BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA 1

Sorcery in Amazonia

A Comparative Exploration of Magical Assault

James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy,
and Tarryl Janik (eds.)

2025
Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut
Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Berlin

James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy, and Tarryl Janik (eds.)

Sorcery in Amazonia

A Comparative Exploration of Magical Assault

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA 1

Ibero-Amerikanisches
Institut
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Sorcery in Amazonia

A Comparative Exploration of Magical Assault

James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy, and Tarryl Janik (eds.)

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA

The monographs and essay collections in the BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA series present the results of research on multiethnic, Indigenous, and Afro-American societies and cultures in Latin America, both historical and contemporary. It publishes original contributions from all areas within the study of the Americas, including archaeology, ethnohistory, sociocultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology.
The volumes are published in print form and online with free and open access.

En la serie BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA se publican monografías y compilaciones que representan los resultados de investigaciones sobre las sociedades y culturas multiétnicas, indígenas y afro-americanas de América Latina y el Caribe, tanto en el pasado como en el presente. Reúne contribuciones originales de todas las áreas de los estudios americanistas, incluyendo la arqueología, la etnohistoria, la antropología socio-cultural y la antropología lingüística.
Los volúmenes se publican en versión impresa y en línea con acceso abierto y gratuito.

Editado por: Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Potsdamer Straße 37
D-10785 Berlin, Alemania
e-mail: indiana@iai.spk-berlin.de
http://www.iai.spk-berlin.de

Consejo editorial: Andrew Canessa (University of Essex), Eveline Dürr (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), Alexander Geurds (Universiteit Leiden), Barbara Göbel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut), Ernst Halbmayer (Philipps-Universität Marburg), Matthias Lewy (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts), Karoline Noack (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn), Bettina Schmidt (University of Wales Trinity Saint David), Fernanda Ugalde (Museum Rietberg, Zürich).

Jefa de redacción: Iken Paap (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut)

Tipografía: Iken Paap (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut)

Imagen de portada: Koch-Grünberg, Theodor (1916): *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco. Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag (vol. 2, pl. IV: "Liane (Bauhinia: Caulotretus), an der der Mond zum Himmel emporgestiegen ist").

Información bibliográfica de la Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
La Deutsche Nationalbibliothek recoge esta publicación en la Deutsche Nationalbibliografie. Los datos bibliográficos están disponibles en https://www.dnb.de.

Pedidos de la versión impresa: Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berliner Str. 53, D-10713 Berlin
https://www.reimer-mann-verlag.de/

Versión digital, acceso libre: https://www.iai.spk-berlin.de/es/publicaciones/

Impresión: Druckhaus Sportflieger GmbH, Sportfliegerstraße 7, D-12487 Berlin

Impreso en Alemania
ISBN 978-3-7861-2930-1

© 2025 Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

BY NC ND

https://doi.org/10.57727/94

Contents / Índice

Preface 7
Laura Rival

Introduction 9
James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy, and Tarryl Janik

Indigenous Perspectives and Ethnohistory Concerning Sorcery in the Guianas

Hay que hacer una nueva cesta 21
Balbina Lambos Pemón-Kamarakoto y Matthias Lewy

Armas y brujería: robo, intercambio y kanaima entre los makushi 29
James Andrew Whitaker
Traducción: Claudia Cornejo Simbala
Comentarios: Bernd Brabec, Daniel G. Cooper y Matthias Lewy

Historical and Contemporary Intersections Between Sorcery and Christianity in Northeastern South America

Kanaima and the Preacher: Taurepáng Cosmology 61
Caio Monticelli

Ethnographies of Kanaima Beyond the Work of Neil Whitehead

Kanaimaton and the Sound of Violence in the Circum-Roraima Region 83
Matthias Lewy

Kanaima (E'toto) and the Ecology of Violence in the Circum-Mount Roraima Landscape 103
Daniel G. Cooper

Revisiting Kanaima Among the Patamona: Tracing the Footsteps of Neil L. Whitehead 125
Tarryl Janik

Interview with Theresa Whitehead 143
Theresa Whitehead and Tarryl Janik

Interview with Matilda Saigo Williams 149
Matilda Saigo Williams and Tarryl Janik

Embodiment and Moral Dilemmas in Relation to Sorcery

Witches and Witchcraft Among the Asháninka People: Moral, Psychological and Educational Aspects 155
Susana Frisancho and Enrique Delgado

The Body as a Battleground: Embodiment and Sorcery in Shamanic Tourism 177
Evgenia Fotiou

Sorcery in the Gran Chaco: Counter-State Force or Unfinished Crystallization of Power? 193
Sonia Sarra and Florencia Tola

Afterword: Assault Sorcery and Kanaima in the Light of New Empirical Approaches: Neil Whitehead's Legacy and Beyond 211
Ernst Habmayer

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA 1 (2025)
ISBN 978-3-7861-2930-1

© Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Preface

Laura Rival
University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Amazonian shamanism has attracted young urbanites from the most 'developed' parts of the world generation after generation for the best part of the last two hundred years. Michael Brown once cautioned New Age enthusiasts about admiring the shamanic tradition one-sidedly. There is nothing wrong with embarking on visionary quests as an alternative to modern healing practices, he remarked, so long as shamanism's stark truths are not brushed aside. 'Shamanism,' he continued, 'affirms life but also spawns violence and death. The beauty of shamanism is matched by its power – and like all forms of power found in society, it inspires its share of discontent' (Brown 1989, 10). Forty years on, Michael Brown's caution remains very actual. David Dupuis's recent exhibition at the Musée du Quai Branly is a testimony to changing New Age psychedelic sensibilities. Visitors are invited to explore misunderstandings that arise when native Amazonians fulfil non-Amazonians' psychedelic needs. By the end of the visit, they may have learnt much about intercultural encounters, but they will have remained blind to dark shamanic practice (Dupuis 2023). The need to counterbalance the large academic production on global shamanism and *ayahuasca* tourism with proper documentation of the dark side of shamanism has no doubt prompted the authors of this fine book to assemble a wealth of new ethnographic evidence on the social contexts of sorcery practice (*brujeria* in Spanish) in Amazonia.

Kanaima, one of the better-documented forms of sorcery in lowland South America, figures prominently in the book. In homage to pioneer figures such as Audrey Butt-Colson and Neil Whitehead, contributors provide detailed ethnographic descriptions of *kanaima* discourse in daily life and of harmful ritual practice in specific, localised settings. While building on Neil Whitehead's approach to violence as cultural performance, contributors are less interested in abstracting the 'poetics of violence' from *kanaima* pragmatics than they are in providing detailed, contextualised descriptions of the ways in which (potential) victims perceive or experience *kanaima* harmfulness.

'*Kanaima* may be so many things' remarks Dan Cooper in his study of Akawaio representations of the links between violence and territory. Shamanic knowledge circulates unendingly among the people of the circum-Mount Roraima region of Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela. Rather than looking for anthropological generalizations regarding cannibalism and predation, violence and war, or history as sorcery, we should follow in the footsteps of Audrey Butt-Colson and pay more attention to the native point of view and its focus on the way in which ambivalence is constructed. If all beings present in the multisensory, sacred landscape can be either helpful, harmful, or both, what matters, then, are the moral stances that get privileged. According to the author's research collaborators, *kanaima* sorcery does not perpetrate violence; rather, it works speculatively at ensuring that reciprocity, balance, and continuity prevail. Among the

Pemon of Venezuela's Gran Sabana studied by Matthias Lewy, by contrast, malevolence acquires meaning not through convergence, but through bifurcation. *Kanaima* killers behave differently depending on whether they possess shamanic powers or not, even if both types of killers equally strike their victims through sound attacks associated with bird whistling. Potential victims must thus pay attention to the quality of the whistling they hear. Hearing a whistling composed of the overlaying of bird vocalization with the sound of a human voice signals the *kanaima* killer's intention to frighten his victim to death. Matthias Lewy invites the reader to dwell on the immorality of intentional twistedness. Why would the imperfect imitation of a bird's song provoke such fear? Evgenia Fotiou's fascinating case-study leads us deeper into the fear-producing machinations of sorcery. How does *ayahuasca* tourism in the Peruvian Amazon intensify shamanic warfare she wonders. Her ethnography, which vividly captures the ways in which power inequalities exacerbate sorcery accusations, provides some answers. She emphasises the central role played by the intense desires, affects, and sensibilities of native Amazonian, mestizo, and EuroAmerican protagonists who get entangled within ever expanding webs.

To summarise, in the Guianas, *kanaima* sorcery practices aiming to poison, mutilate, or kill work by instilling fear. In Peru, globalizing psychedelic experiences drive Amazonians to induce debilitating fear into non-Amazonians, who idealize shamanic practices as potent channels for emotional healing. By juxtaposing these two forms of manipulation of violence, the book seeks to elucidate the historical dynamics at work in both. In so doing, the book invites us to look past fear-inducing techniques, which may be occulting what really matters. A central aspect of shamanic power that too great a concern with the prey/predator relation has masked comes to the fore: strength derives jousting with an equal. For too long, Amazonian shamanism has been thought about as inherently ambivalent because its power can be deployed for beneficial or for harmful ends. However, native Amazonian power is best understood in the context of two predators of equal force locked in combat, neither willing to let the other go (Rival 2015, 290-291). By forcing the souled body not to forget to fear weakness, sorcery techniques shield the strength that one needs to remain human. This might be the book's most powerful ethical insight, one born out of intercultural dialogue, and, it goes without saying, open to further debate.

References cited

Brown, Michael Fobes
1989 "Dark side of the shaman." *Natural History* 98: 8-10.

Dupuis, David
2023 *Visions chamaniques. Arts de l'ayahuasca en Amazonie péruvienne*. Paris: Éditions du Musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac.

Rival, Laura
2015 "Huaorani peace. Cultural continuity and negotiated alterity in the Ecuadorian Amazon." *Common Knowledge* 21, no. 2: 270-304.

Introduction

James Andrew Whitaker
Troy University, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9112-9931
jwhitaker225191@troy.edu

Matthias Lewy
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – School of Music, Switzerland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2529-8507
matthias.lewy@hslu.ch

Tarryl Janik
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0937-5488
tjanik@uwm.edu

Although shamanism has long been a recurrent and central topic in the anthropology of lowland South America (i.e., Amazonia), the ethnological literature relating to sorcery has remained sporadic and sparse by comparison. Despite it being frequently mentioned in many ethnographies, it has not often been a major focus of research in the region. This has especially been the case since the death in 2012 of Neil L. Whitehead whose work on the topic spurred controversy and continues to raise questions about the ethics of research on such topics. However, despite the complexities of such research, sorcery is a significant theme across Amazonia that is often unavoidable in ethnographic fieldwork. Regional practices related to sorcery vary from the *kanaima* complexes of the Guianas (Whitehead 2001; 2002; Whitehead and Wright 2004), to the use of magical pathogenic darts (Chaumeil 2001; Daly and Shepard 2019; Harner 1972), to certain malevolent uses of psychoactive plants (e.g., ayahuasca and datura) (Fotiou 2010). Although Buchillet (2004, 113) has defined sorcery in terms of "conscious and intentional act[s] to cause harm to a specific person or community," there has been little effort to examine these varied phenomena across the region within a comparative scope. Nor has there been much effort to resolve the complex ethical issues pertaining to research on this topic.

One of the better-documented forms of sorcery in Amazonia is *kanaima*. Based on historical research and fieldwork in the Patamona village of Paramakatoi in Guyana, Whitehead (2001; 2002) made this kind of sorcery well-known to Amazonian anthropologists. This and related forms of violent 'dark shamanism' (see Mentore 2004; Whitehead and Wright 2004) have a long and documented history among several Indigenous societies, such as the Akawaio (Butt Colson 2001; Cooper 2015; 2020), Ingarikó (Amaral 2019; in press), Makushi (Whitaker 2016; 2017; 2021a), Patamona (Whitehead 2001; 2002; 2003; Janik 2018), Pemón[1] (Lewy 2011; 2018), and Warao (Wilbert 2004), which traces back into the colonial era in Guyana and the broader region. In the Guianas, much of the ethnographic writing concerning *kanaima* and other forms of sorcery is strongly influenced by the work of Whitehead (2002). However, despite significant differences between groups' understandings of related practices, Whitehead's (2001) descriptions of *kanaima* among the Patamona were influenced (perhaps too strongly) by Butt Colson's (2001) work among the Akawaio and Wilbert's (2004) work among the Warao. At times, this has resulted in a tendency to see potentially differing forms of sorcery in the region as part of one larger complex. Such an approach too often misses the nuances of local descriptions and understandings of sorcery. One of our central goals in this volume is to move beyond these kinds of generalizations of *kanaima* and other forms of sorcery in Amazonia and to more closely examine the particular ontologies, discourses, and practices of specific Indigenous groups across the region. Rather than focusing on *kanaima* as a singular ethnological object, most of the chapters herein seek to understand more localized understandings and experiences of this and other regional phenomena that fit within the broader anthropological category of sorcery.

Going beyond prior engagements on the topic, this volume re-examines the theme of sorcery in Amazonia. It provides the first broadly comparative view on sorcery in the region in almost twenty years, since the publication of *In Darkness and Secrecy* by Whitehead and Wright in 2004. The chapters approach topics concerning sorcery from multiple directions and foreground neglected points of view with a central focus on ethnography and Indigenous voices. The need for such a focus is evident in relation to the many particularities and differences concerning sorcery and its conceptualizations between Indigenous groups, which have often become blurred (and frequently homogenized) in regional ethnographic accounts. The chapters vary from traditional ethnographies to interviews with Indigenous people giving first-hand information on sorcery and its broader contexts. We have also included interviews with people involved (directly or indirectly) with previous ethnographic research on the topic. The result is a broad set of voices shining light on Amazonian sorcery from different angles and vantage points. However, rather than aiming for a synthesis or composite view of the topic, the volume aims to highlight the differences through an emphasis on local rather than regional understandings.

Many of these chapters developed out of a conference panel entitled "On the Jaguar's Trail: Kanaima and the Historicities of Neil L. Whitehead" that we organized for the 2021 meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America (SALSA). The thematic and topical scope of the project has been greatly expanded in the intervening years. Although there remains some focus on *kanaima*, which was a central research focus in Whitehead's work, we have broadened the scope in the volume to incorporate voices and themes from other regions of lowland South America, to better include Indigenous voices, and to expand the range to forms of sorcery besides *kanaima*. We have also worked to move beyond an emphasis on 'kanaima' itself as a focus of research to an emphasis on diverse voices and perspectives concerning sorcery-related phenomena within specific ethnographic contexts. Our hope is that this volume will provide a comparative reference point upon which future research on these topics might build with a focus on ontological differences and particularities across lowland South America. We also hope to help contribute to much-needed discussions concerning the ethics of sorcery-related research. Overall, we hope to re-start an interdisciplinary conversation on these topics.

---

[1] Lewy worked primarily with Kamarakoto, Arekuna, and Taurepan speakers who refer to themselves as Pemón (see also Butt 1960, 100).

Across the chapters, there is an emphasis on the particularities of shamanic ontologies, discourses, and practices. This is particularly reflected in the variations that emerge (despite apparent similarities) between different understandings of *kanaima* among regional Indigenous groups. Conceptualizations, terminologies, and even spellings vary concerning such phenomena across the region. We aim to highlight (rather than paper over) such differences. Each chapter aims to go beyond generalizations and to build upon prior work without reproducing what are often homogenizing treatments. The result is a fine-grained focus on the differences between understandings of sorcery both across and within Indigenous communities in Amazonia.

Theoretical framework

A comparative focus on sorcery in Amazonia requires a general conceptualization of what one means by 'sorcery' as a phenomenon and how it relates to Indigenous understandings and practices in various places where it is relevant to lived experiences. As a practice, it involves (at the most general level) actions that involve harm to others. As such, it can be analytically differentiated from curing and other magical practices, although these practices may sometimes be performed in conjunction or perhaps by the same person. Sorcery is something that people do either individually or collectively and that generally involves some degree of intention (although not necessarily always) applied towards the goal of doing harm. It often fits into Indigenous cosmologies in connection with animist ontologies.

For the purposes of this volume, a productive conceptualization of sorcery can be found in the writings of the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1923). His account of his journey to the Roraima region (encompassing parts of present-day Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela) between 1911 and 1913 is particularly salient for his understanding of sorcery. His account shows how, at least for the Indigenous Pemón (Arekuna) peoples discussed in the third volume of *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco*, sorcery emerges as a practice centered specifically around relations of reciprocity (Koch-Grünberg 1923). He provides early descriptions of *kanaima* sorcery and differentiates different kinds of shamanism. Although an analytical distinction between 'good' and 'evil' forms of shamanism was already present in German ethnology (see von den Steinen 1894, 343), Koch-Grünberg's detailed descriptions of confrontations between various kinds of shamans specialized in either curing or killing are certainly unique for his time period. He claimed that while some shamans helped patients to regain their souls, others were focused on taking souls (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 192; Lewy 2012).

Koch-Grünberg (1923, 200) differentiates between curing-oriented (i.e., 'good') and sickness-causing (i.e., 'evil') shamans. Although shamanic practitioners in Amazonia often engage in both practices, which complicates such binary distinctions, there was an analytical differentiation between the two activities for Koch-Grünberg. He describes the complex system of sorcery among the Arekuna as follows:

> Every illness, whatever its nature, is attributed to the vengeful influence of an evil spirit or the magical influence of a bad person, usually a Zauberarzt [i.e., a sorcerer]. That is why the Zauberarzt, by virtue of his supernatural powers, is first and foremost capable of curing illnesses (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 192; translated by Matthias Lewy).[2]

He explains the dynamics of a shamanic battle, according to the account of his Indigenous interlocutor Akúli (an Arekuna-Pemón man), as well as the roles of various non-human entities (i.e., familiars or 'helping' entities). The latter include spirits of the dead, the souls of deceased shamans, and individual tree barks, to name only a few. Both having such allies, there is a complex struggle between 'good' and 'evil' shamans. Akúli explained the battles to Koch-Grünberg in much detail, as evidenced by the very intricate description of shamanic voicing in his account and in associated recordings. Koch-Grünberg can thus be seen as one of the first sources who truly privileges original Indigenous voices in his work. He admits that he does not have complete cultural understanding as an ethnographer. This early emphasis on local knowledge and experience over ethnographic representation provides a path forward for anthropological studies of sorcery. In conjunction with other sensitivities to local norms and interests, such an approach also helps to point the way towards ethical research on this topic.

Koch-Grünberg claimed that *kanaima* was independent and separate from *piai* (healing-focused shamanism) (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 218). His descriptions of *kanaima* are similar to what is often heard today. He writes that *kanaima* is blamed for any serious illnesses in a settlement, for people slowly wasting away from particular illnesses (e.g., consumption and dropsy), and for sudden deaths. According to Koch-Grünberg (1923, 216) certain kinds of people, including (1) avengers of offenses, (2) avengers of blood, (3) secret murderers, and (4) bad people in general who harm others through magic arts, all 'make *kanaima*.' He mentions claims (from Schomburgk 1848) that it is considered a good deed to kill a *kanaima*, and that nothing happens to the one who does it (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 217). This is part of what Whitehead (2002) called the juridical view of *kanaima*, which he opposed with his more cosmological interpretations.

---

[2] Original in German: "Jede Krankheit, welcher Art sie auch immer sein mag, wird dem rachsüchtigen Einfluß eines bösen Geistes oder der zauberischen Einwirkung eines schlechten Menschen, meistens eines Zauberarztes, zugeschrieben. Deshalb ist der Zauberarzt vermöge seiner übernatürlichen Kräfte in erster Linie dazu befähigt, Krankheiten zu heilen" (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 92).

After Koch-Grünberg, regional descriptions and accounts of *kanaima* sorcery, as well as *piai* shamanism and alleluia prophetism, subsequently emerge in the work of Butt (1960) and other British social anthropologists. Echoing Koch-Grünberg, the ethnological emphasis on reciprocity as the normative relational mode in the Guianas was further developed in the work of Peter Rivière (1984) and Joanna Overing (1981, 1989). Later, in Whitehead's (2002) work, the role of reciprocity in relation to *kanaima* was questioned. In conjunction with the emphasis placed on cosmology and ritual in many accounts of *kanaima*, this led Whitehead (2002) to question the juridical explanations of the phenomenon often found in colonial writings. However, reciprocity remains in his account with the focus turned towards a cosmological exchange posited between *kanaima* and Makunaima. Although reciprocity remains a focus of our analyses of sorcery (*kanaima* and otherwise), this volume goes beyond this framing by emphasizing both the symmetric (e.g., reciprocity-oriented) and asymmetric (e.g., 'mastery' and 'ownership' focused) aspects of *kanaima* and other forms of Amazonian sorcery.

In recent years, there has been a theoretical emphasis on relations of asymmetric ownership over those of symmetric reciprocity in Amazonian ethnology (Fausto 2008; 2012; Brightman, Fausto and Grotti 2016; Brightman 2016; Costa 2017; Halbmayer 2021). This ethnographic turn towards asymmetry has coincided with new modes of theoretical conceptualization and research in the context of the ontological turn (e.g. Descola 2013; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017; Charbonnnier *et al.* 2017; Viveiros de Castro 2014). Recent work has shown how symmetric and asymmetric relations can intersect in regional contexts that sometimes involve sorcery (Whitaker 2021a; 2021b; in press; see Lewy's chapter in this volume). This again points to the ethnographic particularities and diversity of societies in the Guianas and across Amazonia. In addition to highlighting these differences across the chapters, one of the goals of this volume is to elucidate the various different ways that asymmetric and symmetric relations often emerge within contexts of sorcery in Amazonia.

The ethics of sorcery

The question of silence and its ethical implications is often central to anthropological critiques of work on sorcery. Since knowledge of sorcery might in some cases implicate one as a sorcerer, many Indigenous people in Amazonia may be 'silent' or reluctant to discuss the topic. Some ethnographers may also be reluctant to ask about it, since this would elicit interlocutors to evince knowledge of a potentially sensitive or incriminating subject. This view has often kept ethnographers away from research on sorcery due to ethical concerns. The ethical questions are further complicated by issues concerning which forms of knowledge researchers can reveal and questions about the positionality of researchers in describing and revealing such knowledge.

Sorcery is truly a difficult topic for research. It includes a number of thorny ethical and practical issues that may involve hazards for the ethnographer and more importantly for fieldwork interlocutors. These concerns are highlighted by Whitehead's research on *kanaima*, which involved ethical lapses (e.g., touching a vessel and possibly taking human remains), which resulted in him being allegedly targeted by *kanaima* and possibly bringing others into harm's way. These issues are magnified by unverified rumors in the region that someone may have actually been killed in response to Whitehead's actions and allegations. The death of someone in the field is one of the most markedly negative consequences of fieldwork that we can imagine. It highlights the significance of ethical issues surrounding related research. Although we do not see sorcery as an 'off limits' topic, we do feel that these issues must be seriously taken into account.

What would a contemporary ethical framework for anthropological research on sorcery look like? To engage with this question, we must first address two related ones. First, what are the local ethics for this topic? Secondly, how does the positionality of the ethnographer relate to the knowledge, as well as to the disclosure of said knowledge, that such research implicates. Researchers need to particularly take into consideration the perspectives of their interlocutors. We need to (1) take into consideration how the topic of sorcery is approached and addressed within the contexts of the people we study (with a focus on Indigenous perspectives and voices), (2) conduct research with an engaged empathy and reflexivity that takes into account how our own research interests and positionality affect our ethnography and fieldwork interlocutors, and (3) strive to write about sorcery in a more sensitive and cautious way that does not perpetuate violence, voyeurism, or negative stereotypes. With these considerations, the question of whether and how to conduct research on sorcery may yield different answers in different contexts.

At a broader level, topics like sorcery are often not widely discussed or researched within anthropology because they are controversial and can be inherently dangerous for both researchers and interlocutors (but see Sarra and Tola's chapter in this volume). There is a fear that discussing such violent practices can lead to negative stereotypes and othering. However, research on sorcery and related violence can be an important contribution to anthropological understandings of modernization and globalization. It also shows how sorcery can become a force of societal expression and agency. In this volume, we take the approach that cautious and ethical research on sorcery is possible and sometimes needed. Furthermore, we call on anthropologists to think deeply not only about ethical concerns regarding research concerning sorcery but also about the ethical dangers of ignoring the topic.

The ethnographic research described in the chapters included in this volume has been conducted with careful attention paid to matters of fieldwork ethics. Anonymity through pseudonyms has been maintained throughout the chapters except in those cases where authors made special agreements with fieldwork interlocutors not to anonymize based on the desires of the latter. Authors have also sought to avoid unnecessarily exoticizing and othering those with whom they conduct anthropological research. However, the authors and editors are aware of the complicated nature of such work and the dangers it can entail. They hope that this volume will begin a conversation not only about the themes addressed concerning sorcery but also on how to ethically conduct and disseminate research on this and related difficult anthropological topics.

Suggestions for balancing the ethical concerns over sorcery-related research emerge from Matthias Lewy's interview with Indigenous (Kamarakoto-Pemón) researcher Balbina Lambos (published in this volume). She criticizes the publication of *Dark Shamans* by Whitehead in 2002 because she indicates that some young people currently use it for practicing sorcery. They refer back to it as a guide for magical assault, which can destroy a person in the process. She claims that people use it to kill others without considering the consequences. However, she states:

> That's why I'm telling you, Matthias, that we have to be very careful, but we can write about it [sorcery], yes! We do have to expose that, but not all of it. Because there are or were many people with damaged minds who used or applied this knowledge. The question is to what extent we (the Indigenous people) will expose our ancestral knowledge (see Lambos and Lewy, in this volume).

This resonates with what was said by some Indigenous specialists during the recent 2023 SALSA[3] conference that a new basket needs to be woven in order to rethink and recreate the world. In this basket, some new things need to be recognized, such as the *kanaima*.

For Balbina Lambos, ancestral knowledge can also be academic knowledge. However, if it is used incorrectly, then it can do harm. According to her, Indigenous people should apply this knowledge in a positive, intelligent, and responsible way to face their enemies, such as those that destroy the Amazonian forest (e.g. industrial miners). Theirs is an inherited knowledge from the ancestors, but if it is improperly spread all over the world, Indigenous people can be the victims in the end. Rather than precluding or acclaiming sorcery as a research topic, this points again to a need for cautiously proceeding while remaining in close dialogue with communities and interlocutors in deciding what and how to report on research pertaining to sorcery. Under very different contexts, reporting certain knowledge but also potentially ignoring certain knowledge could be unethical.

Balbina Lambos says that this is why Indigenous people are very careful with their knowledge. We have aimed to follow the same path in this volume in terms of deciding what to report and what should not be said or written down. Again, we hope to begin a discussion rather than having the final word on the ethical and topical matters around which the volume centers.

Roadmap of the chapters

The first section of chapters is centered around Indigenous perspectives and ethnohistory concerning sorcery in the Guianas. The first chapter is an interview of Balbina Lambos by Matthias Lewy, which presents a contemporary Indigenous perspective on sorcery in Venezuela. The second chapter, by James Andrew Whitaker, combines ethnography and ethnohistory to examine early documented reports of *kanaima* in the early nineteenth century and relations between *kanaima* and the advent of gun-based warfare in what is now Guyana. Based on fieldwork among the Makushi, he corroborates Whitehead's hypothesis that *kanaima* took on new roles as guns became dominant in warfare. Comments on this chapter are provided by colleagues in dialogue with the central themes. This is followed by a response from the author.

---

[3] Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America (SALSA).

The second section of chapters focuses on historical and contemporary intersections between sorcery and Christianity in northeastern South America. The third chapter, by Caio Monticelli, examines current relations concerning *kanaima* and Seventh Day Adventists among the Taurepáng in Brazil and Venezuela. He describes how *kanaima* practices have increased in recent years alongside Adventist missionization.

The third section of chapters is focused on ethnographies of *kanaima* that go beyond the work of Neil Whitehead, but which directly engage with his oeuvre in various different ways. The fourth chapter, by Matthias Lewy, takes an ethnomusicological approach and considers the qualities of *kanaima* in relation to particular sound phenomena in Venezuela. In particular, he looks at how the soundscape can help to differentiate shamanic and non-shamanic forms of *kanaima.* The fifth chapter, by Daniel G. Cooper, uses a geographical approach to consider relations between violence and territory in *e'toto* cosmology and practice among the Akawaio in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape of Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela. He discusses the interrelations of sorcery, shamanism, and Alleluia and emphasizes the importance of oral tradition. The sixth chapter, by Tarryl Janik, looks at how *kanaima* relates to performance and power within a symbolic landscape among the Patamona in Guyana. He interrogates associations between *kanaima* and the themes of death, violence, and terror within the ethnographic context of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu classes and the 2017 Miss Indigenous Heritage pageant. The seventh chapter consists of an interview of Neil Whitehead's widow, Theresa Whitehead, by Tarryl Janik that looks at how Whitehead became entwined with the ethical implications of his research and its impacts on him and his family. The eighth chapter consists of an interview (also by Tarryl Janik) of Nurse Saigo (Matilda Saigo Williams), who was a key figure in Whitehead's book *Dark Shamans* (2002). It re-visits themes and episodes from Whitehead's original fieldwork and provides an updated account of how *kanaima* is seen and understood today in the Patamona village of Paramakatoi in Guyana.

The fourth section of chapters is focused on embodiment and moral dilemmas in relation to sorcery. The ninth chapter, by Susana Frisancho Hidalgo and Enrique Delgado, explores these dimensions in relation to sorcery among the Ashaninka in Peru. The two authors use a psychological approach to discuss how the burning of witches is locally conceptualized alongside the moral implications of it and practices involving sorcery. The tenth chapter, by Evgenia Fotiou, examines how Western ayahuasca tourists in Peru may unexpectedly encounter themes involving sorcery in their pursuit of Indigenous shamanism. Using an approach focused on embodiment, she considers the material and bodily aspects of sorcery in Amazonia. The eleventh and final chapter, by Sonia Sarra and Florencia Tola, considers the relation between power and sorcery among two Indigenous peoples (Toba and Guarani) of the Gran Chaco. The two authors analyze the paradox inherent in sorcery practices which prevent the proliferation of inequalities and allow the magnification of persons and the accumulation of power.

Overall, the chapters in this volume reveal the complexities and multidimensional aspects of cosmologies and practices related to sorcery across lowland South America. They reveal the diversity of sorcery across the broader region and the need for an ethnographic approach that focuses on particular phenomena over generalizations. The chapters also suggest the potential significance of research concerning sorcery in certain contexts and the need for an ethical framework for investigating it among contemporary peoples. Far from closing the lid on the topic of sorcery in Amazonia and beyond, we hope that this volume will spark new and needed multidisciplinary dialogue about sorcery in the region and the ethics of research addressing it.

References cited

Amaral, Maria Virgínia Ramos
2019 "Os Ingarikó e a religião Areruya." PhD thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio do Janeiro
in press *Areruya and Indigenous prophetism in Northern Amazonia*. London: Bloomsbury.

Brightman, Marc
2016 *The imbalance of power. Leadership, masculinity and wealth in Amazonia*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Brightman, Marc, Carlos Fausto, and Vanessa Grotti, eds.
2016 *Ownership and nurture. Studies in Native Amazonian property relations*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Buchillet, Dominique
2004 "Sorcery beliefs, transmission of shamanic knowledge, and therapeutic practice among the Desana of the Upper Rio Negro Region, Brazil." In *Darkness and secrecy*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 109-131. Durham: Duke University Press.

Butt, Audrey J.
1960 "The birth of a religion." J*ournal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 90, no. 1: 66-106. https://doi.org/10.2307/2844219

Butt Colson, Audrey
2001 "Itoto (kanaima) as death and anti-structure." In *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil L. Whitehead, 221-233. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Charbonnier, Pierre, Salmon, Gilda, and Peter Skafish
2017 *Comparative metaphysics: Ontology after anthropology*. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Chaumeil, Jean-Pierre
2001 "Magic darts as viruses." In *Shamans through time: 500 years on the path to knowledge*, edited by Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley, 272-276. New York: Penguin Putnam.

Cooper, Daniel G.
2015 "Under Mount Roraima: The revitalization of a shamanic landscape and practice." PhD thesis, University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment.
2020 "Alleluia and the Akawaio: The spiritual geography of a highland revitalization movement." In *Indigenous Amazonia, regional development and territorial dynamics: Contentious issues*, edited by Walter Filho, Victor King, and Ismar Borges de Lima, 239-255. Cham: Springer.

Costa, Luiz
2017 *The owners of kinship: asymmetrical relations in Indigenous Amazonia*. Chicago: HAU Books.

Daly, Lewis and Glenn Shepard Jr.
2019 "Magic darts and messenger molecules: Toward a phytoethnography of Indigenous Amazonia." *Anthropology Today* 35: 13-17. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12494

Descola, Philippe
2013 *Beyond nature and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fausto, Carlos
2008 "Donos demais: maestria e domínio na Amazônia." *MANA* 14, no. 2: 329-366. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93132008000200003
2012 "Too many owners." In *Animism in rainforest and tundra: Personhood, animals, plants and things in contemporary Amazonia and Siberia*, edited by Marc Brightman, Vanessa Grotti, and Olga Ulturgasheva, 29-47. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Fotiou, Evgenia
2010 "Encounters with sorcery: An ethnographer's account." *Anthropology and Humanism* 35, no. 2: 192-203. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1409.2010.01066.x

Halbmayer, Ernst
2021 "Some reflections on principles of Isthmo-Colombian Amerindian ontologies". *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 41: 9-28. https://doi.org/10.36447/Estudios2021.v41.art1

Harner, Michael
1972 *Jívaro: People of the sacred waterfalls*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Holbraad, Martin, and Morten Axel Pedersen
2017 *The ontological turn. An anthropological exposition*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Janik, Tarryl
2018 "A return to dark shamans." Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834 (01.11.2023)

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor
1923 *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco: Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. 3: *Ethnographie.* Stuttgart: Strecker ud Schröder. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/c2tvqtbn/items (06.02.2024)

Lewy, Matthias
2011 "Die Rituale areruya und cho'chiman bei den Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)." Doctoral disstertation, Freie Universität Berlin. https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-6806
2012 "The Rituals of Orekotón and the Aguinaldos Pemón – the system of appropriation in Pemón music (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)." Freie Universität Berlin. https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-20902
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

Mentore, George
2004 "The glorious tyranny of silence and the resonance of shamanic breath." In *Darkness and secrecy*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 132-156. Durham: University of North Carolina Press.

Overing Kaplan, Joanna
1981 "Review article: Amazonian Anthropology." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 13, no 1: 151-164. 10.1017/S0022216X00006209

Overing, Joanna
1989 "The aesthetics of production: The sense of community among the Cubeo and Piaroa." *Dialectical Anthropology* 14, no. 3: 159-175. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00248687

Rivière, Peter
1984 *Individual and society in Guiana: A comparative study of Amerindian social organization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schomburgk, Richard
1848 *Reisen in Britisch Guiana in den Jahren 1840-1884: nebst einer Fauna und Flora Guiana's nach Vorlagen von Johannes Müller, Ehrenberg, Erichson, Klotzsch, Troschel, Cabanis und andern*. Leipzig: J. J. Weber. https://archive.org/details/reiseninbritisch02scho/ (17.05.2024)

Steinen, Karl von den
1894 *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens. Reiseschilderung und Ergebnisse der Zweiten Schingú-Expedition 1887-1888*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
2014 *Cannibal metaphysics*. Minneapolis: Univocal.

Whitaker, James Andrew
2016 "Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana." PhD thesis, Tulane University. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (17.05.2024)
2017 "Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi." *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15, no. 2: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4 (17.05.2024)
2021a "Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta." *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726
2021b "Totemic outsiders: Ontological transformation among the Makushi in Guyana." *Religion and Society*, 12, 70-85. https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2021.120106
in press *The shamanism of eco-tourism. History and ontology among the Makushi in Guyana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whitehead, Neil L.
2001 "Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima mountains, Guyana." In *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura Rival y Neil L. Whitehead, 235-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.
2003 "The sign of kanaimà, the space of Guayana and the demonology of development." *Cahiers des Ameriques Latines* 43: 67-86. https://doi.org/10.4000/cal.7271

Whitehead, Neil, and Robin Wright, eds.
2004 *In darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wilbert, Johannes
2004 "The order of dark shamans among the Warao." In *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 21-50. Durham: Duke University Press.

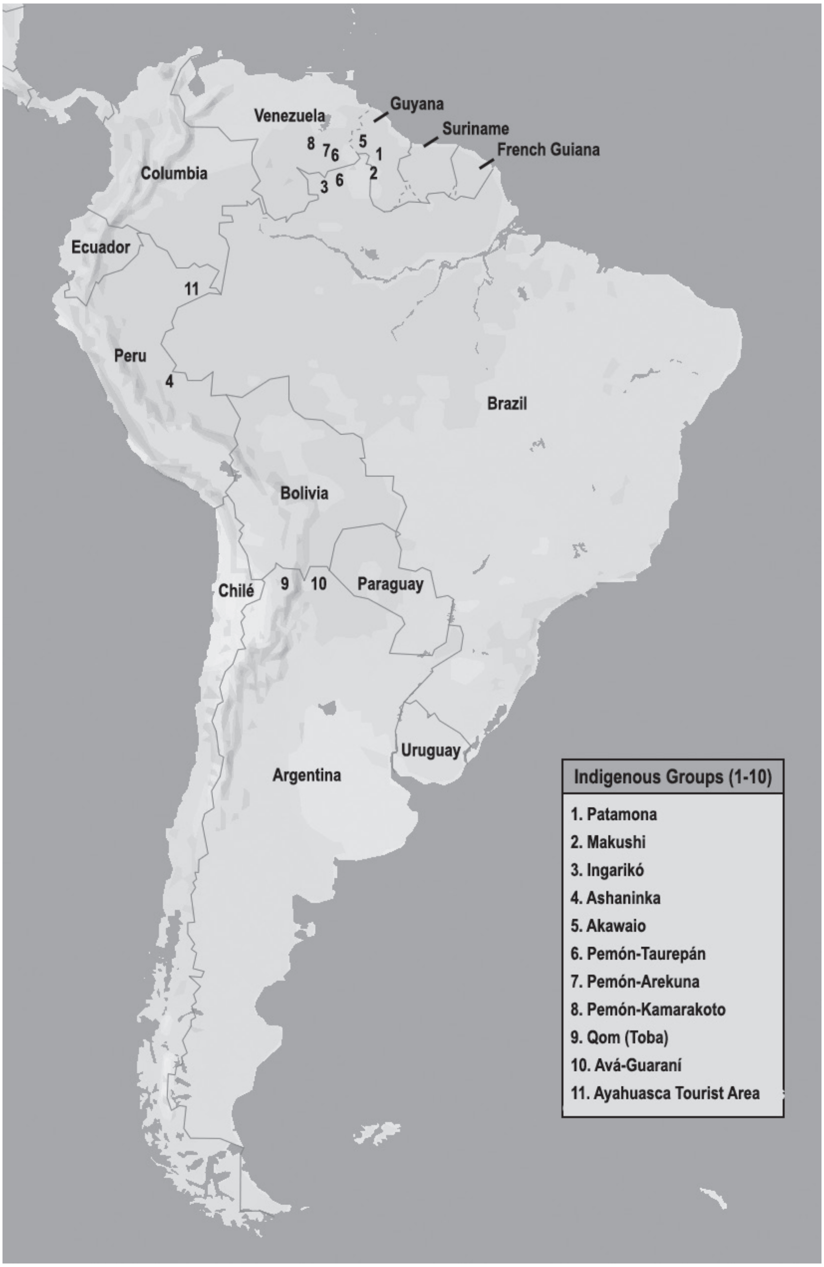

Guyana
Suriname
French Guiana
Venezuela
Columbia
Ecuador
Peru
Brazil
Bolivia
Chilé
Paraguay
Uruguay
Argentina
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
Indigenous Groups (1-10)
1. Patamona
2. Makushi
3. Ingarikó
4. Ashaninka
5. Akawaio
6. Pemón-Taurepán
7. Pemón-Arekuna
8. Pemón-Kamarakoto
9. Qom (Toba)
10. Avá-Guaraní
11. Ayahuasca Tourist Area

Figure 1. South America showing locations of key groups discussed in the chapters (Map: Shawn P. Lambert, Mississippi State University).

Hay que hacer una nueva cesta

Balbina Lambos Pemón-Kamarakoto
Investigadora indígena independiente, Kamarata, Venezuela
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2958-7925
balbinalambos@roraima-tour.com

Matthias Lewy
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – School of Music, Switzerland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2529-8507
matthias.lewy@hslu.ch

Leticia, Colombia, 26 de julio de 2023

Matthias: Hoy estamos en Colombia, Balbina Lambos Pemón-Kamarakoto y Matthias Lewy. Es un placer encontrarnos con nuestra hermana aquí en Leticia, en la frontera con Brasil, Colombia y Perú. Estamos en la selva amazónica y acabo de recibir una llamada de James Whitaker, de Estados Unidos, para hablar de la planificación de nuestro libro. También hablamos de las ideas de Neil Whitehead, un hombre que ha estado trabajando en Guyana sobre el tema de *kanaima*. Balbina, tú has leído este libro,[1] ¿verdad? En nuestra primera pregunta, me gustaría conocer tu opinión como indígena pemón sobre este libro. Whitehead trabajó con los patamona, ¿qué pensamientos te vinieron cuando leíste el libro?

Balbina: Un saludo desde la selva del Amazonas, el pulmón del mundo, y la selva es testigo de lo que voy a decir. Este libro me revela muchas cosas. Yo diría que es el conocimiento ancestral de las culturas indígenas. El *kanaima* es una cosa que se utilizaba en las culturas ancestrales para, por ejemplo, destruir a un enemigo. Era una defensa, pero claro, religiosamente hablando, algo malo, pero era una defensa. Hoy en día los jóvenes lo utilizan como una especie de arte, creen que saben hacerlo y que pueden destruir a una persona. Matan y hacen el mal, pero ya no miden las consecuencias. Por eso te digo, Matthias, que hay que tener mucho cuidado, pero se puede escribir sobre ellos, ¡sí!

Tenemos que revelar que en la cultura indígena, como los ninjas en Japón, teníamos el *kanaima*. Tenemos que revelar eso, pero no todo. Porque hay o había muchas personas con mentes dañadas que utilizaban o aplicaban estos conocimientos, incluso en nuestra cultura kamarakoto. Pero ya no quedan muchos, no nos han dejado sus secretos.

---

[1] Whitehead, Neil L. (2002): *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Y también hemos dicho que no podemos revelarlo todo. La cuestión es hasta qué punto revelaremos nuestro conocimiento ancestral. Sin embargo, me gustaría que la gente tuviera un espíritu positivo y sólo lo use para el bien.

Pero hay mucha gente que utiliza sus conocimientos para el mal, y eso es lo que nos preocupa hoy. Nuestros antepasados utilizaban estos conocimientos para ayudar a los demás. Por ejemplo, de vez en cuando se les pedía que se vengaran de un enemigo. Podían hacerlo, pero también había muchas discusiones entre los antiguos.

Pero esa gente ya se fue, por eso veo este punto de desentrañar el misterio del *kanaima*. Se sabe que es bastante cruel, es como todo, el mundo está lleno de bien y de mal. Para mí es lo que llaman una especie de religión, magia negra, ese tipo de cosas. Nuestros antepasados, los chamanes, nos decían que el que se convierte en *kanaima* no lo hace porque el abuelo o la comunidad lo quieran. Se convierte en *kanaima* porque es la elección personal de esa persona.

Entonces el *piasan* [chamán] le dice a esta persona cuáles son las condiciones. Si la persona sigue queriendo hacerlo a pesar de todo, entonces lo hace bajo su responsabilidad. Entonces, la persona es expulsada por la comunidad. Quizás no inmediatamente, pero la persona será descubierta. La persona revela quién es con el tiempo, por ejemplo, cuando consume alcohol. Entonces la persona suele revelar que ha matado a la mujer o al niño y entonces con el tiempo esta persona es catalogada como una mala persona. La persona es expulsada y le dan el nombre de *kanaima*.

Quiero decir que la persona se convierte en un ser religiosamente diabólico, una persona que hace el mal a otra persona. Por eso este libro me pareció muy fuerte. La gente que no tiene maldad puede leerlo y dejarlo así. Pero no es para la gente que dice que se puede hacer eso. Como lo que pasa hoy en nuestro país, los jóvenes practican el *kanaimismo*. Entonces matan a su pareja como un juego, ¡pero no es un juego! Porque la vida es muy importante. Por eso digo que éstos deben explicarse bien, qué son y para qué sirven.

Se dice que los chamanes primero tienen que pasar por esta fase. Tal vez pueda compararse a un sacerdote que tiene que pasar por un proceso para convertirse en padre. Lo mismo ocurre con el *kanaimismo*. La gente también tiene que pasar por procesos. Pero cuando hace un experimento para matar a un ser humano, lo hace a través de una hormiga, un insecto, un pájaro, y de ahí pasa a un niño, a una mujer y a personas indefensas. Así que esto hay que discutirlo con la gente mayor.

Y tal vez le den conocimientos de este lado. Así que para mí, este conocimiento también es científico [académico], pero si se aplica mal, entonces perjudica a la familia. A mi mamá me la quitaron muy joven en una venganza contra mi papá. Venganza es cuando puedes contrarrestar a tus enemigos, pero sabiamente. Es importante mantener el sentido de la proporción.

Aplicamos nuestros conocimientos de forma positiva, inteligente y responsable para contrarrestar al enemigo. Hoy en día, son los que están destruyendo nuestro hábitat.

Con estos conocimientos les contrarrestamos, porque el gobierno no nos ayuda con armas, no. Es nuestro último conocimiento ancestral, pero si lo difundimos a todo el mundo, al final seremos las víctimas. Lo sabemos y le prestamos mucha atención.

Matthias: Muy bien, y ahora una pregunta que tiene que ver con esto. Nosotros trabajamos mucho sobre grabaciones sobre todo de Koch-Grümberg y teníamos esa experiencia una vez que encontramos una canción que no sabíamos que tiene una relación con ese mundo malo, te gustaría decir algo al respecto?

Balbina: Bueno, Matthias, sí. En primer lugar, muchos misioneros, antropólogos y otros se interesan por nosotros porque les gusta la zona y nuestras costumbres. Así que empiezan a grabar, pero no saben exactamente lo que significa en realidad. Algo parecido le ocurrió a un estadounidense llamado Charles Bogan. El lugar donde vivo es muy bonito. Pero hoy el lugar se llama 'Kanaima' porque este americano lo 'bautizó' así. El hombre no sabía lo que significaba *kanaima*. Vino a un lugar tan hermoso y la gente hablaba de *kanaima*. Tal vez lo hacían por miedo o porque un *kanaima* había matado a una persona. Justo entonces hablamos mucho sobre el tema. Y él pensaba que *kanaima* es el rey de la selva. Un día dijo: "Quiero ser el rey de la selva como *kanaima*" (risas). Llamó al lugar 'Kanaima', y hoy existe incluso el 'Parque Nacional Kanaima' con tres millones de hectáreas bajo un nombre falso, es decir, un mal nombre. Esto no es bueno para la cultura indígena. Es negativo. Cómo puede tener ese nombre, es decir, la selva y el hábitat, ¡tres millones de hectáreas de 'Parque Nacional Kanaima'! Y de hecho hay gente que no sabe el significado y hasta usa el nombre *kanaima*, es decir, por favor, tenemos que investigar primero.

Y luego nos pasó con las canciones de Koch-Grünberg. Él grabó a los macuxi, taurepán y otros grupos étnicos. Transcribimos las canciones entonces, y una señora que entendía perfectamente las grabaciones nos dijo: "¡Ay, no, esas son canciones de *kanaima*!". Y nosotros no lo sabíamos. Pero no eran nuestras grabaciones. Sólo hicimos la transcripción. Pero hay que tener respeto por este tipo de canciones, por muy malas que sean. Yo no las llamo malas, porque todo existe en este mundo, lo bueno y lo malo. Ambos tienen que existir para que este mundo, para que la vida, funcione. Pero al mismo tiempo, tenemos que aclarar por qué y para qué. Tenemos que especificar qué dicen exactamente las canciones. Por ejemplo, hay una canción en kamarakoto llamada *amanawuí*. Se dice que es la canción de los *kanaima* porque están extasiados. También disfrutan de lo que han hecho. El mal que han hecho. Empiezan a cantar y se relajan con sus canciones. Y así, revelan cómo encontraron el sacrificio, todo esto en forma de poesía, en forma de canción. A mí me pasó incluso que empecé a cantar una canción que me parecía preciosa. Pero luego descubrí poco a poco que se trata del *kanaima* que mató a una chica y le cantaba a ella y dice que la familia lloró por ella y así sucesivamente. ¿Sabes qué canción?

Matthias: Si, un *amanawuí*?

Balbina (canta)**:** *Yakon pachi karawü nase*. Luego dice: *yakon* es mi hermana, *karawü* significa que está llorando, *yacon pachi karawü* significa que 'la hermana de mi hermana está llorando'. Es una implicación, porque no dice que él mató. Lo dice como si fuera él el que está llorando, pero claro, le está diciendo a la mujer que está llorando por su hermana a la que ha perdido. El culpable es el que canta, y se da las gracias a sí mismo, dice, bueno, hice algo que no está mal para él, porque él se divierte.

Luego, dice que cuando matan, tienen que ir debajo de una cascada para gritar, para relajarse después porque no pueden guardar esa culpa porque hicieron algo mal. Así que se relajan, lo dejan salir, cantan, gritan, componen, y entonces alguien lo oye y se da cuenta de que el que está cantando es el que mató.

Claro que no lo dice exactamente, pero en forma de poesía lo dice. El *kanaima* se revela. Por eso dicen que el género *amanawú* pertenece al *kanaima* e incluso lo bailan y demás. Yo antes no lo conocía, e incluso lo bailaba sin saberlo. Así que hoy en día hay que tener cuidado de no cantar todas las canciones, de no bailar todas las canciones, porque el que lo entienda lo entenderá como si fueras un *kanaima*. ¿Y tú también celebras como si hubieras matado? Podrían estigmatizarte.

Matthias: En este contexto, cabe señalar que la grabación que escuchamos con el especialista fue publicada en un CD por un museo. ¿Qué opinas de esto, debería publicarse una canción así y la gente debería poder escucharla?

Balbina: Bueno, esta no, o bueno, si no eres indígena, y si escuchas con atención, no hay problema. Los no indígenas pueden escucharlo porque es sólo el ritmo, es un poco melancólico. Pueden escucharla, pero si profundizan mucho, investigan y averiguan qué significa esta canción, entonces pueden llegar al punto de que sea doloroso escuchar esta canción. Por ejemplo, una señora escuchó la canción y dijo que es de *kanaima*. Pero no todo el mundo sabe interpretarla, porque hay que saber interpretarla. También es indirecta. Y no es muy superespecial, pero llega muy hondo, esta canción, para que la escuches, ya lo hemos hecho, ya está ahí.

Matthias: ¿Y los cantos del *piasán*, los cantos de chamán que también han sido publicados? Que resultan ser los mismos que no quiso escuchar un chamán….

Balbina: Debo aclarar algo. En mis investigaciones, he ido descubriendo que las canciones de los *marik* son una religión en sí mismas para nosotros, porque cantan sobre las montañas y los seres extraordinarios que viven en ellas, ya sean negativos o positivos. Se trata, pues, de una especie de canto religioso. Hoy en día, después de que llegaran las misiones, dicen que estas canciones son del diablo, de esto y de lo otro. Hoy en día, cuando los indígenas oyen *marik*, piensan que es del diablo. Pero en realidad, si lo estudian bien y empiezan a entender que no puede ser del diablo, saben que el diablo no existe, eso era en los tiempos en que reinaba la ignorancia, cuando no había los conocimientos que tenemos hoy. Antes pensaba que no podía cantar *marik* porque no quería ir al infierno. Pero ahora lo canto yo, quiero decir que sé que estoy cantando para la Madre Naturaleza, que sea bueno o malo depende de cómo lo interprete cada uno. Es muy bonito. Es una religión, de hecho la hay. Como se suele decir, también he investigado una canción para resucitar a los enfermos que suena como una letanía de canciones religiosas españolas. Es casi el mismo tono, y los indígenas aún no habían conocido a Cristóbal Colón ni nada, ya tenían esta canción, así que este tipo de canción como *marik*. Entonces están prohibidas, son canciones religiosas, y hoy en día el 90% de la población indígena es católica, entonces lo escuchan y dicen: no, esto está prohibido, lo van a prohibir por la religión católica.

Matthias: Entonces, si te entiendo bien, ¿tu dices que para la ciencia, para conocer las cosas, se debe trabajar las cosas de una manera ?

Balbina: Claro, claro, para que haya más respeto, porqué el indígena si tuvo su religión, es eso.

Matthias: Sí, la visibilidad es el argumento. Pero también están los problemas, como con el *tarén*, las fórmulas mágicas. También es un tema difícil.

Balbina: También investigando esto, yo no tengo el título de antropología pero sigo investigando y me gusta mucho, también descubrí que están los salmos religiosos españoles "yo soy, yo soy, yo soy, yo soy". El *tarén* indígena también es así, pero no fue que fue a España a copiarse de eso, ya existía eso y también dice "yo soy, yo soy, yo soy, yo soy" y son poderosas las oraciones. Son oraciones también, por eso hay *tarén*, osea oraciones para hacer el bien y también para hacer maldad. Una muchacha, por ejemplo, es muy bonita y a lo mejor no le corresponde a un hombre. Entonces el hombre para hacerle una maldad por venganza le puede echar un *tarén*. Una oración mala para que de esa muchacha nadie se enamore, lo hace. Entonces así depende de la aplicación. Y hay que explicar nosotros normalmente los *tarenes* malos. Así no los aprendemos. Tampoco no queremos publicar mucho, porque hay mente malsana, mente dañada que van hacer maldad a sus semejantes. Es por eso nada más, tenemos mucho cuidado.

Matthias: Lo que nos lleva al tema de los archivos, que la iglesia católica tiene muchos tarén grabados en su archivo y también de *marik*, la pregunta sería, ¿qué hacer con eso?

Balbina: Bueno yo vivo en Santa Elena de Uairén, donde está la etnia taurepan, yo soy Kamarakoto de la etnia kamarakoto, y también está la etnia arekuna. El padre Cesáreo de Armellada cuando llegó hizo muchas grabaciones de los *pia'sanes*, de las etnias pues.

Matthias: ¿Tu conociste a Cesáreo de Armellada?

Balbina: No lo conocí. Pero por casualidad a mi me metieron en sus proyectos. Porque esta es la tierra de los taurepán. Estaban ellos cambiando las leyendas y todo a su lengua taurepan. Cuando por casualidad alguien me metió en la transcripción de algunas leyendas, cantos y eso, me di cuenta de que le están cambiando las letras. Osea, al parecer de ellos de los taurepán que tuvimos un poco de discusiones. Dijimos no, tenemos que respetar cada etnia. No voy a venir yo a decir que sé más que tú. Tenemos que dejar las cosas como están si queremos que esto se convierta en conocimiento de la humanidad, sea lo que sea. Tenemos que hacerlo responsablemente con cada etnia, o sea, no seamos egoístas, ni yo ni todos. Entonces tuvimos un poco de percance cuando hicimos la transcripción. Fueron 800 grabaciones que hizo el padre Cesáreo de Armellada. Hicimos transcripciones, había para hacer *kanaima*, para hacer *pia'sán*, para hacer maldades. Nosotros, cuando nos pusimos de acuerdo, dijimos no podemos divulgar esto, tenemos que decir que el audio no funciona por que esta en contra de nuestra voluntad. Osea, no podemos, bueno estamos con el ejemplo de la cocaína que el mundo se autodestruye. No podemos, la licenciada que nos tenía haciendo transcripción nos prohibió y nos regañó. Dijo "la que manda soy yo, ustedes tienen que hacer lo que les pedimos". Dijimos "no, no podemos, eso es sagrado", y entonces una vez me tocó transcribir para hacer maldad a una persona. Yo lo transcribí y se lo mostré al que era mi pareja. Y me dijo: "Balbina, te van a echar cizaña con esto". Y por supuesto no lo hice.

Todos dijimos "no, no vamos a hacer eso". Son costumbres y la cultura indígena también tiene sus científicos. Tiene de todo, no tiene nada que envidiar a otras culturas. Descubrí cómo funciona el *tarén* que debería transcribir. Hace que la persona esté sola, aislada. Nadie los visita, nadie quiere hacer nada con ellos. La persona está al margen, todo el mundo le da la espalda. El *tarén* trabaja sobre la necesidad fisiológica del ser humano, no sobre la primera, sino sobre la segunda. ¿Quién quiere estar al lado de una persona que ha defecado, quién quiere estar al lado de su olor? Nadie, la persona en cuestión ni siquiera se da cuenta, eso no es *tarén* del bueno. Entonces aplican la oración de eso, osea que el indígena fue científico ya tenía todo preparado.

Matthias: En cuanto a las grabaciones de Armellada, los representantes de la iglesia me dijeron que se dejó la grabadora en las iglesias. Él no estaba allí y la gente lo grabó así. Tal vez lo sabían, tal vez no sabían lo que era, o tal vez también querían tener cuidado o grabar lo que sabían. En cierto modo, este estilo era muy popular en los años sesenta. Así como Armellada para decir, no estoy representado, no estoy aquí, pero la grabadora está aquí y usted puede hacer lo que quiera. ¿Qué piensa de este método 50 años después de que se hicieran estas grabaciones?

Balbina: Ahora que hablamos de unificación positiva, creo que lo que ha hecho el P. Cesáreo Armellada ya se ha hecho. Sólo hay que hablar con los líderes de cada etnia, es decir, con las organizaciones de cada etnia, para que reclamen el patrimonio de su etnia. Por ejemplo, los registros de los arekunas, los registros de los kamaracotos, los macuxi. Eso quiere decir que cada cosa tiene un origen que la misión no lo tiene, ¿qué va a hacer la misión con eso?

Las 800 grabaciones archivadas podrían dañarse. Pero también se trata del conocimiento en sí. Yo misma no sabía nada, descubrí muchas cosas. Por supuesto, mi abuelo era chamán y más o menos puedo saber algo, pero como estas grabaciones son tan fuertes, no. Eso está ahí, así que creo que la organización, si tenemos una organización, tenemos que....

Matthias: como Piai'ma..

Balbina: Instituto Piai'ma. Porque en lengua indígena *piai* es el principio y fin de las cosas, *ma* es lo grande lo que envuelve todo. La inmensidad y grandiosidad de la naturaleza. Entonces, al ser extraordinario que existió en las montañas y en la selva le dicen Piai'ma. El que dicen que empezó con la artesanía, el iniciador de tantas cosas que forman parte del conocimiento indígena. El hombre grande, como en Europa pie grande, un hombre así, así era el Piai'ma. Entonces me gustó ese nombre porque es el principio. Claro, él no era el dios ni nada, pero el nombre de él lo dice. Parece que fue el principio del ser humano, digo yo, pero en forma de un ser grande, extraordinario, Piai'ma. Ma es lo grandioso lo inmenso y *piai* es el principio y fin de las cosas y el *pia'sán* también viene de *piai* – principio y fin de las cosas y *san* es madre, tiene que ver siempre con eso y me parece que el nombre de institución Piai'ma esta bien.

Matthias: Muy bien y para terminar con cosas positivas, ya hablamos con el señor Huitoto Ailo, el sabio, ¿él habló sobre el canasto y cómo se puede aplicar un nuevo archivo para tejer un nuevo canasto?

Balbina: Aquí con el hermano, bueno, tiene que ser un *pia'sán*. Entonces, él dice que su ancestro, su papá, a lo mejor les está heredando el puesto que le dejó su papá, que era un *pia'sán*, un chamán. Dijo que su papá le había dicho que las cestas que ellos tejieron. Es decir, los ancestros indígenas, los viejos, los de antes, ya se pudrió, ya se rompió. Ahora, la nueva generación teje una nueva cesta, que sea más resistente, que esté a favor de la naturaleza, a favor de la Amazonía, a favor del planeta, eso es lo que quiere decir. Entonces este tema esta muy bonito hay que hacer una nueva cesta, resistente.

Matthias: ¿Y para eso debemos analizar la vieja un poquito? ¿Cómo los archivos?

Balbina: Si, exacto. La cesta vieja sería las grabaciones de nosotros sin conocer mucho. Así como el padre Cesáreo de Armellada, así como Charles Bogan también. O sea que ellos, claro, vienen de otras partes y no saben. Es como que yo llegue aquí y, sin consultar con nadie, como me gustó, empiece a inventar tantas cosas, así mismo. Entonces yo creo que está bonito eso, hay que tejer entre todos, porque el hermano lo dijo y es el slogan de los indígenas "todos somos hermanos". El indígena llama al agua hermano, al aire hermano y a un ser humano más porqué es su misma lengua, su misma mente, inteligencia y todo. Entonces todos somos hermanos, entonces tenemos que tejer una nueva cesta.

Matthias: Eso sería un excelente título para la entrevista.

Balbina: Eso sería muy bonito.

Matthias: Vamos a tejer una nueva cesta. Muchísimas gracias, Balbina.

Armas y brujería: robo, intercambio y kanaima entre los makushi[1]

James Andrew Whitaker
Troy University, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9112-9931
jwhitaker225191@troy.edu

Traducción: Claudia Cornejo Simbala
Comentarios: Bernd Brabec, Daniel G. Cooper y Matthias Lewy

Introducción

La historia de los makushi en Guyana contiene temas recurrentes como el robo de esclavos, el comercio y la brujería *kanaima*. Neil Whitehead (2002, 206, 222-223, 250), basándose en documentos coloniales y trabajo de campo con los patamona, plantea que el auge de la brujería *kanaima* entre los makushi está relacionada con la historia de la esclavitud, la introducción de armas de fuego y otras presiones coloniales de finales del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX. Propone que los practicantes de *kanaima* adquirieron nuevas funciones socialmente reconocidas como asesinos cuando el uso de armas de fuego alteró los patrones de robos y peleas con garrotes, que eran las armas tradicionales de guerra entre los caribes, makushi y otros indígenas de Guyana. De esta manera, el *kanaima* surgió como una fuerza furtiva que podía utilizarse para contrarrestar las depredaciones sufridas por los makushi y otros indígenas. Este ensayo aportará nuevas evidencias a partir de la revisión de documentos coloniales y trabajo de campo con los makushi a favor de la hipótesis en mención y, además, explicará la conexión entre los robos, intercambios y la brujería entre los makushi.

Este artículo no tiene por objetivo explicar los orígenes del *kanaima*. Se trata más bien de proponer una hipótesis sobre las formas en las que las presiones coloniales (redadas de esclavos, comercio, armas, etc.) abrieron nuevos espacios para la aplicación de esta forma de brujería violenta. Los brujos *kanaima* participan en actos de homicidio ritual –con frecuencia disfrazados o transformándose en jaguares, nutrias gigantes u otros animales– que preparan los cuerpos de las víctimas para la extracción *post mortem* y el consumo selectivo con el fin de transferir esencias humanas a un ser mítico llamado Makunaima (asociado con la creación) a cambio de patrocinio y provisión continuos (Vidal y Whitehead 2004, 61; Whitehead 2002, 131, 146, 221-222; Whitehead y Wright 2004, 6). Whitehead identifica este intercambio como el objetivo ritual del *kanaima*; sin embargo, los beneficios individuales exactos de este intercambio para los brujos *kanaima* siguen siendo algo confusos tanto en el relato de Whitehead como en los relatos de mis interlocutores makushi. Aunque los relatos makushi sobre el *kanaima* varían en cuanto a sus objetivos –algunos sugieren que está relacionado con Negi/Makunaima, mientras que otros no declaran un objetivo general específico–, es importante señalar que la identidad de las víctimas como enemigos, personas afines o incluso parientes parece en gran medida irrelevante para el *kanaima*. Whitehead (2001, 240; 2002, 8, 61, 76, 90, 93, 129, 243) menciona que personas aleatorias (incluidas mujeres y niños locales), así como parientes del asesino, pueden ser víctimas del *kanaima* entre los patamona contemporáneos, y que la selección de las víctimas puede basarse en la venganza, la envidia, el pago, actos de intimidación, encuentros al azar, ofensas personales u otras variables. Este y otros aspectos de las descripciones de Whitehead sobre el *kanaima* entre los patamona coinciden en general con los relatos de los makushi.

---

[1] Publicado originalmente como: James Andrew Whitaker "Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi", en *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15 (2017): 158-172, Digital Commons @ Trinity. Publicado con permiso de la Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America.

Los makushi describen los asesinatos *kanaima* con bastante detalle, aunque hay muchas variantes en las historias de sus ataques. Cabe recalcar que estos relatos constituyen un género narrativo de facto para los makushi. Sin embargo, aunque ellos cuentan historias sobre ataques *kanaima*, sospechas de ataques y encuentros cercanos con relativa libertad, existe una notable preocupación entre algunos por el hecho de que hablar demasiado abiertamente sobre este tema pueda atraer la violencia *kanaima*, despertar sospechas sobre si uno es secretamente un *kanaima* u otras consecuencias indeseables. No existe un esfuerzo general por suprimir el conocimiento de los *kanaima*, pero los makushi no suelen querer ser vistos como fuentes de dicho conocimiento.

En casi todas las historias de *kanaima*, la víctima está sola en el momento del ataque. Los *kanaima* no suelen atacar a parejas o grupos de personas. La versión más común sostiene que una persona está caminando sola y percibe crujidos o movimientos delante de ellos. Se quedan mirando el movimiento extraño, el cual funciona como distracción, y una persona oculta viene por detrás y los golpea en la cabeza. Esto ocasiona la pérdida de conocimiento. En muchos relatos, se dice que la víctima percibe un ser similar a una persona que se parece a un jaguar, una nutria gigante u otro animal antes de ser golpeada y perder el conocimiento. Se dice que se trata de un *kanaima* disfrazado o camuflado con la piel de un animal o, de un *kanaima* que se ha transformado en un animal mediante el uso de plantas mágicas llamadas coloquialmente *bina*. Mientras la persona está inconsciente, el *kanaima* pincha la lengua de la víctima con dientes de serpiente para provocar hinchazón e impedir el habla. El *kanaima* ejerce presión sobre el abdomen para provocar protrusión intestinal y luego corta o 'ata' los intestinos. Algunos describen al *kanaima* como la inserción de un paquete de hierbas en los intestinos y el rompimiento de los huesos. Eventualmente, la víctima se despierta, vuelve a casa y cae enferma. El individuo tiene fiebre alta, no puede hablar y a veces experimenta una diarrea incontrolable hasta la muerte, que suele producirse en tres días o menos. Una vez enterrada la víctima, el *kanaima* regresa a la tumba y, mediante uno de varios métodos, obtiene sustancias necróticas de la víctima, normalmente descritas como sangre. El *kanaima* es guiado hacia la tumba por un olor dulce –a veces se describe como similar al de la piña– que es causado por las acciones realizadas en el cuerpo de la víctima durante el ataque. Si el *kanaima* es incapaz de llegar hasta el cadáver, le dan 'ataques' y se transforma involuntariamente en varios animales pequeños, como el armadillo.

La brujería *kanaima* consta de fenómenos regionales y transculturales –hay similitudes entre los relatos patamona, akawaio y makushi al respecto– y de un conjunto de creencias y prácticas que no pueden reducirse a las presiones coloniales. La forma extremadamente violenta en que los *kanaima* matan a sus víctimas y su necesidad de volver al cuerpo tras el entierro obedecen a preocupaciones que van más allá de los objetivos más básicos del asesinato (Whitehead 2002, 231). En sus raíces, las prácticas de los *kanaima* parecen basarse en marcos de creencias más amplios y probablemente son mucho más antiguos que el siglo XIX. La asociación entre *kanaima* y Makunaima se remonta al menos a principios del siglo XIX (Hancock 1835, 44). Entre los makushi, Makunaima se conoce a menudo como Negi y se considera el hermano malévolo del benévolo Inshkirung, ambos seres míticos asociados a la creación. Aunque estas creencias más amplias sustentan las prácticas regionales del *kanaima*, las presiones coloniales que surgieron a finales del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX dieron lugar a nuevas adaptaciones y aplicaciones socialmente reconocidas del *kanaima*.

Los makushi y las incursiones esclavistas[2]

La primera aparición conocida de los makushi en la historia se produce en el contexto de las incursiones esclavistas contra ellos en 1740 por esclavistas luso-brasileños liderados por un irlandés llamado Lourenço Belforte (Hemming 1987, 30; QFGBB VI 1903, 99-100; Williams 1932, 13-14). Durante el siglo XVIII, los makushi fueron atrapados entre las incursiones de esclavistas luso-brasileños y las llevadas a cabo por representantes indígenas de los holandeses, principalmente caribes y akawaio (Whitaker 2016a; Whitehead 1988). Estas incursiones contra los makushi fueron frecuentes durante el siglo XVIII y continuaron en el siglo XIX (CBGHBM 1898, 9-10; Hilhouse 1825, 37; Whitaker 2016a, 40). Por ejemplo, John Hancock (QFGBB VII 1903, 2), Robert Schomburgk (Hemming 1987, 262), Charles Barrington Brown (Brown and Sawkins 1875, 146) y otros visitantes de los makushi en el siglo XIX fueron informados de las inminentes incursiones de esclavos.

Los recuerdos de estas experiencias históricas de incursiones de esclavitud se han transmitido entre los makushi. Durante mis visitas anuales de trabajo de campo (2012-2015) a los makushi en Guyana, me encontré con historias orales relacionadas con estos asaltos. Por ejemplo, en una ocasión me contaron que:

> Los portugueses solían capturar a los makushi para esclavizarlos en las plantaciones de café y tabaco. En consecuencia, muchos de ellos vinieron corriendo hacia el norte. Y cuando lo hicieron, los caribes vinieron a cazarnos. Nos llamaban el pueblo menor. Y los holandeses les dieron a los caribes armas y pólvora para que nos llevaran a la costa y nos esclavizaran. Así que [los makushi] se vieron atrapados en ambas direcciones.[3]

---

[2] Véase Whitaker (2016a; 2016b) para más información sobre la historia de las incursiones de esclavos contra los makushi, el comercio regional y los *kanaima*. Algunas partes de este artículo se han extraído del quinto capítulo de la tesis doctoral de Whitaker (2016b).

[3] Todas las citas literales de este texto están traducidas del inglés.

La madre de la suegra de este interlocutor había sido esclavizada en Brasil y, por tanto, tenía vínculos personales con esta historia de esclavitud. Es notable que en este relato se mencionen las armas de fuego (proporcionadas a los caribes por los holandeses). Como se discute más adelante, la posesión de este armamento por los caribes y otros grupos de esclavistas indígenas, así como por los esclavistas luso-brasileños, parece haber complicado los esfuerzos makushi para contrarrestar tales hostilidades. Otro interlocutor explicó cómo sobrevivieron los makushi a este período de esclavitud:

> [Los portugueses] llevaban a los hombres como esclavos o los mataban. Dejaban a las ancianas. Mi madre decía que solían matar a los hombres. A unos amigos míos, sus padres les decían que los animales les hacían señales. El zorro decía: "Vuela, *humong*".[4] Porque así es como suenan los zorros por la noche. Pero cuando te envían un mensaje, suenan más agresivos. Cuando te envían un mensaje. Y ella le preguntó a la persona mayor: "¿Cómo lo sabes?" Y ella dijo: "Cuando un zorro te enviaba un mensaje ellos lo interpretaban y decían 'El zorro está diciendo que nuestros enemigos están volviendo para matar de nuevo y llevarse a nuestras niñas'". Y entonces veían venir a los brasileños con sus sogas, y los caribes traían sus garrotes para golpearles. Así que enterraban a las niñas y también a algunos hombres. Y una anciana se sentaba junto al fuego y gritaba: "¿Por qué vienes otra vez? ¿No sabes que ya has matado a nuestros hombres y te has llevado a nuestras mujeres? ¿Por qué te vas?" Y por eso creemos que aún tenemos pueblos makushi.

En consonancia con la historia documentada, este relato revela la adopción de la estrategia de esconderse, así como estrategias que involucraron animales, para eludir las incursiones de esclavos. La idea de que las mujeres ancianas se quedaran al encuentro de los asaltantes concuerda con los relatos de exploradores del siglo XIX que describen el encuentro con poblados makushi en los que sólo había hombres o mujeres ancianas. Por ejemplo, los hermanos Schomburgk escriben que encontraron aldeas makushi en las que sólo había mujeres (Hemming 1987, 263; Schomburgk 1876, 46). Richard Schomburgk menciona que los indígenas se escondían, huían o estaban preocupados por los ataques y las incursiones de esclavos (Schomburgk 1922 [1847], 325-326; 1923 [1848], 50, 64, 145). La historia oral patamona también sugiere que a veces los poblados se quedaban sólo con las mujeres ancianas y los niños (Whitehead 2002, 225). Aunque no es posible dar una fecha precisa, las incursiones de esclavos contra los makushi parecen haber terminado en su mayor parte hacia mediados o finales del siglo XIX. Sin embargo, el tema de las mujeres ancianas como salvadoras de sus aldeas se refleja en las historias contemporáneas de los makushi que describen a estas mujeres salvando a sus aldeas de otros seres como murciélagos gigantes y grandes pájaros. A Schomburgk (1876, 30-31) le contaron historias similares.

Varias fuentes entre las décadas de 1810 y 1840 afirman que los makushi a veces se involucraron en la 'venta' de sus parientes como esclavos. John Hancock (1835, 45-46) recuerda que le ofrecieron un joven makushi a cambio de bienes comerciales menores y menciona que los hombres makushi 'vendían' a sus cuñadas (afines), así como a los hijos de sus hermanos (consanguíneos), a la muerte de un hermano menor (QFGBB VII 1903, 2). De manera similar, Richard Schomburgk (1923 [1848], 250) también menciona la 'venta' de parientes por parte de los makushi. John Henry Bernau (1847, 35-36) escribe que los makushi:

---

[4] La palabra makushi exacta que se utiliza aquí no está clara. Se parece a la palabra *pemong*, que significa 'personas' en makushi. También se parece a la palabra *manung*, que significa 'hermana pequeña' en makushi. A menudo, las personas mayores se refieren a las mujeres más jóvenes como *manung*, independientemente de su relación real con ellas.

> [...] tienen la cruel costumbre de venderse unos a otros como esclavos. Si el marido muere, su mujer y sus hijos quedan a disposición del hermano mayor superviviente, que puede venderlos o matarlos a su antojo.

Robert Schomburgk (1848a, 87-88) también menciona reclamos, los cuales admite no poder verificar, de que los makushi a veces vendían a sus parientes. En otro lugar, como se recoge en la recopilación de los escritos de Schomburgk realizada por Peter Rivière (2006b, 161), él sugiere que un arma era el precio de una "joven casable" entre los indígenas (en general) del interior de la Guayana Británica.

Robert Schomburgk se encontró con grupos de caribes que viajaban al territorio makushi con armas y otros bienes para comerciar –o capturar– esclavos makushi (Rivière 2006a, 127, 133, 168). Debido a una muerte, que según Schomburgk causó miedo e incertidumbre entre los incursores, una incursión caribe de esclavos contra los makushi se transformó en una expedición comercial no esclavizadora (Rivière 2006a, 207). Este grupo de caribes afirmó haber "renunciado a toda idea de esclavizar, y [declaró] que simplemente iban a hacer trueques por hamacas, algodón, perros, etc." (Rivière 2006a, 207-208). Considerando que la muerte entre los indígenas de Guyana se asocia tradicionalmente con la brujería, es muy probable que en esta ocasión los caribes fueron disuadidos del asalto planeado por su creencia de que los makushi (a través de *kanaima* u otras prácticas de brujería) habían causado la muerte. Esto revela la potencial eficacia de la brujería como freno contra tales depredaciones.

Podría ser que las armas mencionadas por Schomburgk estuvieran realmente destinadas a los robos y no al intercambio. La afirmación de que estaban destinadas al comercio puede haber sido un truco. Sin embargo, el saqueo y el comercio de esclavos parecen haber existido en esta época como un continuo inestable y difuso en el que las armas se encontraban en ambos extremos.[5] Whitehead (2002, 54) señala la "delgada línea" que separa los saqueos, de las incursiones del comercio y analiza las descripciones de Hilhouse (1825, 22-23) sobre cómo los akawaio optaron por los robos (en lugar del comercio) cuando las aldeas estaban pobremente defendidas, cómo la posesión de armas podía inclinar la balanza a favor de los robos de los akawaio y cómo los ataques *kanaima* (*itoto*) eran utilizados como complementos de los ataques akawaio. Los asaltos y el comercio se alternaron y a la vez se interrelacionaron como medios de intercambio en la región a principios y mediados del siglo XIX.

---

[5] Ferguson (1995) también señala la estrecha línea que divide el saqueo y el comercio.

El comercio de esclavos (sobre todo de parientes) parece haberse producido en un contexto de amenaza de nuevas incursiones. Hancock afirma que la 'venta' de parientes por parte de los makushi era "fomentada continuamente por los caribes comerciantes" y que los makushi se quejaron de ello en su expedición (QFGBB VII 1903, 2). Así pues, la 'venta' de parientes se producía bajo coacción y los casos de personas makushi que transferían a sus parientes a los caribes deben entenderse en el contexto de incursiones similares realizadas en la época por luso-brasileños, caribes y otros. Los intercambios matrimoniales pueden haber sido a veces un medio para establecer vínculos entre aldeas, relaciones comerciales u otras 'alianzas' para los makushi, pero el contexto de saqueos y amenazas de saqueos (implícitas o explícitas) hace que las motivaciones de 'alianza' sean menos importantes.

Otra cuestión que surge con la 'venta de parientes' makushi es que la naturaleza de dicho intercambio no está del todo clara en las fuentes disponibles. El comercio makushi de la época se basaba sobre todo (si no totalmente) en el trueque – tanto Hancock como Schomburgk aluden a un trueque de bienes comerciales, como armas, por personas. El trueque es una forma de intercambio que con frecuencia difiere tanto en la forma como en el contenido en el mercado de intercambio (Humphrey y Hugh-Jones 1992). El trueque suele implicar significados culturales, expectativas e incluso obligaciones sociales que van más allá de la propia transacción económica y que a menudo están ausentes u oscurecidas en las transacciones de mercado basadas en el dinero.

Desgraciadamente, no es posible determinar plenamente el significado más amplio de la 'venta de parientes' makushi a partir de las fuentes disponibles, pero parece probable que tales intercambios (que se producían en un contexto de robos y coacciones) implicaron transformaciones o tal vez manipulaciones de las costumbres existentes, como el servicio a la novia y las funciones de los hombres en relación con la esposa y los hijos de un hermano fallecido. Es posible que el comercio de bienes se utilizara como sustituto de las obligaciones del servicio nupcial y que las costumbres relativas a las cuñadas viudas facilitaran la adquisición de personas por parte de los esclavistas.

Las redadas y el comercio de esclavos provocaron una serie de transformaciones en las sociedades amerindias de la región. En el siglo XVIII, el misionero jesuita Joseph Gumilla observó los efectos del mercado colonial de esclavos en los patrones de saqueo caribes (Edmundson 1904, 14-15). Whitehead (1988, 2, 57) explica cómo el estatus de los cautivos de guerra en las Guayanas se transformó con el tiempo a medida que los europeos crearon un mercado para dichos esclavos. El autor menciona que:

> La propia presencia europea modificó la naturaleza de las relaciones intertribales al intensificar, por ejemplo, las incursiones amerindias en busca de beneficios económicos y políticos. Además, los grupos caribes se vieron desestabilizados por este proceso, ya que existían diferencias importantes entre las nociones indígenas y europeas de la esclavitud. Así, los amerindios acabaron integrando a sus cautivos, como esposas o *poitos* (yernos), en la red de parentesco, mientras que los europeos trataban a sus esclavos como mercancías, explotándolos y desechándolos según su utilidad económica (Whitehead 1988, 2).

Sin embargo, los asaltantes no fueron los únicos que experimentaron transformaciones debido al desarrollo colonial del mercado de esclavos y a las incursiones en busca de esclavos indígenas. Las referencias de personas makushi que 'vendían' a sus parientes sugieren que las víctimas de esas incursiones también sufrían a veces transformaciones sociológicas como consecuencia de la esclavitud. En la mayoría de los casos, como se ha mencionado, estas últimas transformaciones eran probablemente intentos de adaptarse los patrones sociales existentes, como las obligaciones de los hermanos mayores hacia la(s) esposa(s) e hijos de los hermanos menores con el fin de minimizar o mitigar las hostilidades adicionales de los grupos de saqueos de esclavos. Mediante la 'venta' selectiva de parientes, las aldeas o grupos de parientes makushi pueden haber evitado la captura y matanza al por mayor por parte de los caribes y otros grupos armados con armas obtenidas de los colonos europeos. Sin embargo, la normalización ocasional de las incursiones de esclavos en el comercio de esclavos (tanto de parientes como de no parientes) no implica la eliminación de la violencia, ya sea como coacción o como represalia. Incluso hoy en día, una de las principales motivaciones mencionadas para un ataque *kanaima* es el incumplimiento de las obligaciones, como cuando un hombre se casa o deja embarazada a una mujer y luego la abandona. En estos casos, se dice que el hombre ha 'engañado' a la familia de la mujer, y es probable que se tomen represalias mediante la violencia *kanaima*. Los residuos de la guerra dentro de la red de comercio regional, en la que seguían coexistiendo la violencia y otras formas de intercambio, ilustran aún más esta aplicación de *kanaima* dentro de los contextos de intercambio.

Reciprocidad diferida y la red comercial regional

En el siglo XIX, los makushi participaban en una red comercial con otros grupos indígenas de la región.[6] Los textos coloniales ofrecen una imagen limitada de esta red. Las cerbatanas, los ralladores de mandioca y el veneno de curare eran artículos clave en este comercio. Los makushi se especializaron en la producción de hamacas, diversas artesanías y una potente fórmula de curare (Flint 1880, 49; Rivière 2006a, 186; Schomburgk 1841a, 558). Los taruma, guinau y makiritare (llamados maiongkongs por Schomburgk) se especializaron en la producción de ralladores de mandioca (Rivière 2006a, 358; Rivière 2006b, 147; Schomburgk 1848b, 231-32). Los guinau y los makiritare se especializaron también en el suministro de materiales para fabricar cerbatanas (Rivière 2006a, 347; Schomburgk 1841a, 561; Schomburgk 1922 [1847], 352). Se dice que los arekuna obtenían estos materiales, fabricaban las cerbatanas y las distribuían a los makushi a cambio de curare (Flint 1880, 49; Schomburgk 1873, 32; Schomburgk 1841a, 558; Schomburgk 1922 [1847], 333).

---

[6] Butt Colson (1973; véase también Coppens 1971) describe una red comercial similar en la región durante la década de 1950. Los arekuna y los akawaio aparecen como las principales sociedades comerciales de esta red. Las escasas referencias a los makushi pueden reflejar que su posición en la red se fue debilitando con el tiempo, posiblemente debido al declive del comercio de curare.

No hay espacio suficiente aquí para delinear completamente esta red comercial, la cual se extendió por una amplia zona geográfica e involucró a muchas sociedades amerindias, pero un punto clave aquí es la mención de Robert Schomburgk sobre la reciprocidad diferida entre los makushi y un grupo de guinau y makiritare. Durante sus viajes, Schomburgk fue testigo de cómo estos grupos realizaban intercambios comerciales, ante lo cual menciona que:

> A pesar de que los guinaus vieron a los macusis por primera vez, ellos confiaron en su palabra de que enviarían el pago con uno de los hombres que los acompañaría a Pirara (Rivière 2006a, 358).

Además, sugiere que estos grupos pueden haber tenido un contacto sostenido (Schomburgk 1841b, 420-421). Sin embargo, aunque no es muy explícito en el relato de Schomburgk, esta observación parece sugerir la existencia de un sistema de reciprocidad diferida en aquella época en el interior de la Guayana Británica. Por reciprocidad, no quiero decir que hubiera un sistema o concepción explícita de la propiedad privada; sin embargo, sí parece haber existido un mecanismo para garantizar el cumplimiento de las circulaciones económicas en torno al trueque y el comercio regionales. Este punto queda mucho más claro a la luz de los datos etnográficos de mi trabajo de campo con los makushi en Guyana.

Reciprocidad diferida y brujería *kanaima*

La historia oral makushi revela que la amenaza de la brujería *kanaima* garantizó el sistema de reciprocidad diferida en la red comercial regional. Los socios comerciales que incumplían sus obligaciones en el comercio podían convertirse en blanco de la violencia *kanaima*. Cuando pregunté por los patrones históricos del comercio en 2013, me dijeron:

> El último intercambio que conozco [ocurrió] cuando era pequeño. Solíamos ir a comerciar con herramientas; las comprábamos en la ciudad – armas, alfanjes, herramientas, limas. Ellos solían llevarlo [a los] arekunas para cambiarlo por ralladores de mandioca. Los compraban. Eso era como en los años 30, 40 y 50. Esa era la ruta de comercio desde aquí hasta llegar al Orinoco. Les tomaba un mes ir y venir. Pero ellos conocían la ruta para llegar allá y se tomaban el tiempo e iban. No creo que haya nadie que la conozca ahora. El último fue *toshao* [líder de la aldea] durante algún tiempo, pero falleció este mismo año. Su padre era arekuna. Solía hablarnos del comercio y de cómo se hicieron de enemigos porque no cumplían con sus obligaciones.

Esta referencia a las obligaciones se refiere a los acuerdos según los cuales un socio comercial regresaría en un plazo determinado, traería el artículo comercial prometido previamente y completaría el intercambio. Los makushi solían mencionar a los arekuna cuando hablaban de este tipo de comercio y obligaciones con reciprocidad diferida.

Varios interlocutores makushi mencionaron intercambios pasados con los arekuna en Brasil o cerca del Monte Roraima por ralladores de mandioca y cerbatanas. El Monte Roraima tiene una gran importancia para muchas sociedades amerindias de la región y está situado en la frontera entre Brasil, Guyana y Venezuela. Otros interlocutores afirmaron que los ralladores también se obtenían de los akawaio y/o los patamona. En el 2014, me dijeron que:

> Ellos [los makushi] solían ir por allá [a Roraima, cerca de los arekuna] y hacían trueque por ralladores. Creo que eran los arekuna los que hacían los ralladores de piedra. E iban hasta el Roraima para conseguir el rallador. Ellos llevaban hachas de mano, algunos otros insumos y decían que volverían en determinado momento para devolver el intercambio. Si no volvían para aquel entonces, se causaba enoja, de modo que iban a buscar al que no había regresado a tiempo.

El patrón general que surge es que una persona o grupo de personas makushi viajaba una larga distancia para comerciar por ralladores y otros artículos. En consonancia con los relatos de los escritores del siglo XIX, los makushi afirman hoy que en el pasado se especializaron en la producción de curare, hamacas y diversas artesanías. Si no regresaban a completar el intercambio en el plazo acordado[7] –un ejemplo recurrente era el plazo de tres meses–, se enviaba a un *kanaima* para matarlos. Por ejemplo, me dijeron que:

> Los arekuna eran los productores del rallador de mandioca y hacían trueque con lo que trajeras de aquí. Creo que sigue siendo la forma en que funciona (ir con un guía y una persona que te interprete la lengua). A lo mejor voy y me confían un rallador extra y a lo mejor les prometo un arma. Si no apareces, vienen a por ti. Eso es parte de la guerra. Se esconden por ti y te atrapan.

En este relato, se establece una relación directa entre comercio, *kanaima* y violencia. El incumplimiento de las obligaciones comerciales al no completar el intercambio daba lugar a la violencia *kanaima*. Por lo tanto, en la red comercial regional coexistía un elemento violento con el comercio.

Además de estas referencias de la historia oral, también hay algunas pruebas en los textos coloniales de que los *kanaima* participaban en la red de comercio regional durante el siglo XIX. Robert Schomburgk (1841b, 414-417) describe cómo convenció a un hombre makushi de las montañas Kanuku para que le hiciera una demostración de la preparación del veneno curare makushi. Menciona:

> La fabricación del veneno, sin embargo, se retrasó algunos días con el objetivo, según me dijo el químico, de observar previamente un rígido ayuno, a fin de prepararse para el importante negocio. Mientras tanto Kanaima, un influyente jefe Macusi del Rupununi, llegó de visita a Pirara, y no sé con qué propósito: es suficiente decir, que él supo prevalecer hasta tal punto sobre el fabricante del veneno que se retractó de su promesa, y se negó a preparar el veneno en mi presencia (Schomburgk 1841b, 414-415).

---

[7] Para ello se utilizaba a veces un dispositivo similar al quipu. Un interlocutor makushi me explicó en 2013 que: “Tenían una cuerda y hacían un nudo aquí, y otro aquí, y otro aquí. Y cuentan: una luna, dos lunas, tres lunas. Y cuando ven una luna nueva pierden una. Y saben que volverás antes de la luna que les hayas dicho, y si no has vuelto para esa luna, entonces la promesa está rota”. Estas cuerdas anudadas fueron observadas anteriormente por Ribeiro de Sampaio (Edmundson 1906, 241) e Im Thurn (1880, 482; cf. Im Thurn 1901, 142). Los makushi también utilizaban un palo con muescas para contar los días (Schomburgk 1922 [1847], 157).

Aunque el uso del nombre Kanaima, que a veces se utiliza como apodo, no significa necesariamente que este hombre fuera un brujo *kanaima*, su capacidad para impedir que el fabricante de veneno demostrara la preparación a Schomburgk, después de que éste hubiera accedido a hacerlo, sugiere que tenía algún medio de persuasión fuerte. Dado que revelar el conocimiento de la preparación del veneno pondría en peligro la posición de los makushi en su red de comercio regional –los makushi dependían de un relativo monopolio del veneno curare en su comercio con otros grupos indígenas–, podemos deducir que el relato de Schomburgk revela probablemente una intervención *kanaima*. Aunque independiente de la aplicación de la reciprocidad diferida, este incidente sugiere que los *kanaima* pueden haber desempeñado un papel más general en la protección de los intereses makushi en esta época.

Guerra, intercambio y *kanaima*

La historia oral makushi contiene historias de hostilidades caribes contra aldeas makushi y las resistencias a estas incursiones. Sin embargo, la relativa falta de armas por parte de los makushi ayuda a explicar por qué muchos de estos relatos –por ejemplo, la historia de la incursión caribe en la aldea makushi de Surama– destacan la huida de los makushi y el posterior uso de ataques por sorpresa. Los garrotes no podían contrarrestar fácilmente las armas de fuego, pero las represalias sigilosas podían infundir miedo y compensar la fuerza ante los ataques. La brujería *kanaima* se aplicó a modo de respuesta contra la depredación externa y las amenazas. Aunque la brujería y el miedo a la brujería tenían el potencial de desestabilizar la sociedad, como se explica más adelante, llegaron a instrumentalizarse y adquirieron una función protectora frente a los patrones de violencia y guerra. Con el tiempo, esta función se amplió a una serie de roles que implicaron a forasteros, lo que explica la aplicación de la violencia *kanaima* durante el siglo XX a casos en los que las obligaciones comerciales relacionadas con la reciprocidad diferida se incumplían. Sin embargo, en los casos de esclavitud, comercio y alianzas matrimoniales, que tienen el potencial para ser formas de intercambio tanto violentas como no violentas, la brujería *kanaima* surgió como un elemento continuo de guerra que coexiste con otras formas de intercambio.

Lévi-Strauss (1976) ha argumentado que la guerra y el intercambio (comercio) son fenómenos interrelacionados para muchas sociedades indígenas de la Amazonía.[8] Para los makushi, esta interrelación está asociada al surgimiento de funciones socialmente reconocidas para la brujería *kanaima*. Haciendo hincapié en la esclavitud histórica contra los makushi, Whitehead (2002, 206) menciona que:

> Dados los vínculos históricos entre el kanaima, el advenimiento de la guerra con armas de fuego en las tierras altas, y el hecho de que los makushi eran incesantemente depredados por otros, especialmente los karinya [caribes], la brujería kanaima puede haber surgido con fuerza por primera vez a principios del siglo XIX, como una técnica defensiva frente a la nueva y abrumadora fuerza militar.

---

[8] Véase Ewart (2013) y Whitehead (2002, 235) para más información sobre la interrelación entre guerra e intercambio.

Sugiere que los makushi utilizaron la violencia *kanaima* como "una técnica defensiva contra la depredación esclavista" de las incursiones akawaio, caribe y patamona (Whitehead 2002, 136). Al no poder o no querer bloquear militarmente estas depredaciones, los makushi recurrieron a represalias sigilosas por medio de la brujería.

Además, Whitehead (2002, 137-138, 209, 222-223) sugiere que los *kanaima* asumieron funciones más amplias de guerrilla y de naturaleza encubierta con la introducción de las armas de fuego en la guerra, ya que el uso de armas por parte de los grupos enemigos habría aumentado drásticamente el número de bajas de los guerreros que empuñaban garrotes. Esta hipótesis sugiere que el auge histórico de los *kanaima* estuvo asociado a la necesidad de los makushi de luchar contra sus adversarios a través de medios no tradicionales y subrepticios. Los ataques *kanaima* sirvieron a veces como 'adjuntos' en la historia de la guerra makushi (Whitehead 2001, 240; Whitehead 2002, 54-55, 129-130, 222-223; Whitehead y Wright 2004, 5). A diferencia de los guerreros, "quienes ofrecían combate abierto con garrotes y flechas, los kanaimà hacían la guerra en secreto, especialmente cuando el enemigo tenía armas" (Whitehead 2002, 139). Aunque es probable que el fenómeno *kanaima* sea anterior a los siglos XVIII y XIX, el aumento de las incursiones de esclavos en esta época, impulsado por el mercado colonial y facilitado por el uso de armas, dio impulso a nuevas aplicaciones de la violencia *kanaima*. La superioridad militar de los caribes y otros grupos esclavistas, basada en el uso de armas de fuego, probablemente condujo a una normalización de la esclavitud a través del comercio (con las consiguientes transformaciones en las prácticas de parentesco makushi) y a una posterior inyección o expansión de la violencia *kanaima* en las relaciones de intercambio. La continua coexistencia de la guerra en el comercio makushi refleja las amenazas latentes de violencia que habrían estimulado tales intercambios.

Encontré mayor evidencia de la asociación entre la introducción de armas en la guerra y la aplicación socialmente reconocida de la violencia *kanaima* durante el trabajo de campo con los makushi. Una mañana del 2015, un hombre makushi habló conmigo de *kanaima*. Le pregunté cómo las aldeas enfrentaban los asesinatos perpetrados por *kanaima* en el pasado. Ante lo cual conversamos:

> **Interlocutor:** Antes hacían las guerras a garrotazos, pero cuando empiezan a tener las escopetas, las baquetas, recurren al asesino [*kanaima*]. Con las escopetas sólo los derriban a garrotazos.
>
> **Yo:** ¿Los ataques de *kanaima* empezaron cuando llegaron los disparos?
>
> **Interlocutor:** Sí, cuando consiguen armas dejan los garrotes y empiezan ataques secretos por la noche, como asesinos.

En 2013, de manera similar, me dijeron que "el garrote de madera y la pistola no podían compenetrarse" en combate. La introducción de las armas en la guerra y las incursiones puso a los makushi en una posición vulnerable. La disponibilidad de armas variaba entre los grupos indígenas –por ejemplo, los akawaio tenían mayor acceso a las armas que los patamona– y los *kanaima* proporcionaban un medio para igualar estas disparidades

(Whitehead 2002, 135, 139). Los makushi tenían menos acceso a las armas que los caribes y los akawaio, ambos con vínculos económicos y militares más estrechos con los europeos que los makushi. En la mayoría de los casos, los makushi tenían relaciones algo limitadas con los europeos durante el siglo XVIII y principios del XIX (Hilhouse 1825, 36-37). Por lo tanto, los makushi dependían en mayor medida de los garrotes y se encontraban en clara desventaja militar.

Brujeria versus garrotes

La disminución del guerrero con garrote, debido a la introducción de las armas de fuego y a la supresión colonial de la guerra, y la supresión del *piazong* (chamán), debido a la influencia misionera, condujeron a una nueva adaptación y ampliación de las funciones de los *kanaima* sin los controles tradicionales de su violencia (Whitehead 2002, 53, 104, 206, 222-223). Entre los patamona , los guerreros y los *piazong* controlaban tradicionalmente la violencia excesiva de los *kanaima*, aunque los *kanaima* algunas veces aplicaban ese control sobre los guerreros (Whitehead 2002, 53, 104, 138, 230). Aunque la relación entre guerreros y *kanaima* es históricamente compleja, surge una oposición estructural implícita (junto a una tensa y ocasional alianza militar) entre los garrotes y la brujería (Whitehead 2002, 104, 137-139, 228-231). En al menos un caso del siglo XIX, parece que un *kanaima* fue capaz de instrumentalizar el poder del garrote y poner a sus portadores bajo su control (aunque temporalmente) en beneficio de la brujería.

Alrededor de 1845-46, un hombre arekuna llamado Awacaipu, del que se decía que era un *piazong*, reunió a casi mil indígenas en el valle de Kukenan, cerca del monte Roraima, con promesas de igualdad con los colonos europeos y ocasionó la muerte de muchos indígenas en un homicidio masivo (Appun 1893, 341-342; véase también Posern-Zieliński 1978; Roth 1921). Después de hacerles bailar y beber cerveza de mandioca cada noche durante algún tiempo, Awacaipu dijo a los indígenas reunidos que Makunaima le había comunicado que les haría iguales a los colonos europeos y les daría "pieles blancas" si peleaban a muerte con garrotes durante un periodo de tres noches (Appun 1893, 343-344). Dijo que los asesinados resucitarían con "color y modales iguales a los blancos" en la siguiente luna llena, que descenderían del monte Roraima y que dominarían a los demás indígenas (Appun 1893, 344). Awacaipu comenzó la matanza apaleando a varias personas a su alrededor, lo que desencadenó tres noches de apaleamiento homicida que, según se dice, causaron hasta cuatrocientas muertes (Appun 1893, 345-346). Finalmente, llegó el momento de la resurrección profetizada. Al no producirse, la gente se enfureció y el padre de Weh-Toreh mató a Awacaipu a garrotazos (Appun 1893, 346-348).[9] El apaleamiento es el método tradicional utilizado para matar a un *kanaima* (Whitehead 2002, 52, 111, 228).

---

[9] Esta historia fue contada a Carl Appun (1871, 257-265; 1893, 318, 341-348) por Weh-Toreh (también arekuna).

Esta historia es importante para el presente análisis de la brujería *kanaima* por dos motivos. En primer lugar, de la referencia a Makunaima se desprende que Awacaipu era probablemente un practicante de *kanaima* además de (o quizás en lugar de) un chamán *piazong*. Vidal y Whitehead (2004, 61; véase también Whitehead 2002, 146; Whitehead y Wright 2004, 6) mencionan que:

> Awacaipu afirmaba que su visión de cómo los amerindios podían conseguir la igualdad la había recibido del ser creador Makunaima, que también es fundamental en la práctica de la brujería kanaima.

Se trata de algo más que una mera asociación. Aunque Appun (1893, 343) afirma que el objetivo de Awacaipu era lograr el dominio regional sobre todos los indígenas, la historia también puede leerse como un caso en el que un *kanaima* consiguió extraer esencia humana para Makunaima a gran escala. Como se mencionó anteriormente, el objetivo de la brujería *kanaima* es la transferencia de esencia humana a Makunaima. En segundo lugar, en la historia aparece que el *kanaima* pudo realizar esta transferencia masiva manipulando a los guerreros para que utilizaran sus garrotes unos contra otros.

Según Appun (1893, 343), la matanza masiva fue iniciada por Awacaipu para eliminar a "todos los presentes capaces de portar armas". Dudo de la interpretación de Appun que la motivación principal de Awacaipu era lograr el dominio supremo sobre todos los grupos indígenas regionales. Sin embargo, es notable que sugiera que los guerreros (aquellos que podían portar armas) eran los principales objetivos de Awacaipu. Si hemos de entender la relación entre los *kanaima* y los guerreros que empuñan garrotes como una oposición estructural, la historia de Awacaipu parece representar un caso en el que un *kanaima* fue capaz de controlar a los guerreros y utilizar la violencia de sus garrotes para sus propios fines, mientras que actuaba dentro de los límites de su papel instrumental.

Posern-Zieliński (1978, 108-109) sugiere que los acontecimientos de la historia de Awacaipu están relacionados con las entradas del frente colonial contra los indígenas de la región. Este es sin duda el trasfondo histórico de aquel episodio, que se refleja en la desigualdad dentro del contexto colonial, pero que temas más amplios que abarca el relato también ponen de manifiesto las continuas luchas internas por el poder y los límites del *kanaima*. El objetivo declarado de Awacaipu era lograr la igualdad de los indígenas con los colonos europeos. Aunque este relato puede haber servido para ocultar sus motivaciones más profundas, Awacaipu cumplía tácitamente el nuevo papel de *kanaima* como freno a las amenazas y la depredación externas. Sin embargo, fue más allá y prometió una transformación ontológica para acabar por completo con la desigualdad colonial. Awacaipu fue más allá de las normas de la brujería *kanaima* y trató de invertir tanto la jerarquía colonial como la jerarquía existente entre guerreros y *kanaima*. Al hacerlo, sobrepasó incluso el papel socialmente reconocido de los *kanaima*. Este ejemplo extremo ocurre hacia el final del periodo de la trata de esclavos en la región y revela los límites, el potencial de inversión y, quizás, también el fin del papel socialmente reconocido de los *kanaima* como fuerza instrumental y defensiva contra la depredación externa.

Este triunfo situacional (y temporal) de un *kanaima* sobre los guerreros termina con la restauración de las normas sociales de dominación y violencia. Un guerrero superviviente mata a garrotazos al brujo-profeta, poniendo fin a la excesiva violencia antisocial[10] resultante del abuso de Awacaipu de su nuevo papel, y reafirma simbólicamente el dominio del garrote de guerra sobre la brujería. Sin embargo, con el auge de la guerra con armas de fuego que ocurrió en paralelo, este poder del garrote ya había disminuido y su contraparte (*kanaima*) seguía ganando fuerza. El reconocimiento social del *kanaima* como freno contra la depredación externa aumentó en última instancia su capacidad para ampliar el alcance potencial de la depredación interna. La historia de Awacaipu indica que la instrumentalización de la violencia *kanaima* como freno a la invasión colonial, así como a otras formas de depredación concurrentes, no siempre fue eficaz y tenía el potencial de suponer una amenaza a su existencia. Aunque los makushi no se mencionan por su nombre en la historia de Awacaipu, el relato se centra en uno de sus principales socios comerciales: los arekuna. Además, la historia de Awacaipu refleja los aspectos regionales más amplios de las transformaciones que se estaban produciendo en aquella época entre los makushi y otras sociedades amerindias de la Guayana Británica.

Consideraciones etnológicas

La brujería *kanaima* es un tema de estudio difícil y presenta muchos retos para el trabajo de campo etnográfico y la descripción. Se complica por las variantes encontradas entre las sociedades amerindias, entre los relatos de los miembros de la misma sociedad y entre las descripciones etnográficas de los antropólogos. Por ejemplo, las descripciones de Audrey Butt Colson (2001) de los *kanaima* (*itoto*) akawaio no hacen énfasis en los temas cosmológicos destacados en los escritos de Whitehead (2001; 2002) sobre los *kanaima* entre los patamona. En los relatos de los makushi que he encontrado, apenas se mencionan los viajes chamánicos de los *kanaima*, los cuales Whitehead considera fundamentales en los relatos de los patamona. Las diversas descripciones sobre este tema revelan diferencias culturales, mientras que otras veces refleja distintos enfoques y prioridades etnográficas. Sin embargo, las similitudes entre los relatos de *kanaima* de akawaio, makushi y patamona están lo suficientemente desarrolladas como para justificar la consideración de los *kanaima* como fenómenos regionales.

Una de las principales diferencias entre los relatos de patamona y makushi se refiere a la religión Hallelujah. Whitehead (2002) describe el *piazong*, el *kanaima* y el Hallelujah como tres formas de chamanismo separadas, que compiten entre sí y que a veces se solapan en la historia patamona.[11]

---

[10] La violencia *kanaima* es antisocial y contraria a la vida pacífica de la aldea (Butt Colson 2001, 231-132; Whitehead 2001, 235, 237, 240, 242-243; Whitehead 2002, 103-104, 111, 132, 209, 237).

[11] Es necesario seguir investigando las relaciones entre estas formas chamánicas. Cuando se lee en relación a la interpretación anterior de la historia de Awacaipu, la participación temprana de los *kanaima* en la religión Hallelujah puede sugerir más que una explotación manipuladora de (en lugar de una mera resistencia competitiva) las formas regionales emergentes de religiosidad que se ha sugerido anteriormente.

Los relatos akawaio y patamona sobre los orígenes del Hallelujah lo atribuyen a un chamán-profeta makushi llamado Bichiwung, quien finalmente fue asesinado por un brujo *kanaima* (*itoto*) (Butt 1960; Butt Colson 1971; 2001; Staats 1996; Whitehead 2001; 2002). Sin embargo, según mi experiencia, prácticamente ni Hallelujah ni Bichiwung son mencionados alguna vez en los relatos makushi. Muchos de mis interlocutores ni siquiera estaban seguros de a qué me refería con Hallelujah y ninguno de ellos había oído hablar de Bichiwung, aunque existe una historia ligeramente similar sobre un falso profeta incestuoso llamado Joang. Esta relativa falta de memoria cultural sobre Hallelujah concuerda con la idea de que los makushi la dejaron de practicar en un pasado lejano. Aunque oí a algunos ancianos makushi mencionar que habían participado en prácticas religiosas de Hallelujah en aldeas de los alrededores hace mucho tiempo, lo que indica que todavía existe algún recuerdo histórico de Hallelujah entre la generación más antigua de makushi que vive hoy en día, los makushi más jóvenes afirmaban en general tener poco o ningún conocimiento de Hallelujah.

También ha habido desacuerdos sobre si el *kanaima* es considerado legítimo por las comunidades donde se practica. Whitehead (2002, 221) señala que los patamona aceptan el *kanaima* aunque con algo de rechazo. Sin embargo, Butt Colson (2001, 225-226; véase también Butt 1956) afirma que nunca es legítimo para los akawaio. Aunque los akawaio consideran ilegítimo el *kanaima* (*itoto*), algunas veces sí consideran legítimas otras formas de venganza relacionadas con la brujería, como el 'soplido' o *taling* (Butt 1956, 53). Según mi experiencia, los makushi se sitúan en una posición intermedia en este debate. Los makushi parecen considerar el *kanaima*, como Whitehead (2003, 77) sugiere para los patamona, como una tradición existente en continuidad con un pasado lejano. La afirmación de que "los *kanaima* hacen lo que tienen que hacer contigo" (frecuente entre los makushi) podría interpretarse como un indicio de cierta legitimidad. Alguna vez fui testigo de una combinación aparentemente paradójica de miedo y excitación en algunos aldeanos –así como de incredulidad en otros– cuando llegaban noticias de que un *kanaima* podría estar en la aldea. Sin embargo, nunca oí a los makushi decir que la violencia *kanaima* contemporánea fuera legítima, aunque algunos sí sugirieron que desempeñaba un papel histórico legítimo en la guerra. En el presente, como Butt Colson (2001) describe para los akawaio, los makushi consideran la brujería *kanaima* como una práctica claramente antisocial y depredadora motivada principalmente por la envidia, los celos y la maldad.

Por último, los makushi me dijeron con frecuencia que la brujería *kanaima* ha disminuido en las últimas décadas. Aunque no niegan la existencia actual o pasada del *kanaima* makushi, por lo general asocian *kanaima* con los patamona. Tanto los makushi como los patamona suelen considerar al otro como la fuente del *kanaima*. Esta asociación de *kanaima* con otros grupos indígenas, que observé que a veces incluía a parientes casados entre los makushi, es común en la región (Butt Colson 2001; Whitehead 2001) y concuerda con la discusión de Rivière (1970) sobre las funciones sociológicas de la brujería. Sin embargo, como sugiere Whitehead (2001; 2002), los discursos contemporáneos sobre *kanaima* también implican a los europeos y occidentales como víctimas potenciales y pueden asociarse a nuevos vectores de desarrollo. Cuando pregunté por las plantas utilizadas por los *kanaima*, me dijeron:

> Es una planta mala. No está aquí o nosotros también seríamos *kanaima*. Es buena para deshacerte de tu enemigo, pero mala al mismo tiempo porque te conviertes en la persona que mata a toda tu familia usándola. Está desapareciendo. Ellos tratan de mantenerla oculta, pero está desapareciendo. No he visto un ataque de *kanaima* [aquí] en casi treinta años. Sigue ocurriendo en el territorio de patamona.

Mi interlocutor continuó diciendo que "los patamona son los verdaderos *kanaima*. Mataron a mi amigo hace unos meses. Esto es un asunto serio. Dos hombres blancos han caído. Alrededor de 2007 y 2008". Estas afirmaciones reflejan la visión makushi de los *kanaima* como potencialmente útiles pero peligrosos, como asociados a otros (en particular a los patamona), como un elemento en extinción de la cultura tradicional y como una amenaza tanto para los indígenas como para los forasteros, en particular para los que tienen inclinaciones depredadoras.[12]

Conclusiones

A partir del trabajo anterior de Whitehead sobre la brujería *kanaima*, a la que llamó chamanismo oscuro, este ensayo ha desarrollado aún más la hipótesis de que *kanaima* asumió funciones defensivas entre los makushi en respuesta a la depredación (principalmente la esclavitud) y la guerra con armas de fuego. Desde un punto de vista histórico, el *kanaima* se convirtió en un complemento útil de la guerra en una época en la que los makushi estaban sujetos a las esclavitudes, saqueos, comercio predatorio y otros abusos. Este conjunto de presiones coloniales creó el contexto en el que *kanaima* surgió dentro de la historia registrada a principios del siglo XIX. En ese momento, los enemigos de los makushi estaban cada vez más armados con armas de fuego, mientras que los makushi tenían acceso limitado al armamento europeo. En un intento por prevenir, resistir y mitigar ataques externos, ellos tomaron la alternativa de huir de sus atacantes, implementaron estrategias defensivas y, en ocasiones, intentaron transformar la depredación en relaciones comerciales casi pacíficas. En el proceso, aprovecharon las prácticas rituales de brujería llamadas *kanaima* como medio de resistencia subrepticia contra sus enemigos.

En estos contextos, el *kanaima* surgió como un medio de asesinato y represalia socialmente reconocido contra enemigos armados que no podía contrarrestarse fácilmente con la tradicional guerra con garrotes. Es así, que la brujería ritual jugó temporalmente un papel social bajo un conjunto de circunstancias coloniales. Sin embargo, su aplicación era situacional, más que del origen de el *kanaima*, y tales usos defensivos sólo proporcionaban una reducción temporal de sus prácticas. A medida que las amenazas externas alimentadas por el colonialismo (particularmente las incursiones esclavistas) disminuyeron, la brujería ritual *kanaima* continuó como antes, como una práctica depredadora antisocial contra parientes y no parientes y contra aliados y enemigos. Como revela la historia de Awacaipu, los frenos contra la depredación externa fueron capaces de manipular las defensas tradicionales y producir depredación interna a escala masiva. En este contexto político volátil, guerreros, chamanes y brujos competían por el poder entre ellos mientras que las armas, los mercados y otros tentáculos del colonialismo se extendían, aumentaban y disminuían en la región.[13]

---

[12] Whitehead (2002, 46, 104, 130, 182; 2003, 77; véase también Vidal y Whitehead 2004, 72) sugiere que los *kanaima* son hiper tradicionalistas que se resisten a las influencias externas y actualmente se resisten a diversas formas de desarrollo depredador.

Agradecimientos

Me gustaría agradecer a la American Philosophical Society, a la Central States Anthropological Society y la Tulane University por financiar esta investigación. Un agradecimiento especial a los aldeanos de Surama en Guyana por su cálida hospitalidad.

Referencias bibliográficas

Appun, Carl Ferdinand
1871 *Unter den Tropen: Wanderungen durch Venezuela, am Orinoco, durch Britisch Guyana und am Amazonenstrome in den Jahren 1849-1868*, vol. II. Jena: Hermann Costenoble. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/details/bsb11008373 (17.05.2024)
1893 "Roraima, translated from the German of C. F. Appun, by H. L. Bayrhoffer". *Timehri* 7 (New Series): 318-348. https://archive.org/details/nstimehrijournal07roya/page/318 (17.05.2024)

Brown, Charles Barrington y James Gay Sawkins
1875 *Reports on the physical, descriptive, and economic geology of British Guiana*. London: Longmans, Green, and Company.

Bernau, John Henry
1847 *Missionary labours in British Guiana. With remarks on the manners, customs, and superstitious rites of the Aborigines*. London: John Farquhar Shaw. https://archive.org/details/b29319535 (17.05.2024)

Butt, Audrey
1956 "Ritual blowing. Taling – a causation and cure of illness Among the Akawaio". *Man* 56: 49-55. https://doi.org/10.2307/2793660
1960 "The birth of a religion". J*ournal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 90, no. 1: 66-106. https://doi.org/10.2307/2844219

Butt Colson, Audrey
1971 "Hallelujah among the Patamona Indians". *Antropologica* 28: 25-58.
1973 "Inter-tribal trading in the Guiana highlands". *Antropologica* 34: 1-70.

---

[13] Véase High (2015) para más información sobre la relación entre guerreros, violencia y victimización en la Amazonía. Véase Carneiro de Carvalho (2015) para más información sobre la relación actual de los makushi con los Estados-nación (en particular Guyana, Brasil y Venezuela) que sucedieron a los regímenes coloniales en la región.

2001 “Itoto (kanaima) as death and anti-structure”. En *Beyond the visible and the material*, editado por Laura Rival y Neil L. Whitehead, 221-233. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carneiro de Carvalho, Lucas
2015 “Consuming the nation-state. Reflections on Makushi understandings of the person in a transnational context”. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 13, no. 2: 137-149. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol13/iss2/10 (17.05.2024)

Case on Behalf ... (CBGHBM)
1898 *The Case on Behalf of the Government of Her Britannic Majesty. British Guiana Boundary. Arbitration with the United States of Venezuela*. London: Harrison and Sons.

Coppens, Walter
1971 “Las relaciones comerciales de los Yekuana del Caura-Paragua”. *Antropologica* 30: 28-59.

Edmundson, George
1904 “The Dutch on the Amazon and Negro in the seventeenth century”. *The English Historical Review* 19, no. 73: 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/XIX.LXXIII.1
1906 “Early relations of the Manoas with the Dutch, 1606-1732”. *The English Historical Review* 21, no. 82: 229-253. https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/XXI.LXXXII.229

Ewart, Elizabeth
2013 *Space and society in central Brazil*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Ferguson, Brian
1995 *Yanomami warfare*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Flint, Montagu
1880 “My return from Roraima”. *Temple Bar* 59: 48-67.

Hancock, John
1835 *Observations on the climate, soil, and productions of British Guiana*. London: Richard Taylor.

Hemming, John
1987 *Amazon frontier. The defeat of the Brazilian Indians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

High, Casey
2015 *Victims and warriors. Violence, history, and memory in Amazonia*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Hilhouse, William
1825 *Indian notices. Or sketches of the habits, characters, languages, superstitions, soil, and climate of the several nations*. S.l.: Printed for the Author (Hilhouse).

Humphrey, Caroline y Stephen Hugh-Jones, eds.
1992 *Barter, exchange and value. An anthropological approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Im Thurn, Everard Ferdinand
1880 “A journey in the interior of British Guiana”. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 2, no. 8: 465-489. https://archive.org/details/proceedings02keltgoog/page/n501 (17.05.2024)
1901 “Games of the red-men of Guiana”. *Folklore* 12, no. 2: 132-161. https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1901.9719621

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

1976 “Guerra e comércio entre os Índios da América do Sul”. En *Leituras de etnologia Brasileira*, editado por Egon Schaden, 325-339. São Paulo: Editora Nacional.

Posern-Zieliński, Aleksander

1978 “Religious ferment among the Indians of British Guiana at the turn of the 19th century”. *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 4: 97-125. https://doi.org/10.36447/Estudios1978.v4.art4

Question de la frontière ... VI (QFGBB VI)

1903 *Question de la frontière entre la Guyane Britannique et le Brésil*, vol. I: 1596-1822. London: Harrison and Sons.

Question de la frontière ... VII (QFGBB VII)

1903 *Question de la frontière entre la Guyane Britannique et le Brésil*, vol II: 1827-1902. London: Harrison and Sons.

Rivière, Peter

1970 “Factions and exclusions in two South American village systems”. En *Witchcraft, confessions and accusations*, editado por Mary Douglas, 245-256. London: Tavistock.

Rivière, Peter, ed.

2006a *The Guiana travels of Robert Schomburgk, 1835-1844*, vol. I. London: The Hakluyt Society.

2006b *The Guiana travels of Robert Schomburgk, 1835-1844*, vol. II. London: The Hakluyt Society.

Roth, Walter

1921 “Some examples of Indian mimicry, fraud and imposture”. *Timehri* 7 (Third Series): 29-40. https://archive.org/details/timehrijournalo371921roya/page/29 (17.05.2024)

Schomburgk, Richard

1873 “On the urari. The deadly arrow-poison of the Indian tribes in British Guiana”. En *Papers read before the Philosophical Society and the Chamber of Manufactures*, 29-42. Adelaide: W. C. Cox. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044106473283 (17.05.2024)

1876 *Botanical reminiscences in British Guiana*. Adelaide: W. C. Cox. https://archive.org/details/Botanicalremini00Scho (17.05.2024)

1922 *Richard Schomburgk's travels in British Guiana, 1840-1844*, vol. I, traducido por Walter Roth. Georgetown: Daily Chronicle. https://archive.org/details/richardschomburg11922scho (17.05.2024)

1923 *Richard Schomburgk's travels in British Guiana, 1840-1844*, vol. II, traducido por Walter Roth. Georgetown: Daily Chronicle. https://archive.org/details/richardschomburg21922scho (17.05.2024)

Schomburgk, Robert

1841a “Some account of the curata, a grass of the tribe of Bambuseae, of the culm of which the Indians of Guiana prepare their sarbacans or blowpipes”. *Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* 18: 557-562. https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/13697#page/592/ (17.05.2024)

1841b “On the urari, the arrow poison of the Indians of Guiana. With a description of the plant from which it is extracted”. *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History* 7: 407-427. https://doi.org/10.1080/03745484109442713

1848a “Footnote 3”. En *The discovery of the large, rich, and beautiful empire of Guiana*, por Sir Walter Raleigh, editdo por Robert Schomburgk. New York: Burt Franklin. https://archive.org/details/discoverylarger00schogoog/page/n184 (17.05.2024)

1848b “Contributions to the philological ethnography of South America”. Transactions of the Philological Society 3, no. 74: 228-237. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-968X.1848.tb00093.x

Staats, Susan K.

1996 “Fighting in a different way. Indigenous resistance through the Allelujah religion of Guyana”. En *History, power, and identity*, editado por Jonathan D. Hill, 161-179. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Vidal, Silvia y Neil L. Whitehead

2004 “Dark shamans and the shamanic state. Sorcery and witchcraft as political process in Guyana and the Venezuelan Amazon”. En *In Darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, editado por Neil L. Whitehead y Robin Wright, 51-81. Durham: Duke University Press.

Whitaker, James Andrew

2016a “Amerindians in the eighteenth century plantation system of the Guianas”. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*14, no. 1: 30-43. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol14/iss1/3 (17.05.2024)

2016b “Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana”. PhD thesis, Tulane University. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (17.05.2024)

2017 “Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi”. en *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15, no. 2: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4 (17.05.2024)

Whitehead, Neil L.

1988 *Lords of the tiger spirit. A history of the Caribs in colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498-1820*. Providence: Foris Publications.

2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima mountains, Guyana”. En *Beyond the visible and the material*, editado por Laura Rival y Neil L. Whitehead, 235-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2002 *Dark shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

2003 “The sign of kanaimà, the space of Guayana and the demonology of development”. *Cahiers des Ameriques Latines* 43: 67-86. https://doi.org/10.4000/cal.7271

Whitehead, Neil L. y Robin Wright

2004 “Introduction. Dark shamanism”. En *In darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, editado por Neil L. Whitehead y Robin Wright, 1-19. Durham: Duke University Press.

Williams, James

1932 Grammar, notes and vocabulary of the language of the Makuchi Indians of Guiana. St. Gabriel-Modling: Verlag der Internationalen Zeitschrift.

Comentario

Bernd Brabec

James Andrew Whitaker conduce al lector en un viaje de inmersión a través de la historia guayanesa con el fin de perfilar la imagen que deberíamos dibujar sobre la brujería de asalto *kanaima.* La información sobre este tema es reducida, como demostraron en repetidas ocasiones Neil Whitehead y sus colegas. Los indígenas hablan con cierto rechazo sobre el *kanaima* y la información es brindada de manera dudosa, distorsionada o puede ser que se abstengan de darla debido a opiniones locales, estructuras de poder e interdependencias sociales, como bien conoce el autor.

Whitaker asume que la brujería *kanaima* es anterior a los primeros informes de viajeros y misioneros de finales del siglo XVIII como una técnica genuinamente indígena – probablemente para la gestión de recursos entre varias capas de la realidad, concretamente como una forma de transmitir la fuerza vital humana, o esencia, a la entidad protohumana Makunaima (también conocida como Negi). El autor, con mucha prudencia, menciona que el “objetivo de este trabajo no es ofrecer una explicación de los orígenes del *kanaima*”. Se trata más bien de un reinserción o de un nuevo contexto de aplicación de esta forma de brujería durante una época de intensas incursiones esclavistas y otras presiones coloniales ejercidas especialmente sobre el pueblo makushi.

Este esfuerzo histórico es necesariamente especulativo. Whitaker busca reforzar una hipótesis, planteada originalmente por Neil Whitehead, según la cual ciertas aplicaciones de la brujería *kanaima* tienen que ver con dichas presiones y con la calidad de la guerra, que cambió radicalmente con la introducción de las armas. No tenemos pruebas y, por tanto, los ejemplos de Whitaker siguen siendo totalmente dudosos. Por ejemplo, cuando interpreta un relato de Schomburgk, según el cual un grupo caribe que sufrió una muerte se abstuvo de asaltar a los makushi, como un indicador de que los caribes habrían temido más represalias *kanaima* por parte de ellos, no resulta del todo convincente. Lo mismo se aplica a los siguientes casos mencionados. Asimismo, sigue siendo especulativa la razón por la que el incumplimiento “de las obligaciones comerciales al no completar el intercambio dio lugar a la violencia *kanaima*”. Sin embargo, la suma magistralmente ensamblada de relatos y casos construye pruebas circunstanciales que al final hablan claro: La presión de las incursiones de esclavos, el comercio de armas y los cambios del valor de los bienes comerciales provocaron el incremento y un nuevo significado de la brujería *kanaima* sobre el cual, finalmente, los lectores pueden estar de acuerdo. Como afirma Whitaker, aún no conocemos cuál es el origen de las prácticas *kanaima*. Puede ser anterior al contexto en mención, pero podría –¿por qué no?– estar vinculado a las circunstancias exactas que describe el autor.

En algún momento, Whitaker vuelve a contar la macabra historia mesiánica de Awacaipu y su relevancia para el tema *kanaima*. A continuación, también menciona la religión Hallelujah (bastante reconocible en términos indígenas como *areruya*, véase Lewy 2011), pero no nos dice qué podría tener que ver con la brujería *kanaima*.

Considero que profundizar en la interpretación de los movimientos sincretistas indígenas podría revelar mucho más sobre la historia y el significado del fenómeno *kanaima*, por lo que hay expectativa por trabajos futuros al respecto.

A pesar de ello, estoy de acuerdo con la conclusión de Whitaker. Va muy bien no sólo con la literatura histórica y etnográfica centrada en la región que Whitaker utiliza tan meticulosamente, sino también con informes y observaciones de otras partes de las tierras bajas sudamericanas. Me acordé inmediatamente del trabajo de Michael Taussig (1987) sobre "terror y curación" en el Putumayo. Fernando Santos-Granero (2005) alude a mecanismos históricos similares al relatar historias desgarradoras sobre acusaciones de brujería infantil en los andes. En la misma región, una temible entidad conocida como *pishtako* comparte muchas similitudes con el *kanaima* (particularmente el asesinato furtivo y la extracción de fluidos corporales), sobre la cual algunos estudiosos (De Pribyl 2010) han demostrado que tiene raíces en las interacciones coloniales. También aporté mis cinco céntimos al especular sobre el ritual shipibo-konibo 'mochai' para hacer uso de las enfermedades de los blancos (particularmente la viruela) para que estas puedan ser invocadas y controladas por brujos indígenas con el fin de tomar represalias contra los invasores (Brabec de Mori 2015, 634). Parece que en términos mucho más amplios de lo que se había imaginado, los poderes mágicos indígenas, tanto de curación como de brujería, han surgido o al menos se han formado, durante la época colonial: por un lado, las profundas heridas de la esclavitud y el genocidio tenían que ser curadas (a veces con técnicas bastante novedosas como el ritual de la ayahuasca en la Amazonia occidental). Por otro lado, hubo que desarrollar estrategias de retribución y defensa de la mano con técnicas de asalto sigilosas para hacer frente a intrusos tecnológica y/o numéricamente abrumadores.

Sin embargo, esto no debe leerse como una innovación relegada de los indígenas a los colonos, sino todo lo contrario: como una forma genuinamente indígena de dar sentido a la conquista, de luchar, de desarrollar estrategias de afrontamiento y de crear una poderosa narrativa que no sólo infunde miedo, sino que sigue impresionando a los blancos, al menos a James Andrew Whitaker y a mí, aunque seguramente a bastantes más.

Referencias bibliográficas

Brabec de Mori, Bernd
2015 *Die Lieder der richtigen Menschen. Musikalische Kulturanthroplogie der indigenen Bevölkerung im Ucayali-Tal, Westamazonien*. Innsbruck: Helbling Academic Books.

Lewy, Matthias
2011 "Die Rituale areruya und cho'chiman bei den Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)". Tesis de doctorado, Freie Universität Berlin. https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-6806

De Pribyl, Rosario
2010 "Evidencias médico antropológicas sobre el origen del pishtaco". *Revista Peruana de Medicina Experimental y Salud Pública* 27, no. 1: 123-137. http://www.scielo.org.pe/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1726-46342010000100017&lng=es&nrm=iso (17.05.2024)

Santos-Granero, Fernando
2005 “San Cristóbal en la Amazonía. Colonialismo, violencia y hechicería infantil entre los arahuacos de la selva central del Peru”. *Anthropológica* 23: 43-80.

Taussig, Michael
1987 *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man. A study in terror and healing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comentario

Daniel G. Cooper

“Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi” (Whitaker 2017) presenta pruebas convincentes de los orígenes, la continuidad y la capacidad adaptativa de los *kanaima* (*itoto*, *e'toto* o ‘enemigo’ entre los akawaio). Este comentario, informado por el trabajo de campo doctoral (Cooper 2015), refuerza muchos de los temas presentados por Whitaker con un énfasis particular en los akawaio y el papel de la geografía. Añade matices a la relación entre Makunaima, Pia/Chikɨ, *e'toto*, *kanaima*, *piyai'san* (*piazong* o *pia'san*) y el Alleluia (Hallelujah) *pukena'* (poseedor de sabiduría/líder profeta), y sugiere direcciones para futuras investigaciones.

Según los akawaio, las primeras personas nacieron de Wei, un ‘padre sol’ lleno de *akwa* (energía de luz radiante), y una madre terrenal hecha de arcilla. De esta unión nacieron ‘los Makunaima’, una referencia a las primeras personas; dos hermanos idénticos o gemelos; y uno individual. Makunaima es mayor, más hábil en la caza y atractivo en comparación con su hermano pequeño, Pia (*pia* es un tocón, raíz o esencia) también conocido como Chikɨ (derivado de *chigger*, *Trombiculidae*, un ácaro de la cosecha). Estos hermanos, a menudo asociados con las rocas y el arte rupestre, son los responsables de dar forma al mundo nocturno.

En muchos *pantoni* (cuentos), Makunaima es símbolo de estancamiento y codicia, mientras que Pia/Chikɨ es un agitador, entrometido y embaucador poco atractivo que contrarresta y compite con su hermano y que se inclina por alterar las cosas y ayudar a los demás. Pia es el primer *pia'san*. Estos dos (a veces cinco) hermanos vivieron en *pia'atai*, un ‘tiempo de origen’ en el que todas las personas, animales y espíritus hablaban la misma lengua. En una época de mucha hambre, los hermanos talaron el Waiaka, un ‘árbol de la comida’, dejando tras de sí el Waiaka Pia-pɨ (una montaña/un tocón) y una inundación de agua que dispersó los alimentos y convirtió en piedra a muchos animales. Tras la tala del árbol, todos los seres empezaron a hablar lenguas diferentes y a entablar relaciones antagónicas dentro de un mundo ‘estropeado’ y lleno de violencia. Este *panton* (relato) sugiere una base para los conceptos de represalia, equilibrio y reciprocidad que se manifiestan en los dos hermanos, sus descendientes y el paisaje circundante. Un trabajo de campo adicional y una revisión exhaustiva de la bibliografía podrían aportar más pruebas –probablemente en forma de un *panton* arraigado en un lugar– de la conexión entre los Makunaima y los *e’toto* (*kanaima*).

El sistema conceptual akawaio tiene tres (o cinco) niveles distintos de espacio infundidos con *akwa* en el vértice, *ewarupɨ* (oscuridad) en el nadir, y una mezcla en el medio. Este fluido, interconectado y recíproco incluye agentes y dominios discretos, así como zonas marginales que existen en una penumbra entre el día y la noche, la luz y la oscuridad, lo masculino y lo femenino, el frío y el calor, las tierras bajas y las tierras altas, lo *insider*/*outsider* y lo social/antisocial. Al igual que los makuxi, los akawaio suelen describir a sus vecinos patamona como amenazas potenciales de *e’toto*; sin embargo, esta acusación también se hace contra otros akawaio que viven río arriba o río abajo, lo que sugiere que las acusaciones de *e’toto* pueden darse en función de la etnia, la lengua y la geografía.

Entre los akawaio, el *e’toto* está estrechamente asociado con el *piyai’san* y el Alleluia *pukena’*. Estos tres agentes son discretos, pero existe un gran solapamiento, complementariedad, competencia y transformación entre las identidades. Cada una trabaja en solitario y colectivamente para alcanzar estados de éxtasis mediante el ayuno, el sueño, el canto, la danza y/o la realización de trabajos rituales nocturnos al igual que los Makunaima. Los *e’toto* y los *piyai’san* utilizan bina/muran (amuletos de plantas y animales) y *taren* (invocaciones), y se inclinan por la caza, la guerra y la violencia. El Alleluia *pukena’* también es un guerrero espiritual que trabaja aislado y en grupo para resistir las incursiones; sin embargo, en lugar de utilizar el *kawai* (zumo de tabaco), el muran, el taren y la violencia, ellos ayunan, sueñan, cantan y bailan para hacer descender *akwa* y nuevas canciones de *liga-liga* (una fuente celestial de música). En Amokokupai (sede de Alleluia), en ocasiones especiales, el *pukena’* dirige danzas en círculo durante toda la noche hasta el amanecer cuando todos se dirigen al arroyo Putukwai para bañarse en el *akwa* matutino.

La tierra de Makunaima sigue siendo muy disputada. Venezuela reclama una vasta extensión de territorio que se extiende hasta el río Essequibo, en La Zona en Reclamación. El reciente descubrimiento y extracción de petróleo frente a la costa está creando nuevas tensiones en la región que se suman a los problemas ya existentes de extracción de oro y tierras raras, erosión biocultural y enfermedades como la malaria, la diabetes y el COVID-19. Muchos de los pemones de Venezuela viven en el Parque Nacional Canaima, lo que sugiere la popularización de este grupo y su asociación con este paisaje. Esto, junto con la historia de incursiones, comercio y esclavitud explicada por Whitaker, demuestra la continuidad de los modelos coloniales de apropiación y marginación que infunden los nuevos vectores de desarrollo. Nuevas investigaciones aclararán las funciones precisas que desempeñan *e’toto*, *kanaima*, *piyai’san* y Alleluia *pukena’* en la mitigación y adaptación a las nuevas incursiones, reclamos sobre tierras superpuestas y violencia.

Referencias bibliográficas

Cooper, Daniel G.
2015 “Under Mount Roraima: The revitalization of a shamanic landscape and practice”. PhD thesis, University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment.

Whitaker, James Andrew
2017 “Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi”. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15, no. 2: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4 (17.05.2024)

Comentario

Matthias Lewy

Whitaker explicita que no se preocupa por la búsqueda del origen del *kanaima*, sino del *kanaima* en relación con las presiones emergentes y los procesos de transformación social en las Guayanas a través de la influencia directa o indirecta de las potencias coloniales europeas. Su texto trata de las relaciones sociales y de parentesco en el contexto de la caza de esclavos, la trata de esclavos y el comercio en general, apoyando la tesis de Whitehead de que la práctica emergente del *kanaima* en el período colonial debe entenderse, principalmente, como una alternativa al uso del garrote de combate contra un enemigo con más poder equipado con armas de fuego.

Los kariña, también conocidos como caribes en esta época, fueron más rápidos en adquirir armas de fuego que los makuxi, por ejemplo, desde cuya perspectiva argumenta principalmente Whitaker, ya que sus datos etnográficos proceden de su colaboración con este grupo. La falta de armas de fuego y la ineficacia de los garrotes en combate condujeron al uso de la brujería como una especie de táctica de guerrilla, que disuadía sobre todo a los cazadores de esclavos indígenas debido al nimbo asociado. En cuanto a la caza y el comercio de esclavos, hay que señalar que se entiende de forma diferente desde la perspectiva indígena que desde la europea. Mientras que el intercambio de miembros de la familia o la ‘venta’ de los mismos puede ciertamente relativizarse a la luz de ‘hacer parientes’ desde una perspectiva indígena; por otro lado, como argumenta Whitaker después de Whitehead, la esclavitud también implica la explotación inhumana del trabajo de una persona por otra desde una perspectiva europea. Al mismo tiempo, ‘hacer parientes’ también puede significar hacer propio al otro o permitir que el otro haga suyo a uno.

Esto también puede extenderse a los colectivos no humanos. Con la transformación de ‘hacer parientes’ para venderlos a los traficantes de esclavos europeos y la mano de obra asociada, surgió un desequilibrio que afectó a todo el comercio y, al mismo tiempo, provocó el crecimiento de la práctica *kanaima*. Así, cuando los traficantes de esclavos indígenas secuestraban a los makuxi para venderlos a los traficantes de esclavos europeos, se enfrentaban a un ataque *kanaima*. El secuestro antes de esta época no era ciertamente alegre, pero al menos con la idea tranquilizadora de que el otro grupo convertiría a los secuestrados en miembros de su familia.

Independientemente de estos conflictos tribales, se afirma que los ataques *kanaima* también se utilizaban dentro del propio grupo cuando se incumplían las obligaciones sociales. Por ejemplo, cuando el novio abandonaba a su mujer. De esta manera Whitaker explica un nivel social dentro de la comunidad indígena, así como en las relaciones intertribales, en las que el *kanaima* tenía ciertamente un efecto recíproco. Esto cambió bajo la influencia colonial.

Cabe recalcar que Whitaker aborda la complejidad del tema del *kanaima* y la imposibilidad de ordenar y categorizar todos los aspectos. Esto se debe principalmente a la diversidad de las fuentes, pero también a los diferentes enfoques de investigación y discursos indígenas asociados. Whitaker señala que la descripción que hace Audrey Butt Colson (2001) del *kanaima* (*itoto*) entre los akawaio no aborda las cuestiones cosmológicas que Whitehead (2001; 2002) describe entre los patamona. Sin embargo, las diferencias cosmológicas pueden estar directamente relacionadas con la transformación de *kanaima* y con las diferencias en los puntos de vista académicos. La entrevista con Balbina Lambos (véase Lambos y Lewy, en este libro) puede servir de comparación. Ella está de acuerdo con Whitaker en que el *kanaima* surgió de la guerra, pero al mismo tiempo también se descontroló dentro del grupo respectivo. Sobre todo cuando los más jóvenes ven las prácticas *kanaima* como un juego, por ejemplo, vengándose de una mujer que ha dejado a un hombre.

Sin embargo, considero que surgen dos cuestiones fundamentales. En primer lugar, la cuestión de la legitimidad y la aceptación social de los *kanaima* dentro y fuera de la comunidad. En segundo lugar, ¿cómo debe entenderse la relación con las entidades no humanas (quienes suelen ser vistas como propietarias de los *kanaima*)? ¿Y cuáles son estas relaciones en primer lugar?

En la primera pregunta, Whitaker aborda la legitimidad entre los makuxi. Señala que la comunidad lo acepta como una tradición, lo que también puede leerse en la entrevista con Lambos. Cuando ella habla de "conocimiento ancestral", explica cómo llegó a existir el *kanaima*. Al mismo tiempo, rechaza la práctica y, por lo tanto, habla en nombre de todos los pemón, como Whitaker, Whitehead (2003) y Butt Colson (2001) también argumentan en nombre de los grupos con los que trabajaron.

No obstante, la cuestión de los seres *kanaima* no intencionales desempeña un papel que he encontrado repetidamente en el transcurso de mi investigación. Es decir, hay individuos que, sin culpa propia, pueden o deben actuar compulsivamente como *kanaima* (Lewy 2018), los cuales pueden ser categorizados como seres *kanaima* no chamánicos.

Independientemente de estas atribuciones, también se da el fenómeno de que algunas personas se jacten de ser *kanaima*, como aborda indirectamente Balbina Lambos a través de los cantos tradicionales de *amanawuí* (Lambos y Lewy, en este libro). Sin embargo, la afirmación de que nadie quiere ser llamado *kanaima* parece ambivalente, aunque sea obvia, ya que tal autoatribución puede ser fatal. Mientras que en las Guayanas anglófonas hay más *kanaima* que se autoidentifican como *kanaima* (comunicación personal de Janik), en la zona de pemón (Venezuela) ocurre más bien lo contrario. Nunca he conocido a nadie que se identifique directamente con los *kanaima*. Más bien, siempre se refirieron a los demás como *kanaima*. Esta ambivalencia parece deberse a los cambios históricos relativos a los *kanaima*. Mientras que en el pasado los *kanaima* eran utilizados por los makuxi para actuar contra otros grupos, Para los arekuna, taurepán y kamarakoto (pemón), parece ser más un fenómeno intragrupal, por lo que nadie quiere aparecer directamente como *kanaima*. Sin embargo, los makuxi también tienen el *kanaima* como un fenómeno dentro del grupo.

La segunda pregunta se refiere a los propietarios o las entidades no humanas con las que los *kanaima* están en contacto y a las que tienen que entregar algo, por ejemplo, carne humana. Para los patamona, se trata del señor de los espíritus del tigre que describe Whitehead (1988). Para los makuxi, parece haber una conexión directa con Makunaima. Aunque no es desconocido entre los pemón (taurepán, kamarakoto, arekuna), se dice que Makunaima ya no está presente, sino que se ha retirado a Inglaterra (es decir, Guyana). Entre estos grupos, los *kanaima* están en posesión de sus plantas, como sostengo en mi capítulo, siguiendo las reflexiones de Gabriela Levy (2003; Lewy en este volumen). Este punto me parece crucial también para la transformación del *kanaima* de un conocido asesino a sueldo a una persona que básicamente no puede revelarse como *kanaima*.

Esto apunta a la tercera cuestión relativa a las consecuencias de las diferentes armas en relación con los barrotes de guerra frente a la brujería. Whitaker llega al meollo de la cuestión cuando compara el razonamiento ontológico de Awacaipu con la simple práctica bélica del padre de Weh-Toreh, que mata a Awacaipu con el garrote porque su comunicación transespecie con Makunaima era obviamente errónea.

Este argumento es representativo de la preocupación indígena básica de la ontología *kanaima* en relación con el conocimiento cultural y las consecuencias antihumanas o antisociales de este conocimiento, las cuales pueden contrarrestarse con únicamente con violencia. Una cuestión que sin duda seguirá preocupándonos.

Referencias bibliográficas

Butt Colson, Audrey
2001 2001 "Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure". In *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, editado por Laura Rival y Neil Whitehead, 221-233. New York: Oxford University Press.

Levy, Gabriela
2003 *Vozes inscritas. O movimento de San Miguel entre os Pemon, Venezuela*. Campinas: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

Lewy, Matthias
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima". *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

Whitehead, Neil L.
1988 *Lords of the tiger spirit. A history of the Caribs in colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498-1820*. Providence: Foris Publications.

2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima mountains, Guyana”. En *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil L. Whitehead, 235-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2002 *Dark shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.
2003 “The sign of kanaimà, the space of Guayana and the demonology of development”. *Cahiers des Ameriques Latines* 43: 67-86. https://doi.org/10.4000/cal.7271

Respuesta a los comentarios

James Andrew Whitaker

Me gustaría agradecer a (1) Bernd Brabec, a (2) Daniel G. Cooper y a (3) Matthias Lewy por sus profundos e interesantes comentarios a mi capítulo “Armas y brujería: robo, intercambio y kanaima entre los makushi” en este volumen editado. Agradezco la oportunidad de recibir comentarios tan perspicaces sobre mi trabajo y espero iniciar un debate más amplio sobre los temas que abordan. Los comentarios se ubican en diversos contextos, pero se complementan entre sí, lo cual facilita productivamente el desarrollo de una mirada amplia y multidimensional.

(1) Estoy de acuerdo con la caracterización de Bernd Brabec de la investigación del *kanaima* como precaria. Como él indica, la naturaleza delicada del tema se ve claramente en la obra de Whitehead. Esta es una de las cuestiones que se abordan en este volumen editado, pero es una conversación que espero vaya más allá de estas páginas. Un aspecto de la precariedad del tema está relacionado con el secretismo que lo rodea y la ética de la investigación y elaboración de reportes al respecto. Entre los makushi de Surama, los aldeanos no solían considerar que el *kanaima* fuera un tema especialmente delicado, pero sí algo sobre lo que los aldeanos se mostraban cautelosos a la hora de proporcionar información personal de manera extensa. En otras palabras, informar sobre ‘historias’ o relatos de *kanaima* solía estar bien, pero había que tener cuidado de no pedir a la gente información que pudiera indicar directamente que tenían un acercamiento personal a estas prácticas, ya que podría ser visto como que se revelaban como *kanaima*. Otro aspecto de esta precariedad tiene que ver con las limitaciones de los datos etnohistóricos y etnológicos relativos a la práctica del *kanaima*. El fenómeno se ha descrito en términos generales desde principios del siglo XIX, pero los relatos sólo llegan hasta cierto punto y hacen falta muchos detalles. Estos dos aspectos se afectan mutuamente, ya que la información disponible es limitada y aún pueden surgir inquietudes con relación a llenar los vacíos mediante métodos etnográficos.

Como menciona Brabec, mi capítulo es ante todo un intento de examinar las aplicaciones del *kanaima* en el contexto específico del siglo XIX del aumento de los conflictos por el uso de armas de fuego, según la tesis planteada por Whitehead. Considero que los análisis aquí planteados quizá no sean tan especulativos como lo sugiere Brabec. El caso de Schomburgk sobre el grupo de caribes que se retiró de una expedición de incursión tras una muerte, resuena con las nociones regionales de la muerte causada por agentes malévolos (generalmente brujería). Dado que esta muerte se produjo en el contexto de una incursión planificada contra el pueblo makushi, podemos inferir la probabilidad de asociaciones entre la muerte y las intenciones de la visita para los caribes. Mi afirmación de que "el incumplimiento de las obligaciones comerciales al no completar el intercambio dio lugar a la violencia *kanaima*" se basa principalmente en un relato que recibí de un aldeano makushi de Surama. Sin embargo, es justo señalar que algunas de las conclusiones se basan más en una preponderancia de pruebas, la cual combina etnohistoria con datos etnográficos, más que en una prueba concluyente en particular. En general, las pruebas apoyan la hipótesis y se suman a la afirmación de Whitehead respecto a que las prácticas *kanaima* adquirieron nuevos significados frente a la fuerza que adquirieron otros grupos indígenas (en particular los caribes) debido al uso de armas a través las relaciones con los colonos europeos. Me alegro de que esta hipótesis, aunque quizá no todas las pruebas, resultara convincente. Y estoy de acuerdo en que es especulativamente posible (aunque no necesariamente) que el *kanaima* pudiera haberse originado entre algunos grupos en tales circunstancias.

En cuanto al movimiento milenario de Awacaipu en Beckeranta, la presencia de la brujería se sugiere en los temas de hemotofagia, homicidio, depredación y las conexiones con Makunaima. También se sugiere, aunque muy débilmente, en la eventual muerte de Awacaipu a garrotazos, que era el medio clásico de matar *kanaima* según los interlocutores de Whitehead (2002, 228) entre los patamona. Se pensaba que Awacaipu era un chamán, pero estos temas sugieren que también podría haber sido un brujo. Su movimiento fue uno de los numerosos casos de milenarismo sincrético que condujo al auge de la reconocida religión Hallelujah, la cual es conocida en los países vecinos y entre algunos indígenas de Guyana como Areruya. Creo que Brabec tiene razón al afirmar que hay más que decir sobre el *kanaima* a partir de futuros análisis del surgimiento de Hallelujah y sus diversos movimientos "precursores" (Posern-Zieliński 1978, 99). Aprecio su uso de relevantes ejemplos comparativos de toda la región para ampliar los temas centrales tratados en el capítulo. Esto se refiere a las formas en que los pueblos indígenas a menudo ajustaron, moldearon o incluso diseñaron potencialmente prácticas mágicas (por ejemplo, la brujería) de manera activa en torno a las fuerzas coloniales y contextos relacionados con el fin de luchar, obtener ventajas y crear significados propios.

(2) Agradezco el alcance comparativo de Daniel G. Cooper en relación con mi capítulo basado en su extenso trabajo de campo con el pueblo akawaio. Su comentario tiene un significado etnográfico propio que va más allá del enfoque de mi capítulo sobre los contextos históricos del *kanaima* entre los makushi. Destaca dimensiones importantes relativas a los fundamentos ontológicos del *kanaima* entre los akawaio. Los contrastes etnográficos hablan en gran medida por sí mismos, por lo que mi respuesta se centrará más en temas específicos. En el capítulo independiente de Cooper en este volumen entra en mayor detalle en relación con varios de estos temas y está bien apoyado por su comentario.

Al igual que Brabec, Cooper destaca desde el principio el énfasis de mi capítulo en las formas en que se ha adaptado el *kanaima* en determinadas circunstancias. Señala en particular la variación en las conceptualizaciones y comprensiones de los hermanos mitológicos (especialmente Makunaima) entre los grupos indígenas de toda la región. Aunque las historias (*pantoni* o *pandong*) de estos hermanos se encuentran a menudo en las Guayanas, los detalles, nombres e incluso números relativos a estos hermanos varían entre las comunidades. Las asociaciones entre estas entidades, por un lado, y el chamanismo y la brujería, por otro, también pueden variar y encontrarse más entre algunas sociedades indígenas regionales que en otras. Sin embargo, existen notables similitudes entre las narrativas akawaio y makushi al respecto, como la asociación de un hermano (Pia) con el chamanismo curativo y probablemente el otro (Makunaima) con la brujería o el 'chamanismo oscuro'. Cooper también corrobora la forma en que las acusaciones de *kanaima* sirven a menudo como marcador de alteridad o diferencia entre los grupos indígenas. Proporciona una validación comparativa de la separación entre los akawaio de *e'toto* (es decir, *kanaima*), *piyai'san* (es decir, chamanes sanadores) y Alleluia *pukena'* (es decir, profetas Hallelujah).

Aprecio especialmente que Cooper actualice el tema y lo sitúe en una escala más amplia hacia el final de su comentario en relación con las crecientes tensiones generadas por los conflictos por el uso de recursos entre Venezuela y Guyana en el contexto de la depredación y el extractivismo en curso (véase también Tamboli 2019). Las narrativas de *kanaima* rara vez están lejos de tales tensiones en la región. Anteriormente, he sugerido que las continuidades entre la esclavitud y el saqueo históricos y el extractivismo contemporáneo podrían conceptualizarse en relación con el Plantationocene (Whitaker 2020). El comentario de Cooper parece apoyar este punto de vista y aumenta el alcance comparativo para comprender las similitudes relevantes entre los makushi y los akawaio.

(3) Estoy de acuerdo con el balance que hace Matthias Lewy de mi capítulo y sus argumentos. Reconoce su énfasis en "las presiones emergentes y los procesos de transformación social en las Guayanas a través de la influencia directa o indirecta de las potencias coloniales europeas". Este enfoque sobre cómo los makushi (o makuxi en Brasil) adaptaron el *kanaima* a las condiciones cambiantes es fundamental en el capítulo. Señala acertadamente el contraste entre los garrotes y las armas de fuego como base de esta transformación histórica y destaca el contraste en que los contextos de incursión y esclavitud pueden entenderse a través de lentes antropológicos e indígenas. Esto es un recordatorio de la importancia de la interpretación en la escritura etnográfica y etnohistórica, como indica Lewy, con un contraste entre las interpretaciones de 'hacer parientes' y 'explotación inhumana'. Hay que tener en cuenta la tensión entre estas formas de interpretar. La esclavitud indígena en las Guayanas ha sido vista como una transformación de las prácticas indígenas precoloniales de captura e incorporación, que a veces se interpretan como 'hacer parientes', a las prácticas coloniales de esclavitud como hiperexplotación (Whitehead 2002; véase también Farage 1991). En algunos casos, esto puede eludir el hecho de que el cambio fue quizás menos cualitativo que cuantitativo, ya que la captura y esclavitud entre los grupos indígenas también incluía dimensiones de explotación (véase Jabin 2016). Para los makushi, la captura y esclavitud, tanto por parte de los europeos como de otros grupos indígenas, se consideraba indeseable. Por

ejemplo, John Hancock menciona que los makushi, durante su visita en la década de 1810, se opusieron a la esclavitud y a las depredaciones relacionadas que experimentaron por parte de los caribes y algunos otros apoderados indígenas de los holandeses (véase Whitaker en prensa). Es en este contexto en el que el concepto de *kanaima* empieza a surgir en los escritos coloniales, siendo Hancock (1835, 44) y Hilhouse (1825, 37) dos de los primeros en aludir a esta forma de brujería en la Guayana Británica.

Creo que Lewy tiene razón al vincular el aspecto de 'hacer parientes' de la esclavitud indígena con el tema de la reciprocidad, ya que los fracasos de la reciprocidad en los contextos tanto de las incursiones de esclavos como del sistema transformado de esclavitud durante la época colonial desempeñaron un rol en los usos del *kanaima*. A pesar de los aspectos antisociales del *kanaima* en la región (véase Butt Colson 2001), existe un hilo conductor que conecta las diversas aplicaciones del *kanaima* (por turbulentas que sean, como se indica en la entrevista con Balbina Lambos) en contextos que implican relaciones de comercio, deserciones de parientes y depredaciones que implican incursiones. Según los datos históricos y etnográficos disponibles, la reciprocidad negativa parece haber sido significativa en contextos de esclavitud y brujería. Esta última se dirigía generalmente contra los forasteros, a menudo cuando se negaba la reciprocidad (Whitaker en prensa).

Lewy también tiene razón al señalar las diferencias existentes entre los relatos etnográficos y las concepciones locales del *kanaima* entre los distintos grupos indígenas regionales. Su análisis de la entrevista con Balbina Lambos complementa en gran medida su comentario, al tiempo que subraya la diversidad del *kanaima* como conjunto de conceptos y prácticas. También respalda algunos de los argumentos claves de mi capítulo, en particular la asociación entre *kanaima* y guerra.

Las dos cuestiones clave planteadas en el comentario de Lewy merecen mayor investigación y consideraciones adicionales. La primera pregunta se refiere a "la legitimidad y aceptación social del *kanaima* dentro y fuera de la comunidad". Para los makushi, se trata de una cuestión difícil, ya que el *kanaima* es una persona asociada con el terror y el miedo y, en simultáneo, un símbolo de la tradición indígena y un freno potencial contra la depredación exterior (véase también el capítulo de Janik en este volumen). Las narraciones en Surama varían en este punto. Yo no diría necesariamente que está 'aceptado' entre los makushi en un sentido activo, pero a veces existe cierto reconocimiento de que forma parte de la tradición. Desde luego, no es una identidad que se pueda reivindicar; al igual que la experiencia de Lewy entre los pemón, nunca he conocido a nadie que se reivindique como *kanaima* entre los makushi. Sin embargo, parece haber un grado en el que los *kanaima* son vistos (al menos por algunos) como parte del mundo social existente u, otras veces, como parte de un panorama más amplio. La segunda pregunta se refiere a la relación entre los *kanaima* y las entidades no humanas. Se trata de un ámbito en el que se podría investigar mucho más en todas las sociedades regionales (véanse los capítulos de Lewy y Monticelli en este volumen; véase también Whitaker 2016, 326).

La discusión de Lewy sobre la diferencia entre *kanaima* intencional y no intencional también merece una investigación comparativa (véase Lewy 2018). Aunque no he encontrado indicios de esta diferenciación entre los makushi, tiene sentido que algunos grupos indígenas de la región puedan hacer tal división analítica. Esto trae a la mente nociones entre algunas sociedades indígenas (no limitadas a la Amazonía) de brujas que no tienen la intención de ser tales, pero que tienen una esencia o sustancia dentro de ellas que causa daño involuntario. En tales casos, es posible que tengamos que replantearnos el significado más amplio de *kanaima*, ya que no está claro cómo un *kanaima* no intencionada participaría en las prácticas específicas de agresión corporal asociadas a él.

Lo que está claro, es que nuestra comprensión de la brujería *kanaima* se ampliará sin duda con nuevas investigaciones.

Referencias bibliográficas

Butt Colson, Audrey
2001 "Itoto (kanaima) as death and anti-structure". En *Beyond the visible and the material*, editado por Laura Rival y Neil L. Whitehead, 221-233. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Farage, Nádia
1991 *As muralhas dos sertões: os povos indígenas no Rio Branco e a colonização*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra.

Hancock, John
1835 *Observations on the climate, soil, and productions of British Guiana*. London: Richard Taylor.

Hilhouse, William
1825 *Indian notices. Or sketches of the habits, characters, languages, superstitions, soil, and climate of the several nations*. S.l.: Printed for the Author (Hilhouse).

Jabin, David
2016 "Le service éternel: ethnographie d'un esclavage amérindien (Yuqui, Amazonie bolivienne)". Tesis de doctorado, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre.

Lewy, Matthias
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima". *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89 Lewy, Matthias

Posern-Zieliński, Aleksander
1978 "Religious ferment among the Indians of British Guiana at the turn of the 19th century". *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 4: 97-125. https://doi.org/10.36447/Estudios1978.v4.art4

Tamboli, Vikram
2019 "Hustling fuel, striking gold. Smuggling in the Guyanese-Venezuelan borderlands". *NACLA. Report on the Americas* 51, no. 4: 422-432. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2019.1693003

Whitaker, James Andrew
2016 "Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana". PhD thesis, Tulane University. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (17.05.2024)
2020 "Strategic alliance and the Plantationocene among the Makushi in Guyana". S*ocial Anthropology* 28, no. 4): 881-896. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12784
en prensa *The shamanism of eco-tourism. History and ontology among the Makushi in Guyana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whitehead, Neil L.
2002 *Dark shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kanaima and the Preacher: Taurepáng Cosmology

Caio Monticelli

Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), Brazil
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5992-4115
caio.monticelli@gmail.com

Introduction

Inhabitants since immemorial time of the lands adjacent to Mount Roraima, Pemon and Kapon are not exactly two Indigenous peoples, but two 'great ethnic groups' with internal variations. The Pemon live in the lands to the west and southwest of Mount Roraima and are subdivided into Arekuna and Kamarokoto, located in the Caroní river basin, in the Venezuelan savannah, and Taurepáng, who live further south, on the Brazil-Venezuela border (Thomas 1982). The Kapon, on the other hand, live in the mountains to the north and east of Mount Roraima, subdivided into Akawaio, Patamona and Ingarikó (Amaral 2019). Despite employing dialectal variations among themselves, the Pemon and Kapon collectives constitute the largest Caribbean-speakers Indigenous populations living in the Guianas region (Rivière 1984). Its traditional territory of occupation was overlapped by the triple border Brazil-Venezuela-Guiana, an area known as circum-Roraima (Butt Colson 1985). They are related to the Macuxi, with whom they share a very similar cultural complex (Santilli 2001).

A widespread phenomenon in the circum-Roraima area is *kanaima – kanaimé, kanaimë, kanaimî, kanaimü or kanaimo*. Polyvalent in nature, it is as much a mechanism of accusation between non-relatives as the desire for revenge itself (Carvalho 2016, 15). However, alongside these immaterial qualities, *kanaima* is also the expression of an 'assault shamanism' in which the aggressor uses specific sorcery techniques to hunt, mutilate and murder his victims (Whitehead 2001, 238; 2002, 1).

The objective of this chapter is to relate the *kanaima* phenomenon with the Christian experience of the Taurepáng, a Pemon subgroup that has practiced the Seventh-day Adventist religion for decades. If *kanaima* is an evil for which "there is not enough protection" (Butt Colson 2001, 233), Taurepáng preachers, in turn, encourage community unity and transmit the word of God about eternal life to be achieved in paradise after death. While one brings separation, the other hope. In this contrast, aspects of Taurepáng cosmology – and, at the limit, Pemon and Kapon – come into play, such as the way in which the ritual word can transform people.

After a brief presentation of general concepts of the Adventist Taurepáng practice, the analysis turns to a shooting that took place in early 2019 in the community of San Francisco de Yuruaní, henceforth called Kumarakapay, located very close to Mount

Roraima, in Venezuela. This episode caused twenty-nine families to cross the border to the Brazilian side, in search of refuge in the Bananal community. Migration brought a series of challenges to the socio-political organization of Bananal, and the refugees do not intend to return to Kumarakapay. In the neighboring country, they suffer from the misery of years of economic crisis, but their main fear is with *kanaima*, whose cases, they claim, have multiplied in the Venezuelan savannah.

Finally, I discuss the performance of Taurepáng preachers, religious leaders responsible for transmitting words of care and teachings that would lead the faithful to reach paradise in heaven after death. Although the Taurepáng Adventists condemned the activities of the shamans, we will see that the performance of their preachers evokes a background shamanism that underlies the Christian experience of this Indigenous people.

The ritual word

The cults are ceremonial meetings of great importance for the Taurepáng, whose structure is divided into three sections, all permeated by many prayers. The initial part of the cult is called the 'singing service', a period of approximately one hour that precedes the preaching. During the singing service, the church gradually fills up with the arrival of the faithful, who add voice to the collective communion choir. The next section is the actual preaching, which lasts between half an hour and 45 minutes. Finally, the shortest section takes place after the preacher has left the pulpit. In it, the congregation sings a few more hymns and, before the end of the meeting, if there is any community report, it is at that moment that it is passed on. Thus, in addition to being a religious meeting, cults are also a privileged moment for transmitting relevant news about the community.

The religious hymns that Taurepáng sing so vigorously are provided by the Associação Amazonas-Roraima (AAmaR), the institutional arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil, which is active in the Brazilian Amazon in particular.[1] For material support, AAmaR keeps 40 % of the value of the tithe collected in the Bananal church, deposited every month by the community treasurer in a bank in the city of Pacaraima. The remainder is for church expenses, such as repairs, renovations and painting.

In addition to the hymns, AAmaR provides handouts on religious teaching, lessons that in theory the Taurepáng should study during the week, and the 'sermonary' book, for the exclusive use of preachers, as it contains the theme of the sermons for the semester. It is a homogeneous material, printed in Portuguese and distributed by AAmaR to Adventist churches throughout the states of Amazonas and Roraima, regardless of whether they are located in urban, rural or Indigenous communities. The particularity of the Taurepáng resides in their sociocultural specificities. It is an Indigenous people who practice the Adventist religion in their own way, transforming it in this process in order to give meaning to the Christian experience they live.

---

[1] https://aamar.adventistas.org/ (10.01.2024).

In summary, what is conventionally called Indigenous Christianity are religious expressions that combine elements of the Christian tradition, whether Catholic or Protestant, with the sociocultural specificities of the catechized Indigenous peoples. A field that reflects, in turn, the polyvalence of the set of Christian signs and symbols transmitted by the missionaries (Hefner 1993; Montero 2006; Robbins 2011; Robbins, Schieffelin and Vilaça 2014).

These forms of Christianity are associated with the incorporation of Christian liturgy into Indigenous traditions and practices, that is, their cosmogonies, cosmologies, anthropologies, and eschatologies (Wright 1999; 2004). For example, the interpretation of the Bible from the cultural perspective of the catechized peoples, the holding of Christian services in an Indigenous language and the use of traditional dances and songs in Christian festivities. There are also cases of inclusion of angels and Catholic saints in the portfolio of spirits that help shamans in healing sessions (Vilaça and Wright 2009, 89; Capredon, Cernadas, and Opas 2023, 1).

As for the Taurepáng of Bananal, they consider themselves to be *apuranin*, which I translate as 'believers', because *apuranin* is those who have *apurantok*, 'faith', that is, those who believe and trust in the Bible and the 'word of God': *poturüto maimü*. Practitioners of the Seventh-day Adventist religion for decades (Andrello 1993, 33), in Bananal they do not allow the consumption of alcoholic drinks or the meat of animals prescribed as 'unclean' by Adventist doctrine, such as peccary or fish with scales. The Taurepáng also do not have shamans, called *piasán* in their language, since tobacco consumption and shamanic healing sessions are practices condemned by Adventist doctrine. On the other hand, on Saturdays they never work in the farm and don't even turn on the television at home. It is a day reserved exclusively for the worship of God, *poturüto*, understood by these Indigenous peoples as the creator of human beings. It is to *poturüto* that they pray for protection and care, for this reason they also call him *paapay*, 'our father.'

In addition to the Saturday cult, known as the Adoration Cult, the main ceremonial meeting of the Taurepáng, the Bananal community's schedule is guided by the holding of at least three other weekly cults. On Sunday, the Evangelism Cult, with a preaching aimed especially at brothers and sisters who are away from the church. On Wednesday, the Prayer Cult, where the faithful ask the congregation to pray for the rehabilitation of the health of a sick person, in particular, or for the resolution of more general problems, such as "the hunger that affects our relatives in Venezuela." On Friday, the 'advent' of Saturday is celebrated by the Sunset Cult – for Adventists, the transition from one day to the next occurs at 6 pm.

There are 17 preachers in Bananal: ten men and seven women. Both are *ekamanin*, a term composed of the root *ekama*, 'to tell' or 'to say' (derived from *ekare*, 'news', 'message'), plus the suffix *-nin*, which indicates the subject of the act. Whether male or female, *ekamanin* is 'the one who tells the message', but not just any message. For all intents and purposes, they are the emissaries of the 'word of God', *poturüto maimü*, to the members of the congregation, and the *chochi*, the church, is the ritual house where the religious meeting takes place.

Without deviating from the pre-established theme of the AAmaR book, at the moment each *ekamanin* prostrates himself on the pulpit, he preaches in his own way. In general, the sermons are delivered in the Taurepáng language, but it is not uncommon that words in Portuguese or Spanish are used by the preacher at the time to transmit the message. Mixing languages is fluid; it's not a hindrance.

There are basically two types of preachers. Some literally read the printed sermon line by line in Portuguese and translate them into Taurepáng as they go along. The cult gets tiring, the congregation is not enthusiastic. Others, endowed with greater oratorical eloquence, synthesize the main message of the sermon and transmit it in a powerful way. The light and dynamic style of these preachers contrasts with that of mechanical, rigid reading, eventually without even lifting one's head from the paper.

Preaching lightly is a skill that requires 'knowing by heart' *poturüto maimü*. The Taurepáng say that the firmer the word of God is in the heart of the *ekamanin*, greater is the fluidity with which the message will be transmitted, so that the words come out of his mouth without effort. But for that to happen, the preacher needs to be a 'living example' of what he is talking about. There is no point in preaching about a certain subject and, in his private life, acting in the opposite way. If that happens, the preacher becomes the target of criticism, declining in prestige. Influential preachers, in turn, are often invited to preach in neighboring communities, always well received by the hosts.

A good *ekamanin* must be the embodiment of the 'transforming power of God', something the Taurepáng call *merundan* in their language and 'Espírito Santo' in Portuguese. Without *merundan's* action, they say that the *ekamanin* can fall into incoherence or something worse: reading the pages of the Bible and do not understand God's message. Furthermore, if the action of *merundan* does not act in the environment of *chochi*, the faithful listen to the preaching but the word of God does not penetrate their hearts, failing to transform the person.

If the person is not transformed by the message given by the preacher, he will continue on the 'broad path' of perdition, that is, he will continue to be *makoyí-pe*, 'sinner.' It is important to note that if the Taurepáng call God *poturüto* or *paapay*, Satan is called *makoy*, understood as 'the chief of demons', 'the great enemy' of God and human beings. Thus, when classifying sinners as *makoyí-pe*, the Taurepáng are saying that these people 'carry *makoy*' with them, that is, they carry Satan in their body. That is why they live on the 'broad road' of perdition, sinning by consuming tobacco, alcoholic drinks, the meat of 'unclean' animals or by not keeping the Sabbath.

In cults, preachers are always transmitting messages that preach collective well-being and unity. Let's see an excerpt from a sermon given by the preacher Claudia, recorded on a Wednesday night, at the Prayer Service. Shortly before the end of the singing service, the church already considerably full, Claudia positioned herself on the pulpit and waited for us to close the praise. She organized her papers, waited for everyone to be seated, opened her Bible and began:

1. *Söröwarö inna senupantokoman* nossas contabilidades para com os outros
   (Today we are going to study the subject of our accounts towards others)

2. *Mörö pok senupantokompe oração kupainnokon*
   (But first let's pray)

3. Querido Jesus gracias *taurönöman merundan tawörö inna entendematopennöra aprendemapenöra cumprimatope*
   (Dear Jesus, we thank you and ask for the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we can understand, fulfill and practice it)

4. *Auyepö* Cristo ponarö *inna komekatope kamapöra.* Jesus *yese dau,* amém
   (Until Christ comes, we must proclaim Your coming. In Jesus' name, amen)

5. *Apukatök mörö poturüto maimü dau* Tiago 5:16
   (Let's open the Bible to Tiago 5:16)

6. *Se'dö taurepö nawa:* orai uns pelos outros para ser curado, muito poder e eficácia a súplica do justo. *Taurepöman se'dö poturüto maimü.*
   (Here it says: pray for each other to be healed, much power and effectiveness to the supplication of the righteous. It says here in the bible)

7. Quem são algumas pessoas especiais por quem devemos orar?
   (Who are some special people we should pray for?)

8. *Anök kin maimonan* especial-*pe tok nainnök ök pök tok ponak inna purumatokchi*
   (Special people are relatives, friends and neighbors. We should pray for them)

9. *Atönoö kin mörö epürümantok anok dan ponak* parentes e amigos t*aureröman se'dö etrawasoma tok chi* trabalhar para *poturüto*
   (Relatives and friends who want to work for God must start in their own family, in the neighborhood, among friends)

10. *Tapöman se'dö* nem trabalhar para pastor nem *yuurö yuwanope* para ancião *yuwanope* para Deus
    (It is saying here that we must work for God. The work is for God, not for the elder or for the pastor)

There are many considerations that can be drawn from this sermon. Note, for example, the fluidity with which words in Portuguese, Spanish and Taurepáng are mixed, demonstrating that switching languages does not interfere with the transmission of the ceremonial message, something quite different from the Mapuche case (Course 2018). Or, in line 3, the invocation of *merundan* at the beginning of the preacher's speech, so that the 'transforming power of God' is present in the environment of the *chochi*. It is as if the preacher were invoking the presence of God from a specific ritual name, aiming to produce certain transforming effects during the cult. This aspect would resemble Claudia's speech to the modus operandi of tarén magic formulas, the 'enchanted word' that the Pemon and Kapon utter to directly influence people's lives (Armellada 1972, 23; Santilli 1994, 295).

However, due to constraints of space, suffice it to say that although the theme of the sermon is pre-formatted by the AAmaR book, it adjusted perfectly to the reality of Bananal. In early 2019, more than a hundred Taurepáng emigrated from the community of Kumarakapay, located in Venezuela, to Bananal, which made the local population jump from 300 to just over 420 residents. The migration took everyone in Bananal by surprise. When the 29 families arrived, there was not even a place to shelter them, nor food to appease their hunger. After months of living in makeshift sheds, the Taurepáng from Kumarakapay were finally able to build their own homes with wooden boards and tarpaulins provided by UNHCR (UN refugee agency) and ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency). Their permanence in Bananal, however, still depends substantially on the support provided by these institutions, especially food.

As it is located at the foot of the Pacaraima mountain range, there are not good areas available in the Bananal for all the newcomers to cultivate. And even if there were, felling and burning the forest, plowing and planting the land is a time-consuming process. Hunger, on the other hand, does not wait. Therefore, although on a different scale than what happens in the Taurepáng communities in Venezuela, devastated by consecutive years of economic crisis, hunger also began to be present in the Bananal. At first, the refugees were completely dependent on the meals provided by the hosts. As the months went by, given the limited availability of food for everyone, some began to accuse the hosts of being stingy, saying that they didn't want to share all the food they had. Simultaneously, cases of theft began to occur, whether of chickens, tools, clothes or money. These are unprecedented challenges for the socio-political organization of Bananal, which until then had not had problems of this nature, at least not in the frequency with which they arose.

It is significant that the interlocutors stated that something similar happened in Kumarakapay. It is said that the tension and internal rivalry reached such intensity in that community that its residents were divided into two groups: one in favor and the other against the government of Nicolás Maduro. In the midst of consecutive years of crisis and increasing poverty, those in favor of the government said that the suffering was temporary, that things would soon get better. Opponents argued that the crisis will only get worse as long as Maduro remains in power.

On February 22, 2019, faced with the prospect of delivering 'humanitarian aid' to the Venezuelan people,[2] a battalion of the Bolivarian National Guard (BNG) was deployed to close the border with Brazil. The shipment was scheduled to arrive in Venezuela via Pacaraima, a Brazilian city located on the border and only 25 kilometers away from the Bananal community. But before reaching the border, the BNG military found the access route to Brazil, a road that crosses the community of Kumarakapay, blocked by the Taurepáng opposed to the Maduro government, favorable to the delivery of the shipment.

---

[2] Controversial operation led by the United States in conjunction with Colombia, Brazil and the Netherlands. See: https://g1.globo.com/mundo/noticia/2019/02/21/entenda-como-a-ajuda-humanitaria-oferecida-a-venezuela-ficou-no-centro-da-disputa-politica-no-pais.ghtml (10.01.2024).

According to people who were there and now live in Bananal, a vehicle approached and told the demonstrators to clear the road. There was no agreement, the riot police came. In the ensuing clash, three Taurepáng were killed and at least twenty were wounded. In Bananal there are five refugees from Kumarakapay who still carry shrapnel from the bullets fired by the BNG. After the Kumarakapay shooting, I didn't meet any immigrants who expressed a desire to return to live in that community.

Therefore, in view of the new reality that has been established in Bananal, Claudia's preaching sought to encourage a certain care for the so-called "special" people, notoriously "relatives, friends and neighbors" (lines 7 and 8). As a religious leader, the message she conveyed within the *chochi*, the ritual house, was intended to articulate aspects of morality, kinship and alliance in order to encourage community unity. It was a 'counseling' (Gibram 2020, 48) that aimed to combat the growing state of animosity and tension that gradually settled in the community in recent years.

After the arrival of the Taurepáng from Kumarakapay, the population of Bananal seems to have been divided into two groups: the *patamona*, that is, the 'old residents', and the *yepesakon*, the 'refugees' or 'immigrants.' Even if implicit, the division also marks a distinction between those who 'have something' (good farms, jobs, belongings, food) and those who 'have very little or almost nothing.' Members of the first group accuse those of the second of being people more prone to envy, since most *yepesakon* arrived at Bananal only with the clothes on their backs. That's why they would covet what the *patamona* possess.

Claudia is aware of the dangers that such an internal division can entail. In fact, in addition to *ekamanin*, another term that the Taurepáng use to refer to preachers is *mannapatan*, which means 'watchman', 'sentinel.' Claudia knows that a state of tension and animosity between neighbors is dangerous, as it carries with it the potential for the outbreak of the *kanaima* phenomenon.

It is important to point out that in addition to a specific technique of murder sorcery, an 'assault shamanism' (Whitehead 2000; 2002), *kanaima* also covers the immateriality of the feeling of envy and the desire for revenge for an offense suffered, related even to the lack of correspondence in normative reciprocity (Carvalho 2016; Whitaker 2021). Because it is considered a becoming, "um risco ao qual todos os indivíduos estão sujeitos" (Sztutman 2005, 189),[3] the *kanaima* is able to emerge within the community bringing fear, terror and death (Janik 2018). Apparently, a united community, whose residents are concerned with each other, with the collective well-being, would neutralize the appearance of this evil. However, this does not prevent *kanaima* from coming from outside the community.

Almost four years after the migration of the Taurepáng from Kumarakapay, some matrimonial arrangements united the newcomers with members of the Bananal's main families, which seems to have mitigated part of the community's internal conflicts.

---

[3] "A risk to which all individuals are subject."

However, for the *yepesakon* who were not married in their new place of residence, a return to Kumarakapay is not in the plans. In Venezuela they fear inflation and lack of perspective, but their main concern is the fear of *kanaima*.

Although Kumarakapay is also an Adventist community, even older than Bananal, there the *yepesakon* say that *makoy* (Satan or evil) "has taken over", because people no longer want to share what they have and "only care about with what is yours." Still according to the refugees, in recent years cases of *kanaima* have multiplied in the Taurepáng communities located in Venezuela, in direct proportion to the worsening of the crisis. Fearing for their lives, a Kumarakapay return would make the job easier for those who wish them harm. At Bananal they say that this does not happen, it is a community of 'real brothers.'

Terror

It was night. The children were asleep and the last lights were about to go out. After a hard day at work, João felt his body tired. His legs ached, but the worst was his back. Carrying thirty kilos of cassava for almost four kilometers was no easy task. At least he felt satisfied. Despite the fact that the farm was not his and little experience in farming, working for others was better than no work at all. Bananal's relatives took him in and now his family had enough to eat. In Venezuela, this had long been an uncertainty.

Before going to bed, he noticed that the dog was looking intently at the dark woods. The animal began to growl at something that did not reveal itself. All it took was the snap of a branch for the dog to bark ferociously. João immediately ran into the house and grabbed the machete. The children woke up, the mother tried to calm them down. When the neighbors came out to see what was going on, he shouted: "There's a *rabudo* over there!" Armed with a machete and a shotgun, the group of men ran into the woods. But it was too late, the *kanaima* disappeared without a trace.

On the Brazilian side of the border, the *kanaima* is often called *rabudo*,[4] but this is not an approximation to the popular figure of the devil. According to Farage, the term *rabudo* spread among the Indigenous peoples of the Roraima fields in reference to the peoples of the mountains. Due to their later contact with the whites, for a long time the people of the mountains continued to use a long, red-dyed cloth wrapped around the pelvic region, the ends of which hung over the buttocks, similar to a tail (Farage 1997, 109 en Amaral 2019, 319).

Despite the fact that the garb has fallen into disuse, even today the people of the mountains are considered by those of the fields as excellent sorcerers. In fact, *kanaima* is a blaming mechanism. Koch-Grünberg (1979-1982 vol. I, 187) wrote that a single person, an entire village or "an entire tribe" can be accused of *kanaima*. Therefore, from the point of view of the Indigenous people of the fields, who had been in contact with the whites for a longer time, the *rabudos* of the mountains were all *kanaima*. Another possible explanation for the term *rabudo* has to do with the *kanaima*'s ability to transform into animals with a tail, such as a dog, jaguar or anteater (Thomas 1982, 123). The transformation takes place through the magic of the *tarén* (Lewy 2017, 17), but it is not without dangers. If attacked or killed in animal form, the sorcerer directly suffers the damage received.

---

[4] Person with tail.

For Whitehead (2001, 238), who worked with a Kapon subgroup called Patamona, inhabitants of the Guyana mountains, it is impossible to determine the temporal origin of the *kanaima*, as its presence dates back to at least two hundred years in colonial sources. Despite the difficulty and even the fruitless exercise of insisting on the question, let's see three different versions that complement each other about the emergence of the first *kanaima*.

Muxumuxu is a Wapishana who moved from Guyana to Brazil after having two sons killed by *kanaima*. He tells us that the ancient Patamona (neighbours of the Wapishana) used plants of power to hunt deer and wild pigs. After the hunt, in a dream, the plant visited the hunter and asked for portions of the blood of the slaughtered animal as food. Due to their success, their use became frequent and the Patamona no longer hunted without them. However, endowed with a will of their own, the plants of power gradually began to demand human blood. For Muxumuxu, the firsts *kanaima* appeared when the ancient Patamona stopped using plants of power to hunt animals and started to hunt other people, to offer their blood to the plants that guaranteed them success in the hunt (Machado and Pereira 2020, 12-13).

Muxumuxu's sons were murdered out of envy, as the abundance of their farms bothered other people. As mentioned, the feeling of envy between neighbors is the leitmotiv for the emergence of *kanaima* within the community, which leads us to the other two versions. The following story was told to me by a Taurepáng who lives in Venezuela, but who at the time was visiting his relatives in Bananal.

In the old days, said the interlocutor, there was an abundant fishing river. One family lived above and the other below the watercourse. On one occasion the fishes began to become scarce. To avoid problems, local chiefs decided to establish a large *samaúma* (*Ceiba pentandra*) as a motto: from the tree upwards one family would fish, from the tree downwards another. But those who lived downstream understood that the best fishes were caught upstream. Then, in the dark of night, they fished upstream. Discovered and warned, successive animosities were created between the two families, until one person was killed. From that case, a cycle of revenge erupted between the two families, one trying to repay the other for the damage received.

Lastly, according to a Taurepáng preacher, my privileged interlocutor to discuss the matter in question, *kanaima* does not just happen in "indigenous culture." It is present "all over the world" because it is part of "the nature of the human being." He explained that "wherever there are people, there will be *kanaima*." His understanding is based on the Bible, in the passage where Cain killed Abel (Genesis 4: 8-10), murder provoked by envy that one brother felt of the other for his relationship with God. For the *ekamanin, poturüto maimü*, the Bible, 'does not lie', and this would be the first known case of *kanaima* in history.

The three versions bring us some lessons. In all the feeling of envy is present. In the Indigenous world, the feeling of envy is driven by miserliness, selfishness. In the face of avarice, the *kanaima* is the countermeasure that brings death. But it is only in the story of Muxumuxu that the use of plants of power is mentioned, a technique therefore specific. Let's move forward on this issue.

In general, it is common in the Brazilian Amazon to associate certain plants with the ability to cure or ward off harm. They are considered as plants of plants, popularly called *pussanga*. For the Taurepáng, *pussangas* are classified into two types: *muran* and *kumi*. Although they are not discriminated against, the ownership and use of these plants is secret. There are basically three ways to obtain them: i) find the plant while wandering through the forest; ii) it 'simply born' in a person's farm, as I was told; iii) by exchange. Despite being an extremely valuable item for the Indigenous people, plants of power are never sold, because they die if sold (Farage 1997, 74-79).

The power of *muran* is in the leaf of the vegetable, that of *kumi* in the tuber. Its use can help practically all daily activities, such as working vigorously in the farms, walking long distances without getting tired, attracting game animals, fish or seducing a spouse. For this purpose, sexual and dietary protections are necessary, as well as rubbing the plant in scarifications carried out on specific parts of the body, such as knees, chest, wrists or temples (Monticelli 2020, 54-55).

There are *muran* for each of the main animals hunted in the forest and in the fields. Upon its use, the hunter must kill only the animal that the plant attracts. If he kills another type, he run the risk of becoming *panema*, that is, unlucky in hunting, as well as subject to the plant's revenge. As said by Muxumuxu, plants of power demand the blood of the slaughtered animal, food that nourishes them. If there is no blood donation, the Taurepáng say that the *muran* warms the hunter's body, causing fever and generalized boils. On this subject, Farage wrote that if *wapananinao*, the plants of power used by the Wapishana, taste blood, they will always want it. If they run out of hunting blood, they will seek to satiate their will with human blood, even attacking those who care for them (Farage 1997, 86). For the Wapishana, southern neighbors of the Taurepáng, without the donation of blood the hunter becomes prey.

In the history of Muxumuxu, the appearance of the first *kanaima* is the result of the counterpart of the plant. The desire to kill people did not come from the ancient Patamona, it was the plant's desire for human blood. When discussing this issue among the Pemon in Venezuela, Levy comments that if the *kanaima* does not satiate the bloodlust of its plants of power, he could end up being killed by them. Thus, the performance of the *kanaima* would be more like that of a "slave" who lives to support the vice of plants (Levy 2003, 2, note 2). In this logic, there would be no 'ex-*kanaima*', as the man-plant relationship only ends with the death of the sorcerer. Then the plant reborn in another location, looking for a new slave.

With regard to the *kanaima* attack, the Taurepáng say that it only occurs when the victim is alone, either working in the farm, in transit between the farm and the community or close to home. It can also occur when the person goes to the bathroom at night, which is why many go with a relative. Being in the company of another person is a condition that practically nullifies the possibility of a *kanaima* attack, as it reduces the chance of success of the aggression and the killer can have his identity witnessed. If the *kanaima* attack is successful, the victim has several purple bruises across the joints of the body and mutilated tongue and anus.

Death, however, is not immediate. The victim is unconscious the entire time while his body is mutilated. Upon waking up, feels an indescribable malaise and cannot remember what happened. The Taurepáng say that a person attacked by *kanaima* will only be able to talk about what happened if they are served 'pestle tea.' For this purpose, the pestle and grain pillar stopper are washed, the water is strained and given to the victim to drink. The 'pestle tea' makes the person talk, but does not prevent your imminent death. Not even the most skilled shamans can reverse the damage caused by a successful *kanaima* attack. Although the victim breathes and speaks, there is nothing else that can be done. The relatives of a person attacked by this shamanic assault technique (Butt Colson 2000; Whitehead 2000; 2002) are left with only the possibility of revenge. But as the Taurepáng do Bananal are all Adventists, revenge is not encouraged by the preachers, who work so that blood is not paid for with more blood.

In the time between the attack and death, the victim agonizes in a feverish state, unable to eat and suffering from intense diarrhea. The victim does not eat because his tongue was perforated and the diarrhea does not stop because there is a *pussanga* in his intestines poisoning his body from the inside. The Taurepáng say that this *pussanga* gives off a sweet and sour odor, similar to that of a rotten pineapple. At the same time that this odor configures an aggression that is impossible to reverse, it indicates that there is a possibility that the victim's grave will be visited by the killer. In this way, the relatives of a person killed through this shamanic technique of murder watch over the grave of the murdered relative for about three days after the burial, on the lookout in case the killer appears.

According to the interlocutors, the *kanaima* visit the victim's grave to taste the 'dead man's *caxiri*', that is, the 'dead man's beer.' It is for this reason that the killer waits three days to go to the grave, that's the time it takes for the *caxiri* to ferment. They say that the accession of the *kanaima* to the defunct is not done in human form, as this would facilitate their identification. It usually occurs in the form of a dog. Dogs that carry the *kanaima* spirit have red eyes and typically angry behavior, called by the Taurepáng *awoinürüpö*, 'evil spirit.' It is interesting to note that Armellada and Salazar (1981, 26) translate *awoineripue* as "a fantastic being with nocturnal habits, which feeds on corpses."

Another point to highlight is that regardless of the context, the *kanaima*'s action is never seen as 'legitimate', and whoever kills one of these sorcerers does not suffer reprisals from the community. As I once heard, killing *kanaima* is a 'good deed', as the world becomes 'less worse.' In this sense, in July 2017, a man was stabbed to death while drinking in a bar in the municipality of Alto Alegre, Roraima. The reason for the crime was to have been recognized as a *kanaima*. Two years earlier, in 2015, a trial held in the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land, also in Roraima, cleared two Indigenous people involved in the death of another *kanaima* (Folha Web 2017).

Revenge, however, is not unilateral, after all *kanaima* also have relatives who sooner or later may want to reciprocate the aggression. From then on, as described in the story of fishing on the great river, a blood feud unites the two families: on the one hand, the relatives of the murdered *kanaima*, on the other the relatives of the *kanaima* victim.

The increase in revenge cycles of this type has worried the leaders of the Taurepáng communities located in the Venezuelan savannah. In Maurak, a large Adventist community located very close to the Brazilian border, a special meeting brought together local leaders concerned about the growth of blood feuds caused by accusations of *kanaima*. To deal with the problem, local leaders adapted an old maize and bean warehouse, which was deactivated in Maurak, to function as a prison. Although it is used to imprison offenders of various types of crimes, the old warehouse is also serving to imprison people accused of *kanaima*. Through this measure, Indigenous leaders intended to control the customary murder of these sorcerers, in an attempt to reduce the cycles of revenge that have occurred in the Venezuelan savannah.

The measure did not have the desired effect. Rather than reducing conflicts, imprisoning *kanaima* accused exacerbated animosities. In Venezuela, political leaders are called *capitanas*, and in the context of the arrest for *kanaima* in Maurak, the *capitana* of that community began to suffer threats. They come both from the relatives of the victims of *kanaima*, who prefer the sorcerer's death to his imprisonment, and from the relatives of the arrested person, who allege his innocence. The situation is complicated, since, it is worth remembering, *kanaima* is also a mechanism for distinguishing between kin and non-kin, not being necessarily linked to the use of *muran* or *kumi* to hunt human beings.

If the imprisonment in Maurak did not attenuate the cycles of revenge, it revealed the existence of a network of killers. As the accused *kanaima* are detained, 'awaiting trial', some reported having been instructed to commit the crimes at the behest of others. That they did so aiming at a prearranged reward, payment usually made with gold, money or industrialized food, so that the killer and his family have something to eat.

Therefore, in addition to the 'common cases of *kanaima*' conveyed by the literature, sorcerer-murderers who act out of 'pure evil' (Butt Colson 2000, page?; Whitehead 2000, page?; Carvalho 2016, page?), the worsening crisis in Venezuela seems to have made *kanaima* a 'hired killer.' According to the Taurepáng of Bananal, both old and new residents, the consecutive years of the Venezuelan crisis have transformed the *kanaima* into a mercenary who acts for pay. Amidst a scenario of scarcity of basic products, unemployment, inflation and lack of food, the motivation of these killers would rest on providing a momentarily better material condition for themselves and their families. After all, as I heard several times, "*kanaima* are people too."

Another important consideration made by the interlocutors is about the proliferation of mining camps in the Venezuelan savannah. They have multiplied around the Taurepáng communities and this would be another factor of great relevance for the increase in cases of *kanaima* in that region. Since there are local leaders who are against mineral exploration – aware of the problems arising from this activity in the vicinity of communities, such as deaths from being buried, an increase in cases of drunkenness, prostitution and violence in the vicinity of mining fields – there is, on the other hand, people interested in eliminating these leaders in order to establish mining. By resisting, such leaders end up becoming a preferred target for *kanaima* whose payment, as a rule, is made with gold taken from the mining fields themselves. Mining in this case implies death, and death encourages mining.

With the worsening of the crisis in Venezuela, the shortage of basic products and currency devaluation, mining remained as one of the few subsistence options for the Indigenous people. Behind these manual workers are the buyers, generally non-Indigenous people who encourage the Indigenous people to persevere in mining. And if there is a network of killers, the interlocutors point out that it is because there are those who teach. As they point out, "nobody learns to be *kanaima* alone", "it takes a master."

Refugees in Bananal claim that there are *kanaima* masters teaching young people and adults in Venezuela, which would constitute an alternative income for those destitute due to the misery of not having anything to eat. But this is a trap, they warn, because afterwards the apprentice cannot simply stop being a *kanaima*. This is because there would be no 'ex-*kanaima*', and if the person stops feeding his plants of power with human blood, the sorcery himself becomes the prey.

According to the *yepesakon*, one of the main *kanaima* masters in the Venezuelan savannah lives near Kumarakapay. The interlocutors even say that the *capitana* of Kumarakapay has not been murdered yet because he is a friend of that *kanaima* master. By all indications, a person cannot become the target of *kanaima* if his death is not authorized by another more experienced *kanaima*.

Thus, even before the confrontation with the Bolivarian National Guard in early 2019, tempers among the residents of Kumarakapay were quite heated. In addition, the knowledge that there is a *kanaima* master living in the vicinity of the community, who has been teaching young people and adults in assault shamanism, has turned local tensions into explicit accusations of *kanaima*. So, if the *kanaima* phenomenon is able to emerge within the community precisely from the feeling of anger and revenge for an offense committed, it was an explosive combination. This is the main reason why refugees do not want to return to Kumarakapay. They fear that their lives are in the sights of desperate people, who, in the midst of consecutive years of crisis, would spare no effort to harm them. An environment, therefore, 'dominated by *makoy*', that is, by evil, Satan, in which unity and collective well-being are far from being achieved.

Light

Preachers convey messages of care, which encourage unity and collective well-being. Before the influence of the Associação Amazonas-Roraima material in Bananal, the Bible was the only instrument used by the *ekamanin* to preach. Nowadays, along with the Bible, they also use the AAmaR 'sermonary' book.

In both cases there are fixed words on paper and written in a language other than Taurepáng, that is, Portuguese. At the moment of ritual speech within the *chochi*, the *ekamanin* translates the content of the paper into the Taurepáng language. But translation is not always efficient, as members of the congregation may not clearly understand the content of the transmitted message. After the cult, there were cases when I asked the interlocutors about what the preacher had said, so they answered me "I didn't understand anything", that *ekamanin* "speaks confusedly." That is, in cults, there is apparently the possibility that God's message is not transmitted with the intended effectiveness. Thus, the transposition from printed Portuguese to oral Taurepáng, which takes place in sermons, can vary significantly.

The performance of the *ekamanin*, therefore, is close to what Carneiro da Cunha (1998) wrote about shamanism in the Amazon. For the author, one of the main attributions of the shaman is precisely the ability to translate, but not the mere transposition of meanings from one language to another. Rather, it is a rearrangement of relationships that creates new connections and produces new meanings.[5] Since shamanism is understood as a "communication and mediation system", Sztutman (2005, 153) described shamanic action as "a translation activity that can be transposed from the supernatural to the socio-political level."

So, Taurepáng cosmology is strongly influenced by the Adventist religion, in which the themes of the end of the world and the second return of Jesus Christ are systematically reiterated. Let us return to Claudia's sermon, which in line 4 in prayer says "*auyepö* Cristo *ponarö inna komekatope kamapör*a. Jesus *yese dau*, amen" (Until Christ comes, we must proclaim Your coming. In the name of Jesus, amen). Faced with the impacts of the Venezuelan crisis, the misery that affects relatives on the other side of the border and the migration of residents from Kumarakapay to Bananal – which brought several implications for community life –, the work of the *ekamanin* consists of translating the messages of the Bible and the AAmaR sermon in an attempt to assign meaning to the broader events in which they are inserted. They are religious leaders who "builds worlds" (Overing 1994, 101-102), establishing connections and rearranging relationships that multiply, give meaning and enrich the understanding of the faithful about the imminent end of the world and the consequent return of Jesus Christ to Earth, whose tragic events recent events would bear witness.

But when we talk about shamanism in the Indigenous Amazon, it should be noted that this practice covers a significant internal difference, classified by Hugh-Jones (1994, 39) in terms of the distinction between 'horizontal shamanism' and 'vertical shamanism.' The contrast between the two types is evident in peoples such as the Bororo in Central Brazil or the Tukano and Arawak in the upper Rio Negro, among whom there are two well-defined categories of shamans. The performance of the shaman classified as horizontal turns to the outside of the *socius*, a condition that imbues them with aggressiveness and moral ambiguity. Vertical shamans, on the other hand, are specialists in chants and incantations that lead the processes of reproduction of relationships within the group, such as birth ceremonies, naming and funerals.

---

[5] For the reader interested in the ontology of Amazonian spirits: see Viveiros de Castro (2006).

Having established the distinction, Hugh-Jones (1994, 78) considers that the Tukano and Arawak prophetic movements that occurred in the Northwest Amazon region, from the middle of the 19th century, were all led by shaman-prophets with a 'horizontal' profile. Viveiros de Castro, however, suggests that the distinction to be made would not be so much between two types of shamanism, the shaman "widespread in the Amazon" (horizontal) and the "priest-shaman" (vertical), but between "two possible trajectories of the shamanic function", that is, the prophetic drift and the priestly drift. For this author, the prophetic drift of the shamanic function would produce a "historical warming of shamanism", while the emergence of a well-defined priestly function would result in the "political cooling of shamanism", where cosmic power and political power converge in a single person (Viveiros de Castro 2002, 101).

The suggestion is interesting and opportune for us to think about the Christianity practiced by the Taurepáng. Adventist preaching became an indispensable quality of their political leaders, the *tuxauas*. For example, Bento, the founder of the community of Bananal, held the position of *tuxaua* for decades; influential preacher, he was also one of its main religious leaders. The same happened with Avelino and Lazaro, his sons who in the past occupied successively the position of *tuxaua* of the community, and today with Tercio, grandson of Bento, preacher and current *tuxaua* of Bananal.

Thus, although not every preacher among the Taurepáng is a *tuxaua*, every *tuxaua* is recognized as a preacher, which certainly allows him to concentrate political power, evoking the figure of the priest mobilized by Viveiros de Castro. But the role of *tuxaua* is provisional, while that of preacher is associated with a permanent and growing skill in terms of the knowledge conveyed by *poturüto maimü*. It is also significant that shamans with a horizontal profile, the *piasán*, currently do not exist among the Taurepáng Adventists, since the various components of this practice (heavy consumption of tobacco and contact with various classes of dangerous spirits from the mountains and waterways) are incompatible with the doctrine of the religion they adhered to. The residents of Bananal even say that the *piasán* are "lying people who mess with diabolical spirits."

When we compare the performances of *ekamanin* and *piasán*, we notice certain points in common, but there are many more differences. This is because *maimü* means both 'word' and 'voice' (Armellada and Salazar 1981, 116), so that *ekamanin* and *piasán* convey the word-voice of others entities. In the environment of the *chochi*, the first transmits the *maimü* of God, *poturüto*, whose abode the Taurepáng conceive as located in the sky, *kak*. On the other hand, through the throat of the second conveyed the *maimü* of the Mawarí and other spirits who 'sit' on the *piasán* bench, called *dapon*, during the shamanic healing session (Koch-Grünberg 1979-1982 vol. III, 180; Abreu 1995, 107; Lewy 2018, 105; Amaral 2019, 225).

In both cases, therefore, the ritual specialist is just a vehicle for cosmic communication, connection takes place through speech, a sound phenomenon (Lewy 2012, 58). And for the transmission of the *maimü* of such entities to be efficient, *ekamanin* and *piasán* need to practice a constant process of bodily production. The *ekamanin* abstains from the consumption of alcoholic drinks, tobacco, the meat of animals prescribed as ‘unclean’ and keeps the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship of God. The *piasán*, in turn, must consume a lot of tobacco, low-fat foods and, from time to time, protect himself socially and sexually. These are their similarities, in addition, the *ekamanin* does not “shake the leaves”, as the shamanic performance of the *piasán* is known (Rabelo Filho 2012, 79), and its performance takes place in a public and illuminated environments: the church. As a counterpoint, the environment in which the *piasán* performs the healing sessions is restricted and marked by complete darkness (Andrello 1993, 157).

Another relevant difference is that the words that the *ekamanin* utters in church are heard by all. On the other hand, in healing sessions the *piasán* performs *tarén* to rehabilitate the sick person’s health, magic formulas that must be uttered in whispers. Since its content is covered up, as it is loaded with metaphors and metonymies that are difficult for lay people to understand, people are not sure whether the words ‘breathed’ by *piasán* are in fact to promote healing or further aggravate the disease. Its performance is ambiguous, which is not seen in the *ekamanin*. Finally, *piasán* is understood to be the opposite of *kanaima*, when not accused of being *kanaima* themselves (Koch-Grünberg 1979-1982, vol. III; Thomas 1984; Cooper 2015; Janik 2018; Whitaker 2021). Such an association never occurs with *ekamanin*.

Good preaching builds prestige for a preacher and his influence increases as he is invited to preach in other communities. To some extent, therefore, these specialists refer to the figure of the “good shaman”, an expression that Thomas (1976, 47) used to describe the Taurepáng prophets of the past, especially since the domain of knowledge to which they turn is not marked by moral ambiguities, as with *piasán*. For the residents of Bananal, the *ekamanin* shows the “narrow path to eternal salvation”; path taken from the words of God written in another language.

Let’s look again at line 3 of Claudia’s sermon: “Querido Jesus gracias *taurönöman merundan tawörö inna entendematopennöra aprendemapenöra cumprimatope*” (Dear Jesus, we thank you and ask for the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we can understand, fulfill and practice it). The term *merundan* is uttered at the beginning of every preaching, recurrently glossed as ‘Holy Spirit.’ The word *merundan*, however, does not appear in the Pemon-Spanish dictionary by Armellada and Salazar (1981). But the authors indicate that *merunte* and the variations *merunte-ta*, *merunte-pa* mean, respectively, “strength, give strength and strengthen” (Armellada and Salazar 1981, 125) Thus, translated as Holy Spirit, *merundan* would possibly be a force. But what is its most precise nature?

As stated, *ekamanin* can be more or less skillful with words. Some preach ‘clearly’, others ‘confused.’ When that happens, the message of God would not ‘penetrate’ the heart of the believer, would not ‘transform’ the person, who would continue to live in sin. Or rather, on the ‘broad way’ (*tanotak e̍mak*) to perdition. Its opposite is the ‘narrow path’ (*etakak e̍mak*) that leads to ‘eternal life’ (*kowannötok tericheparak*).

For a person to be able to walk the ‘narrow path’, *poturüto maimü* must penetrate his heart and ‘enlighten’ it. Since in Claudia’s prayer the term *merundan* is preceded by *taurönöman*, plural of *tauron*, ‘to say’, it seems to me that the expression t*aurönöman merundan* would indicate something related to the ‘power of the spoken word.’ Was it the specific force of the word spoken by the preacher? If so, what relationship would there be between the strength of the spoken word and those printed on paper and in another language? What does the latter transmit to the one, which would be able to penetrate the hearts of the faithful and thus transform the person? It is interesting to note the great interest of the Pemon peoples in the written papers of the whites since the end of the 19th century, with which they were able to invent a series of cults that preceded the more orthodox practice of Adventism from the first decades of the 20th century (Andrello 1993).

On the other hand, the passage from written to oral that takes place in Taurepáng preaching would provide an ‘illumination’ of the person, enabling the faithful to walk the ‘narrow path’ (*etakak e’mak*) of souls towards heaven. The theme of light is recurrent in ethnographies dedicated to the prophetic cult of Aleluia among the Pemon and Kapon of Monte Roraima (Butt 1960; Abreu 1995; Cooper 2015; Amaral 2019; Whitaker 2016), which also refers to the ‘heavenly paradise’ prepared by God. The Taurepáng conceive this post-mortem abode as *wakü patá*, a ‘good place’, ‘beautiful’, where there will be no more deaths, illnesses or suffering. They say that in paradise their bodies will be transformed into *auká*, which they translate as ‘glory’ or ‘light’, but a different light from everyday life, *iwiyu*, which contrasts with the dark, *waröpo*. They explain that *auká* is a ‘glorious light’ that exists only in the paradise (for more on the native concept of *auká*, see Butt Colson and Armellada 1990, 15).

Thus, we have a direct association between listening to the spoken word in preaching and the enlightenment, so to speak, of the person, the consummation of which would be his total transformation into light in the afterlife. Therefore, from the visible word in written records to the audible word translated and uttered by the *ekamanin* in the *chochi*, the Taurepáng seem to envision a means through which their souls could potentially transform themselves into bodies of light after death, exhibiting an apparently unattainable degree of visibility in earthly life – marked, in turn, by the opacity of the countless spiritual beings that inhabit this level and whose voices can be heard in the darkness of shamanic healing sessions.

In this sense, the ritual speech uttered by the *ekamanin* seems to greatly transcend the communicative or referential functions of language (Chernela 2018; Hauck and Heurich 2018; Course 2018). In the *chochi*, the words of the religious leader act as a “body manufacturing technology” (Lolli 2014, 300), as they are associated with qualities that are both empowering, *merundan*, and imagery, *auká*, capable of transforming the body of the believer. However, conversion only makes sense for the Taurepáng if it is a collective phenomenon (Vilaça 2007, 18), which is why in the Bananal community the meat of ‘unclean’ animals is not consumed, alcoholic drinks, tobacco use and *piasán* are not allowed. In addition, all residents observe the Sabbath, a day reserved exclusively for rest and worship of God. As I heard from an interlocutor, it would be a ‘tragedy’ to live in paradise without the company of relatives, referring to his father, mother and brothers.

There is, on this point, a significant difference between the Taurepáng and the Palikur, an Indigenous people who live on the Brazil-French Guiana border. For the Palikur, the interest in Christianity and its practice of evangelical Pentecostalism rests especially on the desire to incorporate the Holy Spirit, which even allows the believer to dance and speak in 'angelical language.' The Christian experience lived by this Indigenous people is related to "religious ecstasy" (Capiberibe 2007, 27; 2017, 319). Something like that does not occur among the Taurepáng, mainly because the religion they practice does not incorporate the Holy Spirit. Their interest in Adventist practice rests on the desire to overcome the condition of existence in this land "spoiled" by Satan (Monticelli 2020, 29), where people suffer, get sick and die. To do so, through a series of shelters they hope to reach eternal life in a paradise in heaven after death, a place they claim is being prepared by God and reserved exclusively for those who remain faithful to the message transmitted by the preacher inside the ritual house.

Final considerations

The crisis that Venezuela is going through has reached catastrophic proportions. Taurepáng communities located in the Venezuelan savannah began to suffer from hunger and increased internal tensions among their residents. In early 2019, a shooting promoted by the Bolivarian National Guard made more than a hundred Taurepáng from the Kumarakapay community migrate to Bananal, on the Brazilian side. The lack of structure to house the yepesakon, as the newcomers became known, provided unprecedented challenges for the socio-political organization of Bananal, revealed in the form of accusations of stinginess and theft within the community.

Aiming to combat the growth of animosities, Bananal preachers have worked to reduce the internal conflicts that began to be present in the place. Inside the *chochi*, the ritual house, they preach care and solidarity with others. The preachers' action can be interpreted as an attempt to neutralize the outbreak of the *kanaima* phenomenon. But *kanaima* is not just rivalry between neighbors, it is also a murder sorcery technique. According to the Kumarakapay refugees, the misery caused by years of the Venezuelan crisis turned the *kanaima* into a mercenary, a killer who acts for reward, usually industrialized food. According to these interlocutors, there are masters in the Venezuelan savannah who have taught young people and adults to be *kanaima*.

The Adventist practice of the Taurepáng is directly related to this crisis scenario. They classify the world they live in as 'spoiled' by Satan, whose end is imminent. While the return of Jesus Christ does not materialize, they are meeting inside the church several times a week, to hear the preaching of the *ekamanin*, pray and praise God. That would be the reason for his Christian experience: incorporating the words of *poturüto* that lead to 'good living', transforming the person to walk the 'narrow path' of eternal salvation. However, full salvation will only be achieved after death, in the heavenly paradise prepared by God, where they hope to be pure light and immortal.

References cited

Abreu, Stela
1995 *Aleluia: o banco de luz*. Campinas: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

Amaral, Maria Virgínia
2019 "Os Ingarikó e a religião Areruya." PhD thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

Andrello, Geraldo
1993 *Os Taurepáng: memória e profetismo no século XX*. Campinas: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

Armellada, Cesáreo de
1972 *Pemonton taremuru. Invocaciones mágicas de los indios pemón*. Caracas: Centro de Lenguas Indígenas, Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

Armellada, Cesáreo de and Mariano Salazar
1981 *Diccionario pemón-pastellano*. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

Butt, Audrey
1960 "The birth of a religion." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 90, no.1: 66-106.

Butt Colson, Audrey
1985 "Routes of knowledge: An aspect of regional integration in the circum-Roraima area of the Guiana Highlands." *Antropológica* 63-64: 103-149. https://biblat.unam.mx/hevila/AntropologicaCaracas/1985/no63-64/7.pdf (12.01.2024)
2001 "Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure." In *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 221-233. New York: Oxford University Press.

Butt Colson, Audrey and Cesáreo de Armellada
1990 "El rol económico del cháman y su base conceptual entre los Kapones y Pemones septentrionales de las Guyanas." *Montalban* 22: 7-98.

Capiberibe, Artionka
2007 *Batismo de fogo: os Palikur e o cristianismo*. São Paulo: Annablume.
2017 "A língua franca do suprassensível: sobre xamanismo, cristianismo e transformação." *Mana* 23, no. 2: 311-340. https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-49442017v23n2p311

Capredon, Élise; César Cernadas, and Minna Opas (eds.)
2023 *Indigenous churches. Anthropology of Christianity in Lowland South America*. New York: Springer.

Carneiro da Cunha, Manuela
1998 "Pontos de vista sobre a floresta amazônica: xamanismo e tradução." *Mana* 4, no. 1: 7-22. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93131998000100001

Carvalho, Agnaldo
2016 *Canaimé, a personificação do mal.* Boa Vista: Universidade Federal de Roraima.

Chernela, Janet
2018 "Language in an ontological register: Embodied speech in the Northwest Amazon of Colombia and Brazil." *Language & Communication* 63: 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.02.006

Cooper, Daniel G.
2015 "Under Mount Roraima: The revitalization of a shamanic landscape and practice". PhD thesis, University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment.

Course, Magnus
2018 "Words beyond meaning in Mapuche language ideology." *Language & Communication* 63: 9-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.03.007

Farage, Nádia
1997 "As flores da fala: práticas retóricas entre os Wapishana." PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo (USP). http://biblioteca.funai.gov.br/media/pdf/TESES/MFN-1075.PDF (01.11.2023)

Folha Web
2017 "Indígena acusado de ser canaimé é morto com mais de 40 facadas." https://folhabv.com.br/noticia/POLICIA/Ocorrencias/Indigena-acusado-de-ser-Canaime-e-morto-com-mais-de-40-facadas/29917 (07.09.2022)

Gibram, Paola
2020 "Falas da diferença: aconselhamentos e modos de ser kanhgág pé." *Campos* 21, no.1: 43-59. https://doi.org/10.5380/cra.v21i1.70044

Hauck, Jan and Guilherme Heurich
2018 "Language in the Amerindian imagination. An inquiry into linguistic natures." *Language & Communication* 63: 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.03.005

Hefner, Robert
1993 *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and anthropological perspectives on a great transformation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hugh-Jones, Stephen
1994 "Shamans, prophets, priests and pastors." In *Shamanism, history and the state*, edited by Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, 32-75. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.

Janik, Tarryl
2018 "A return to dark shamans." Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834 (01.11.2023)

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor
1979-1982 *Del Roraima al Orinoco (1917-1928),* 3 vols. Caracas: Caracas: Ernesto Armitano.

Levy, Gabriela
2003 *Vozes inscritas: o movimento de San Miguel entre os Pemon, Venezuela*. Campinas: Universidade Estadual de Campinas.

Lewy, Matthias
2012 "Different 'seeing' – similar 'hearing.' Ritual and sound among the Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)." *Indiana* 29: 53-71. https://doi.org/10.18441/ind.v29i0.53-71
2017 "About Indigenous perspectivism, Indigenous sonorism and the audible stance. Approach to a symmetrical auditory anthropology." *El oído pensante* 5: 1-22. https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/6093561.pdf (12.01.2024)
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

Lolli, Pedro
2014 "Atravessando pessoas no noroeste amazônico." *Mana* 20, no. 2: 281-305. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93132014000200003

Machado, Amanda and Jama Pereira
2020 "O kanaimé em território wapichana: região amazônica entre o Brasil e a Guiana Inglesa." *Organon* 35, no. 70: 1-17. https://doi.org/10.22456/2238-8915.103351

Montero, Paula
2006 *Deus na aldeia: missionários, índios e mediação cultural.* São Paulo: Editora Globo.

Monticelli, Caio
2020 *Patá matá, o que dizem os Taurepáng sobre o fim do mundo*. São Carlos: Universidade Federal de São Carlos.

Overing, Joanna
1994 "O xamã como construtor de mundos: Nelson Goodman na Amazônia." *Idéias* 1, no. 2: 81-118.

Rabelo Filho, Manoel
2012 *A representação social do Kanaimî, do Piya'san e do Tarenpokon nas malocas Cantagalo e Maturaca*. Recife: Universidade Católica de Pernambuco.

Rivière, Peter
1984 *Individual and society in Guiana: A comparative study of Amerindian social organization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robbins, Joel
2011 "Transcendência e antropologia do cristianismo: linguagem, mudança e individualismo." *Religião e Sociedade* 31, no. 1: 11-31. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0100-85872011000100002

Robbins, Joel, Bambi Schieffelin, and Aparecida Vilaça
2014 "Evangelical conversion and the transformation of the self in Amazonia and Melanesia: Christianity and the revival of anthropological comparison." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 3: 559–590. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000255

Santilli, Paulo
1994 "La tradition orale Carib." *Recherches Bresiliennes: Annales Littéraires de la Université de Besançon*, n. 527: 291-302.
2001 *Pemongon Patá: território Macuxi, rotas de conflito*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp.

Sztutman, Renato
2005 "Sobre a ação xamânica." In *Rede de relações nas Guianas*, edited by Dominique Gallois, 151-226. São Paulo: Associação Editorial Humanitas/Fapesp.

Thomas, David
1976 "El movimiento religioso de San Miguel entre los Pemon." *Antropologica* 43: 3-52.
1982 *Order without government*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Vilaça, Aparecida
2007 "Indivíduos celestes. Cristianismo e parentesco em um grupo nativo da Amazônia." *Religião e Sociedade* 27, no. 1: 11-23. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0100-85872007000100002

Vilaça, Aparecida and Robin Wright
2009 "Introduction." In *Native Christians. Modes and effects of Christianity among Indigenous people of the Americas*, edited by Aparecida Vilaça and Robins Wright, 1-20. Burlington: Ashgate.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
2002 "Xamanismo e sacrifício." In *A inconstância da alma selvagem*, edited by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 457-472. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.

2006 “A floresta de cristal: notas sobre a ontologia dos espíritos amazônicos.” *Cadernos de Campo* 14/15: 319-338. https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9133.v15i14-15p319-338

Whitaker, James Andrew

2016 “Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana.” PhD thesis, Tulane University, New Orleans. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (12.01.2024)

2021 “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta.” *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726

Whitehead, Neil

2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and Ritual Death in the Pakaraima Mountains, Guyana.” In *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 235-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wright, Robin, ed.

1999 *Transformando os deuses. Os múltiplos sentidos da entre os povos indígenas no Brasil.* Campinas: Editora da Unicamp.

2004 *Transformando os Deuses.* Vol. II. *Igrejas evangélicas, pentecostais e neopentecostais entre os povos indígenas no Brasil.* Campinas: Editora da Unicamp.

Kanaimaton and the Sound of Violence in the Circum-Roraima Region

Matthias Lewy
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts – School of Music, Switzerland
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2529-8507
matthias.lewy@hslu.ch

> *"You are made of white flesh – white flesh*
> *stinks to the Kanaimaton, they certainly*
> *don't want anything from you!"*

Introduction

The epigraphic statement above had a very reassuring effect on me after a while, but I still have some doubts in relation to skin color and *kanaima*. In the last 15 years that I worked in the Gran Sabana, I never really wanted do work on the topic of *kanaimaton*. It was only somewhat lately, since around 2015, that I had to inevitably take on this topic. I have suppressed this topic for a long time out of the assumption that as an 'ethnomusicologist' I would not have to deal directly with this violent topic. To make the change around my lack of self-reflection understandable, I will give a little history of my research. In 2005, I first started my fieldwork in the border area between Venezuela, working on the topic of *areruya* and *cho'chiman* among the Arekuna and Kamarakoto. I had intensely studied these dance-song rituals of the Pemon between 2005 and 2011 (Lewy 2011). From 2014 to 2019, I worked on a CAPES project at the Universidade de Brasília, conducting collaborative research with Indigenous specialists on the wax cylinder recordings of the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg, who recorded 88 wax cylinders of various genres in this region in 1911. During this collaborative research, I inevitably encountered the subject of *kanaimaton* (plural), as some of Koch-Grünberg's recordings are related to that phenomenon (Lewy 2018). However, I never intentionally worked with confirmed *kanaimaton* suspects, at least not on the topic of *kanaima* (see Whitehead 2002). For the Gran Sabana Region, it is important not to mention anyone who is accused of *kanaima* or who defines oneself as a *kanaima* (see also Monticelli in this volume).

I have previously described a situation (Lewy 2018, 91), where my co-researcher became shocked when hearing a *kanaima* song during a listening session on Koch-Grünberg's recordings with an older woman specialist (see Lambos and Lewy this volume). These are the recordings that had been documented under the category *oareba* by the German linguist in 1911. When the specialists started to explain why this song genre is dangerous, I remembered my own experiences and the resonance of that topic with academic literature on the region. Along with Whitehead, Butt Colson's (2001) description of 'Itoto', as well as the work of Thomas (1982) and Armellada (1989), came to mind. I was always wondering why Koch-Grünberg never explained the phenomenon in all its characteristics, particularly in relation to his recordings. The accompanying documentation of these recordings is very sparse. This is at odds with his meticulous linguistic notes. Unfortunately, one can only assume that he either had too little time for it or wanted to avoid the topic, because *kanaima* is a dangerous topic.

One of the most important questions for the study of *kanaima* remains whether non-Indigenous people can be included in the worlds of the *kanaima*. In the case of Whitehead (See Janik and Whitaker in this volume; Whitaker 2021) this is obviously the case. But I had my doubts if it can be adapted to the Pemon, and the question is – even after many years of living in the savannah – for me not to answer clearly.

In the first part of this chapter, I will explain my personal experiences and approach the phenomenon of sorcery in relation to the *kanaima* complex. Previously unpublished material is included and put into dialogue with published material. For example, in an article on *kanaima* songs (Lewy 2018), I focused on the *oarebá/warepán*[1] and *amanawui* genres. The published material will only be used to explain the broader context of the phenomenon of *kanaima* sounds. The *amanawui* genre will be supplemented by new data when explaining the role of the *aiyan* timescape, i.e. the world of the *kanaima*.

The main question of this article deals with the qualities of *kanaima*, and how these qualities are related to sound phenomena. The hypothesis posed here is that there is a form of *pia'sán kanaima* (literally shaman *kanaima*) beings and a form of non-*pia'sán kanaima* (literally non-shaman *kanaima*) beings, which can be deduced by examining formalized sound and soundscape examples. The role of bird sounds will be further discussed at the end.

What is a *kanaima*?

This question is the subject of several chapters in this book and there are significant national and group-specific differences as discussed in the introduction. However, the phenomenon of *kanaima* often intersects at several different levels. For example, political-ideological accusations of *kanaima* to individuals or groups can be found, as is currently the case in notes on migration movements of Venezuelan Taurepán from Kumarakapay who fled to the Bananal community in Brazil (see Monticelli in this volume). But accusations of *kanaima* can also take place within a group, for example from an economic point of view as it happens in the tourism sector (Whitaker 2016). During my life in the Gran Sabana, I testified that unethical behavior towards

---

[1] Koch-Grünberg (1923) writes *oarebá*. The problem of this spelling caused an unfortunate misunderstanding during a listening session on this genre, which is widely known as *warepán*, a dangerous genre (Lewy 2018, 111).

Indigenous colleagues can mean an accusation. Also, fierce competition often leads to imbalances that can result in the accusation of one community by another and vice versa. Ethnic-linguistic characteristics also point to historically developed differences associated with hostile accusations involving *kanaima* practices. All of the basic characteristics concerning the *kanaima* phenomenon are known. *Kanaima* are special entities that are perceived as human beings (*pemon*), but have weakened social connections and relations (e.g., an outcast). Every *pia'sán*, which I will refer to as shaman-*kanaima* for the rest of the chapter, can be a *kanaima* or knows the practices (as seen also in Whitehead 2002 in the Patamona context). Furthermore, there are *kanaimaton* that are *kanaimaton* from birth or are categorized as such and/or stigmatized. They are therefore non-*pia'sán-kanaima*, which I will refer to as non-shaman-*kanaima* for the rest of the chapter. This distinction between shaman-*kanaima* and non-shaman-*kanaima* is essential to understanding the *kanaima* phenomenon among the Pemón in the Gran Sabana. I will focus on the Pemón that live in the Gran Sabana in the Venzuelan part. These are the Taurepán, Arekuna and Kamarakoto. My experiences and information about *kanaima* are related to persons, with whom I established a long-term relationship (mainly from the mentioned groups). Most of them also have family in other Indigenous groups (like the Akawaio in Guyana).

My main interest in the phenomenon of *kanaimaton* is the relationship between sound and magic, which I define in terms of trans-specific communication with non-human entities (spirits, plants, animals). These interactions define the perceived world(s) and the behavior in these world(s) (Lewy 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the phenomenon in its ontology. There are four categories that needs to be considered. The main difference is between being *kanaima* due to one's identity or ascribed status and the ritual practice of being a *kanaima* as an achieved status. This refers to the ritual phases of killing, which can be separated into three parts.

The first phase is the pursuit of the victim and the transformation of the *kanaima* entity during the final steps of the homicide. The second phase is the moment of killing or, more specifically, the moment when the victim dies. This moment initiates the final and third phase, because the *kanaima* has to re-transform into a human being. This process is necessary because the entity separates body and soul in the second phase. This separation, however, takes place without control in case of a non-shaman-*kanaima*. It is contrary to shamanic practice, including that of the shaman-*kanaima*, who control their *yekaton* (soul or shadow). Therefore, *kanaimaton* act in the same way as shamans, i.e., they step out of their body by means of their shadow in order to shapeshift into animal bodies. However, this practice is limited to shaman-*kanaima* entities. To explore this further, it is first necessary to look at the multiverse and its actors specifically in terms of *kanaimaton* ritual practice.

The five states of being *kanaima* can be divided into two main categories. The first encompasses the constant perception as *kanaima* through self-attribution or external attribution. The second main category includes the four phases of the *kanaima* killing ritual.

1. Being *kanaima* (identity-outside attribution)
2. Phase 1 of being *kanaima* state – persecution
3. Phase 2 of being *kanaima* state – transformation before killing
4. Phase 3 of being *kanaima* state – killing
5. Phase 4 of being *kanaima* state – re-transformation, re-becoming *pemon* (human being)

All state-related properties of *kanaima* can be associated with certain formalized sounds. Besides the sounds in space, these include anthropomorphized songs of this *kanaima* entity. On the one hand, these reflect actions in the individual phases or, on the other hand, refer to further contexts and references around the ritual phases. There is no song that directly refers to the act of killing, as it is often a pursuit and an attack to bring about a disease.

Multiverse

The world concept of Pemón cosmology contains various timescape[2] layers that form a multiverse (Halbmayer 2010), as I described elsewhere (Lewy 2018). In addition to the *serewarö* (here and now), the *pia daktai* (derived from *piai* – the beginning and the end/ mythical world) and the *wakü pata* (paradise/world of *orekotón*), the *aiyan* timescape layer with its specific plant entities must be added (Lewy 2018, 102).

The layers are placed in different parts of the landscape as an invisible but audible area inhabited by certain entities. For the Pemon, humans share the world with all kinds of animals, plants, spirits, and additional other-than-human beings. All animals, plants and humans live and have their place in *serewarö*. The spirits (*mawaritón*) live in the mountains (*tepuy*), which are their home. Other entities include the water spirits of the *rató* family. According to Pemon cosmology, there are entities that are not visible to normal Pemón but are audible. They are the *maikok*, who inhabit different areas in the savannah and mark their territory with spider webs or bird calls (*wantoto*) to warn people not to cross their territory without leaving an offering for them. The appropriation of the term 'paradise' (*wakü pata*) reflects the idea that there is a place where the souls of the deceased Pemón family members who practiced the rituals of the *orekotón* (*areruya*, *cho'chiman*) live, together with Christian spirits (like saints) and former ritual leaders (*ipukenak*). Every weekend, the living *orekotón* meet to perform these rituals

---

[2] Halbmayer (2004; 2010, 531) developed the idea of timescape following Overing (1985; 2004) as a "continuity of discontinuity" between the worlds from a vertical instead of a purely horizontal orientation of a multiverse. The concept of time lies on the idea of an "[...] ordered relationship of continuity and discontinuity. Modern time is based on a discontinuous continuity, a continuity that prevails over and is based on discontinuous units. These units of time or periods have a be-ginning and an end; they may be 'clipped together' linearly, and are associated with notions of before and after" (2004, 137). However, the notion of timescapes, based on a continuous discontinuity, an overarching discontinuity whose reproduction produces continuity not primarily as continuous antagonism of discontinuous units, but rather "in the continuous coexistence of different, and therefore spatial-temporally discontinuous, units and their change" (Halbmayer 2004, 137).

(Lewy 2011, 154). When doing so, a transactive timescape (Lewy 2023) is established. It is the very moment when timescapes like *wakü pata* and *serewarö* merge into one by trans-specific communication for the time of the performance.

Another transactive timescape is generated when the *pia'sán* connect the spirits' world of the *pia daktai*, the mythical timescape which is also strongly connected to the *aiyan* timescape. The shaman sees and hears all entities of these timescapes, which ordinary Pemón cannot. During the interaction with individual entities of these timescapes, for all involved entities (e.g., *pia'sán*, spirits) both timescapes of *serewarö* and *pia daktai* transcend in a transactive timescape. This transcendence is produced by formalized songs, which were given by spirits to humans. In creating the transactive timescape through the healing ritual the *pia'sán* contacts the spirits via their songs and starts to interact with them. In most cases, the *pia'sán* leaves his body and his *yekatón* (soul or shadow) and travels through the *pia daktai*. This is a well-known shamanic practice that is noted across Amazonia. The practice of shapeshifting into animal bodies is also documented regionally and in Indigenous discourses.

A different world is the *aiyan* timescape, which is more related to specific plants. The most important one is the *kumi* plant, which is used in practices of healing and sorcery.[3] The question arises how the *aiyan* layer becomes part of a transactive timescape and what body-soul relationships are to be found here for the shaman-*kanaima* as distinct from the non-shaman-*kanaima*.

***Aiyan* timescape layer**

This layer is reserved for the interiorities of the plant world. The trans-specific communication with this layer is again done by singing. The *amanawui* and *oareba* genres are used by the *kanaimatón* to interact with this layer. The song texts themselves reflect the ontological relations as well as the social ones of the human community.

Butt Colson and Armellada (1989, 172; Halbmayer 2010, 192) write that *aiyan* is the name of a dance among the Pemón. The term *aiyan* means darkness and weakness and is a counter-concept to the term *auka* for the Kamarakoto and Arekuna I worked with (Lewy 2011, 199; 2018, 114). *Auka* means light and vitality. The dance was performed in the dry season to obtain fruits, prey animals and fish (Butt Colson and Armellada 1989, 172; Halbmayer 2010, 192).

Butt Colson and Armellada mention that the aiyan ritual has been replaced by the *areruya* and/or *chimitin* rituals, which are often practiced at Christmas time (Butt Colson and Armellada 1989, 185; Halbmayer 2010, 192). According to this idea, it seems understandable that Christian spirits were appropriated as a new and safe source of resources compared to aiyan entities. However, it can be said that these aiyan entities have not disappeared, at least not in the *areruya* and *cho'chiman* rituals. *Makoi* is a layer near around the *cho'chi* (ritual house) where the evil energy of the world or the devils resides (Lewy 2011, 71; 2012, 62). The notion also refers to underwater (mermaid-like) beings among the Makushi in Brazil (see Santilli 2002, 501, in Whitaker 2020, 51, note 14). Devils are metonyms referring to the sign of dead bringing entities in Pemón discourse.

---

[3] It needs to be mentioned that *kumi* is used by several *ipukenak* (wise people). It plays a part in healing practices (*pia'san*). *Kumi* is used in puberty ritual by grandmothers with their young granddaughters (Koch-Grünberg 1923, 131), as well as in *kanaima* rituals (e.g. Whitehead 2002, 91; Levy 2003, 2, note 2; Lewy 2018, 93).

The question is how the "domination of the animals" works in relation to the *kanaima* phenomenon. The connection between *kanaima* and the *aiyan* timescape runs on several levels. It is necessary to make a special distinction between different qualities and differences here in relation to *kanaima* and shamans. The *amanawui* genre, which has already been discussed elsewhere (Lewy 2018, 107), must be considered. The genre includes the reflexive statement "I am a kanaima" when mocking the relatives of the victims.[4] For example, it can be interpreted in the lyrics of Usankoro's song (Example 1). Usankoro was the last famous *pia'sán pachi* (female shaman) in the Kamarata area and died in the 1990s. She knew that song as she knew *kanaima* practice like all *pia'sán*.

1. *yakon pachi karawü nase?*	1. Is my brother's wife crying?

Example 1. amanawui, Usankoro (*pia'san pachi*/*kanaimaton*, región de Kamarata), 1992 (Lewy 2018, 111. See Lambos and Lewy this volume).

The song is sung by the *kanaima* after the killing ritual or independently of the ritual status to demonstrate their power. To do this, potential *kanaima* hunters must be kept at a distance, which works best for creating fear. I often experienced that people only whispered or looked fearfully to the side when a powerful *kanaima* was in sight. The idea that a *kanaima* exercises power through 'seeing' is evident in another *amanawui* song (Example 2). The singer draws attention to the fact that the victims are far away, but he still sees them. As mentioned, all shaman-*kanaima* can separate the body from the soul (*yekatón*). They are able to always keep their victims under observation. The expression *yewayuru* (straight) means that the soul of shaman-*kanaima* is in the water and they observe their victims through this medium. The word *uyakonon* (my brothers) is not necessarily to be understood here in the sense of a relationship of kinship or friendship. Rather, this song is a concrete threat. The so-called 'brothers' are the victims who are under the watchful eye of the *kanaima*. It needs to be pointed out, that one's own family members can also become victims of the *kanaima*. The term 'brothers' can even refer to blood relatives or friends, but not in a connotation that is widely understood in the Western sense, namely as a synonym of a communal bond based on mutual trust and family protection. This theme is extremely ambivalent. From stories of *kanaima* whose family members were identified as *kanaima*, it can be noticed that some members of the family voted for the execution of the *kanaima*, but children were enormously afraid of the demise of one of their parents. These children are severely traumatized by such experiences. Accordingly, there are gradations to be made here as to what is called a family. As a rule, the nuclear family (mother, father, children) is not affected, although more extensive family relationships are affected.

---

[4] *Kanaima* mockery practice is also expressed by the nurse Saigo Williams, who plays a role in Whitehead's book (2002, 115) and was interviewed by Tarryl Janik in 2017 (this volume).

1. *micha micha*	1. far, far
2. *Mazuri yewayuru*	2. from the straight Mazuri river,
3. *mükadatöu uyakonon*	3. you said my brothers,
4. *uneneton pök rö*	4. I see, I see,
5. *Parüima yewayuru*	5. from the straight Parüima River.

Example 2. amanawui.

A direct reference to the *aiyan* timescape as a place of plant spirits is shown in the song *ököyimü*, which is related to the myth of the origin of *inek* (barbasco) plant (Example 3). The myth as well as the song refer to that connection of blood as a fertilizer for plants linking to growth and underlining Whitehead's thesis, when saying that "dark shamans" kill to create life (Whitehead 2001, 14; Cooper 2015, 115; Cooper in this volume). Human crops serve as fertilizer for the soil and for the plant. These plants serve as alimentation for the animals which humans eat (Lewy 2018, 109). Whitaker (2016, page) writes for the Makushi that the principle of *kanaima* is a human-plant relationship. The *kanaima* ritual killer is powered by *bina* plants, which in turn are controlled by a spirit. While the *bina* plants enable the *kanaima* to move with superhuman speed and transform into various animals, the *kanaima* must kill their victims, and then provide the victim's blood to the plants. If this reciprocation fails, the *kanaima* is driven mad and killed.[5]

The well-known myth "How the fish poisons Aza and Ineg came into the world" was told to the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1916, 68) by the Pemón-Arekuna Akuli in the years between 1911 and 1913. Already in 1972, Cesáreo de Armellada published a similar version of the myth under the title: "Ada esemboikatok Pantoni: Leyenda sobre el Origen del Barbasco" (Armellada 1972, 107).[6] The myth is widely known and is still passed on from grandparents to children, so the family tradition of myth-telling has been preserved in the families. The plot is as follows: A child grows up with a fox because it is rejected by its mother. After growing up, he meets a tapir woman, and they fall in love. The tapir woman becomes pregnant. The adult male returns to his village with his tapir wife. A villager shoots the tapir woman in the head. His son is cut out of the tapir woman's belly. While bathing this child, many fish die. The villagers bathe the child very frequently. The father of the fish (*ratö*) in the form of the giant snake *ököimü* kills the child. The shamans call birds. These birds kill *ököimü*. The birds then receive their colored plumage and their calls or flutes (Koch-Grünberg 916, 72).

---

[5] The Patamona call this *sopai*, see Whitehead (2002, 95), Janik (2018, 5), and Whitaker (2016, 326).

[6] Legend about the origin of the barbasco (Armellada 1972, 107).

While the child is taken to the grave, blood drips to the ground on the way. Where the blood meets the ground, the plant *inek* (barbasco) grows.

The Koch-Grünberg version says that the name of child that was washed is Aza. This is the creeping plant (*Paullina* sp.) used to poison fish (Koch-Grünberg 1916, 70, note 1).

He also writes that where the blood and flesh of the dead boy that fell to the soil is *ineg* (or *inek*, barbasco), a strong fish poison. The private parts of the dead boy and his bones remained on the shore and became *Azataukobu(x)pe*, a weak fish poison (Koch-Grünberg 1916, 70).

1. *ököyimü pi'po iwakaramutun pe*	1. The serpent (of the rainbow), as between the colors,
2. *wadakan, wadakan nariwomüy, nariwomüy*	2. the rainbow, the rainbow flew.

Example 3. *amanawui* (Raimundo Pérez, Kavanayén 2006).

These two lines refer to the myth reflecting the relationship between the skin of the snake and the analogy to the rainbow. That the rainbow flew over the snake refers to the birds as well as, in a broader sense, to all other animals (see Koch-Grünberg 1916, 68ff.), which formed their present-day bodies, the textures and colors of their body parts and countenances from the skin and flesh of the snake. The text, however, plays with a form of temporal displacement. The birds, as representations of the rainbow in the myth, are only endowed with their characteristics after the death of the giant snake. In contrast, the song reflects that suspension of diachronic time, which symbolically refers to the entire interaction between the discussed timescapes of the multiverse.

Even though the song contains no direct action or reference to human blood, flesh or bone, the reference level is served by these two lines, it links to the whole mythical story. Furthermore, the musical structure of the *amanawui* genre demonstrates this relationship of *kanaima* and the *aiyan* timescape and the creation of a transactive timescape as discussed below. In this context, the hunting sacrifice for Ayuk (Lewy 2018, 110) needs to be mentioned. Ayuk is the spirit of a plant, which helps the hunters. For this reason, the first prey caught in the forest must be left for him. If the hunter does not comply with this reciprocal demand, his body will be covered with a rash. Farage (1997) already elaborated on this point, referring to the intention of these plant spirits, which without game flesh and blood will even attack humans (Farage 1997, 86; Monticelli in this volume).

Levy (2003, 2, Note 2) describes the dependence of the *kanaima* on its plant owners, even a step further, when writing:

> Thus, when using this knowledge for revenge, they end up becoming "slaves to these plants." Once they have tasted the blood of revenge, these plants will always want to feed on humans. Therefore, if the Kanaimü do not continue killing and feeding them with human game, they may end up devouring them.[7]

---

[7] "Assim, ao utilizar esse saber para a vingança, acabam por se tornar 'escravos dessas plantas.' Uma vez tenham experimentado o sangue da vingança, essas plantas vão querer, sempre, alimentar-se de

Monticelli (this volume) follows this logic when writing that "there is no 'ex-*kanaimé*,' as the man-plant relationship only ends with the death of the murderer. Then the plant is reborn in another location, looking for a new slave." The only way to avoid becoming a *kanaima* is to have family members who can determine early if a child is carrying '*kanaima* symptoms.' Elsewhere (Lewy 2018, 98), I have already mentioned the story of a young girl who spoke with a deep voice, talked in tongues, grew sacred plant species, and began smoking tobacco at the age of 12. The plant spirits had therefore chosen the young girl and not the other way around. The diagnosis of the local *pia'sán* at that time was that she was entwined by an inner snake, like a creeper or *karavare* (see below). The parents took her to relatives in another area and she is now considered 'cured.' This is probably also because she never started the practice and was able to escape the plant spirits in time.

This dependency is the special distinction from the shaman-*kanaima* entity, who are not dependent on their plants. The *pia'sán* (shaman) is the *esak* (master, body) of the plants, chants, etc. If the relationship is reversed, the *pia'sán* would be exclusively a *kanaima*. The problem that non-shaman *kanaima* cannot do anything against being *kanaima* with *karavere* as the ontological unity of *kanaima* and this plant entity. But this entity is reinforced by the addition of sound entities that carry further parts of power towards the victims. This leads to further distinctions between the shaman-*kanaima* and non-shaman-*kanaima*, which are found in the individual ritual phases of the *kanaima* state.

An important distinction here is in relation to body-soul management, which is different for all *kanaima* types. It is important to note that various forms of *kanaima* behaviors are used mainly by the *pia'sán*, since *kanaimaton* without the skills of a *pia'sán* are not able to do so. The *kanaima* state is to be further specified in their ontological contexts and units, which can best be seen around the individual phases of the killing ritual of the *kanaimaton*. The focus here is primarily on the sound phenomena.

The first phase of the ritual refers to the selection of the victim and the associated stalking or pursuit. Several authors have commented on this. *Kanaimaton* prefer to attack in groups. They begin to inflict minor injuries on the victim, which can also serve as exercises for trainees (Butt Colson 1977, 47; Cooper 2015, 99; Cooper in this volume; Whitehead 2002, 93).

There are several descriptions of the process of killing,[8] so it will not be explained here in detail. It can be stated that the explanations of symptoms as described by the nurse Saigo Williams to Whitehead (2002, 115; see also interview with nurse Saigo in this volume) are like the explanation of medical staff members at the Santa Elena hospital (Lewy 2018).

Most authors mention that a shaman separates his spirit from his body, for which he connects with the plant spirit *kawai* (tobacco). Colson describes how Itoto (*kanaima*) can also intentionally split off his life force and send it to kill. In doing so, he can also send it

---

humanos. Por isso, se os *kanaimü* não continuarem matando e alimentando-as com caça humana, elas podem terminar por devorá-los."

[8] Whitehead (2002); Thomas (1982); Butt Colson (2001); Whitaker (2021); Cooper, Monticelli, Williams, and Janik in this volume.

into another creature, like dogs, birds, jaguars, or deer, etc., and use their bodies as disguises (Butt Colson 2001, 223). The idea of using an animal body is also found in Whitehead, who mentions the appearance of the *kanaima* as a jaguar or anteater. He states that the form of the apparition can be produced by *tarén* magical formulas (Whitehead 2002, 89).

The latter is not particularly difficult, as any Pemón *ipukenak* (*curandero*-sorcerer, non-shaman, non-*kanaima*) or *tarén esak* (the one who knows *tarén*) is able to change the perspective of others. The mode of action of *tarén* (magic formulas) is based on changing not one's own body but the world that the other sees. The formalized sound of the magical formulas defines the world the other sees. With other words, the formalized sound (*tarén*) defines in which body something is seen and how. The *kanaimaton* do not have to transform their bodies or use another animal body. The incantation causes the victim to see, for example, a jaguar. The *kanaimaton*, acting as *tarén esak*, do not see themselves as jaguars, but as humans, like all other jaguars as well do (Lewy 2018, 91).

The application of magical formulas can be performed by any person who has the gift to do so. It is more difficult to become invisible, for this purpose the *kanaimaton*, as the only form of *kanaima* being and explicitly non-shaman-*kanaima*, also use that plant *kumi* or *murán*, as all *pia'sán* use it.

Creating the *aiyan* transactive timescape

The connection between music and *kanaima* was not perceived in academic discourses for a long time, but the two main genres have been mentioned by indigenous specialists. The Brazilian anthropologist Fiorotti wrote in 2007:

> Besides these, Terêncio Luiz Silva, the Indigenous person responsible for the interlocution in this work, lists two rhythms of music: ware'pan and manau'ã; however, there is, so far, no record of these types of music, and even Terêncio Luiz Silva, our main interlocutor, did not get to know them (Fiorotti 2007, in Fiorotti 2017, 103).[9]

It is important to point out that magical incantations (*tarén*) cannot be used for the purpose of encountering the entities of the *aiyan* timescape. For doing so, singing is the only performance practice. The first genre is the *oarebá* (Koch-Grünberg) or *warepán* (also: *ware'pán*, see above Fiorotti). The second one is called *murúa* (also *muru'á*, *murwa*, *marik* or *manau'ã*, see above Fiorotti 2017). Both genres should not be recorded or even known as Fiorotti's co-researcher Terêncio Luiz Silva (see above, p. 217) says. This ethical issue was also confirmed to me by several Indigenous researchers. Otherwise, these genres were recorded by Koch-Grünberg and were also published on a CD by the Berlin Phonogramm Archive (Koch and Ziegler 2006).

As I described elsewhere (Lewy 2018, 91), my Pemón co-researcher and I experienced an emotionally difficult listening session with Koch-Grünberg's recordings. The genre *oarebá* indicated in his sparse documentation is the *warepán* genre, which evoked emotionally difficult associations in a specialist. In this context, the specialist referred us to the keyword for *pia'sán* and *kanaimaton* songs, which is *aiyan*. My Indigenous co-researcher knew this word and its negative connotation, but a reference to the world of the *kanaimaton* was unknown to her. The words also appear in *murúa* songs which are used by the *pia'san* in general to contact the entities of the *pia daktai* timescape.

---

[9] "Além desses, Terêncio Luiz Silva, indígena responsável pela interlocução neste trabalho, elenca dois ritmos de músicas: ware'pan e manau'ã; contudo, não há, até o momento, nenhum registro desses tipos de música, e mesmo Terêncio Luiz Silva, nosso principal interlocutor, não chegou a conhecê-los."

1. *tüwotori'pö pona*	1. After the hunt
2. *tarikuyamai*	2. I adorned myself
3. *muroko wadarirü'pe*	3. as well as the voice of the fish
4. *umanupamüy*	4. then the dance, I finished
5. *aiyan, aiyan, aiyan*	5. *aiyan, aiyan, aiyan*

Example 4. Wax Cylinder Number 12, Collection of Theodor Koch-Grünberg, Phonogramm-Archiv Berlin VII_W_2819_K_GR_BRASILIEN_12, see also: Lewy (2018, 105).

It is not atypical for shamans to contact the *aiyan* timescape. The *murúa* certainly points to an interaction with rató and its world of water spirits. It cannot be said whether the *aiyan* timescape is an independently separated timescape. However, it is the area of negative forces, and its entities are difficult to handle. Most respondents explain that in case these forces are used against humans, the *pia'sán* turns into the kanaima.[10] This information confirms that there are two modes of being *kanaima* as mentioned above. Regardless, the songs of the non-shaman-*kanaimaton* are the *oareba/warepán* chants recorded by Koch-Grünberg. These include the wax cylinder with the numbers 5, 6, 13, 14 and 23. In four of five *oareba* recordings (no. 6, 13, 14 and 23) only the word *aiyan* is sung in different variations (Lewy 2018, 106).

1. *awari makö'dan*	1. You are singing to the voice of your instrument
2. *aiyan aiyan*	2. *aiyan aiyan*

Example 5. Wax Cylinder no. 5, Koch-Grünberg collection, Phonogramm-Archiv Berlin VII_W_2812_K_GR_BRASILIEN_5 see also: Lewy (2018, 105).

In the context of the cylinder recording in Example 5 the term *awari* (*a-* 'tú', pos. and *-wari*, 'instrument') refers to the singer's voice. Singing to the voice seems at first glance to be a self-referential action. However, in this context, it is an action of 'humanizing' the voice of the singer, that is, the human voice generates its own entity to connect with the entities of the *aiyan* layer to create independence from its own body, whose transformation cannot be controlled for those *kanaima* without *pia'sán* abilities. For those entities, the soul leaves the human body and transforms itself into the *kanaima* body. Different categories are mentioned concerning these soulless body forms. Generally, the term *enek* (wild animal) is used. This also includes fantastic sounding forms like monsters or dragons (See informant description in Cooper in this volume).

---

[10] I worked over years with family members of 'Maki' (Marco William, who told the Urubere *pan-ton* to Cooper 2015, in this volume). These are Arekuna members from Guyana living in Santa Elena de Uairén, explaining that it depends on how *aiyan* entities (like *murán*) are used and against which kind of entity.

After the contact and the transformation, the *kanaimaton* are in the being *kanaima* state. They are connected to the *pia daktai* and to the *aiyan* timescape layers generating a transactive timescape with the *serewarö*. That means the layers are transcended due to the performance of the songs. Whitehead's *kanaima* informant Pirai mentions the *kalawali* world (Whitehead 2002, 109). This is the 'vine' that connects the different timescape layers and creates the transactive timescape that only exists during the ritual phases. The term can be read as a synecdoche for this transactive timescape. The process of connecting two timescapes is found in all three major transcendental subgroups of circum-Roraima inhabitants as mentioned before. The *orekotón* movement (also *areruya* or *cho'chiman*, Lewy 2011) uses the expression "pata dewa" (Lewy 2012, 61), the thread that connects the *kak münata* (heaven's gate), the *wakü pata* timescape to the *cho'chi* (ritual house) that represents the *serewarö* timescape. In the healing ritual, Koch-Grünberg (1916, 66) uses the term *kapeyenkumá(x) pe* for the vine that connects the *pia daktai* to the *serewarö* erected via singing ritual songs (e.g. *murúa*). The term *karavare*[11] was mentioned to me in the context of the young girl's *kanaima* symptoms and is also found in the dictionary of Armellada, who translates the term with: "Escalera de los piaches" ('ladder of the shaman,' Armellada 2007, 93). The *pia'san* use this expression to connect with the *pia daktai*, the *aiyan* timescape and the *serewarö*. The non-shaman *kanaima*, therefore, also use that word to contact the *aiyan* timescape.

Re-transformation and re-becoming Pemón

There are two forms of transformation and re-transformation. One is the kind of transformation used by a shaman who acts as *kanaima*. Is this case, the shaman knows how to manage his or her body-soul interaction. He kills with the soul using other bodies and *tarén* for changing the view of the other. The non-shaman-*kanaima* has more problems with the transformation and re-transformation. This *kanaima* entity senses when the victim dies since it transforms at that very moment. This transformation must be counteracted, i.e., the entity must re-transform. The non-shaman-*kanaima* loses the soul when transforming. It produces an immense heating and unwanted transformation of the body, which can be protected by *tarén* (magic formulas). But it can also be nullified by anti-*tarén* of the *kanaima* hunters. During the killing, the *kanaima* is highly vulnerable, as it cannot prevent the heating up and physical transformation (*enek* state), nor its loud screaming or roaring. To cool down, the *kanaima* prefers to go to waterfalls, as the sound of the water is said to drown out its unwanted screaming. Thus, waterfalls are the frequently suspected location of a *kanaima* immediately after the kill.

---

[11] When comparing Whitehead's (2002, 164) transcription *kalawari* with Armellada's (2007, 92) *karavare*, it should be noted that the Spanish-speaking mostly Indigenous translators used an "r" instead of an "l" for the transcriptions of their language.

In this state, the *kanaima* hunters can track him down and prevent the soul from re-entering the *kanaima*'s body. If the *kanaima* manages to hide, there are two solutions for how the *kanaima* can restore the state of a human (body and soul). Either he eats the flesh of the victim from the left thigh, or he intones a *kanaima* song, which provides cooling and thus re-transformation, so that the soul can re-enter. I have no information about a honey-sweet *maba* (Whitehead 2001, 238) in his context – rather the *amanawui* and *warepan* songs serve as anthopophagic substitutes. It explains what Levy (2003, 2, Note 2) noted that the *kanaima* is the "slave" of the plant, as well as Whitaker mentioned for the Makushi (2016, 326). The entity liberates its body from *karavere* by feeding it, and so to re-transform into a human. The human meat of the victim and the song performance are related at a metonymical level.

1. *parau saru uyau*	1. In the current of the ocean,
2. *tuma sewasurumai tunakoto*	2. the place of the waters, I become a mermaid.

Example 6. amanawui

The text (Example 6) reflects the action of the first phase of transformation into a mermaid, which is a preliminary stage to the final re-transformation into a Pemón. The former produced voice as an independent sound entity is singing inside the *aiyan* timescape at this moment, in which all *kanaimaton* are connected in some way. Thus, they all feel physically touched when one of them killed and, therefore, need to be in the phase of re-transformation and cool down.

parau po utösak dau	*parau po utösak dau*	When I go to the sea,
unnepü rö mö kamisa	*kamisa, kamisa*	I also have clothes with me. Clothes, clothes.

Example 7. amanawui song (Raimundo Pérez, 2005).

Another song of the *amanawu*i (Example 7) genre shows again the connection between the mythical world and its narratives for the re-transformation of the *kanaima*. He describes here again a reference to *ököimü* (giant snake) as representation of *rató*, for which also all white people can be counted (see Whitaker 2020, 39). The fish poison is, ontologically, the boy in the myth *inek*. *Rató* and the plant do not have a good relationship, because the plant kills the fish. This point links to the proportionality that must be applied in fishing. The plant itself would kill incessantly, which is why a significant deliberate effort on the part of the people is necessary.

Sound structures

There are two categories of sound structure to distinguish, with overlap producing a variety of types. Basically, there are the chants with intelligible texts and clearly recognizable musical structures that are inseparable from the texts used. Thus, individual syntagms often combined with each other are bound to subphrases. The latter can also be varied. Syntactical, but also musical parallelism emerges from these variations (Lewy 2011, 279; 2012, 67). A typical structure is the repetition of two lines of text, each connected to a musical phase. Every text line is usually subdivided into two syntagms. These syntagms form the two subphrases make up a musical phrase. In the examples of *amanawui* (Example 6), it can be seen, how one syntagm is repeated in two musical subphrases, forming Phrase A.

A=a+a1 Syntagma a: *parau po utösak dau*
B=b+c Syntagma b: *unnepü rö mö kamisa, Syntagma c: kamisa, kamisa*

Both phrases are generally repeated 8-12 or more times to form a partial song. The entire performance can last several hours, as a series of partial songs are performed to create the entire ritual. It should be noted that the singers of this genre do not have to be *kanaima*. There is a reflexive layer within all musical genres, in which songs are performed in schematic contexts, such as community festivities. This was also the case with the *aiyan* genre, as described above (see aiyan dances, Butt Colson and Armellada 1989).

These findings, however, leads to the second level of musical structure. When such songs are performed in the ritual of *kanaima* or in the healing ritual of *pia'sán*, the musical variations become more complex, and the lyrics are increasingly unintelligible. Direct communication is created between entities of the respective timescapes. The emergence of the transactive timescapes (e.g. *karavere*) can be read close to this musical structure. The musical variation of single words like *aiyan* are increased, as it is up to the decision of a single singer and no group dance and song performance takes place. The language becomes unintelligible, as it is not meant to be understood either by people present or by non-humans (e.g., spirits). These kinds of performance are found primarily in the *oarebá* recordings of Koch-Grünberg.

While the shaman-*kanaima* is always the *esak* (body/owner) of the *kumi* plant, the non-shaman-*kanaima* becomes the body of the plant. The plant takes over his or her body and his or her soul disappears. The soulless body deforms and must eat the flesh of the victim's thigh to get his soul back. In other words, the non-shaman-*kanaimaton* have problems separating their souls from their bodies. Instead, they hand over their body to the plant and can no longer control their *yekaton* (soul), which is why they have little control over the whole process, as also Levy writes following Farage (see above). The plant owns the *kanaima*, which explains again why it was confirmed to me that non-shaman-*kanaima* attack their own family members (Lewy 2018, 95), while Thomas (1982, 235) rules this out for the Pemón.

The transcendence of the multiverse through songs and the differences between the qualities of the introduced *kanaima* types can be examined by another sound phenomenon. The relations of *kanaima* to birds and their sound are found especially during the first contacts, the pursuit phase and the harassment of the victim.

Piesey whistling

> The kanaimàs are hunting during certain points of the year, when they get access. Yes, that is what happens, they are out there to do their damage at a certain time of the year, most times. And then you will hear them whistling. They make a strange sound, and you know that is kanaimà sound (Saigo Williams, the nurse in Whitehead 2002, 117).

The first time, around 2006, I had a concrete contact with the world of the *kanaimaton*, which was not merely a reflection. A single Indigenous woman asked me to stay the night in her house, because she was afraid of a *kanaima* that had been prowling around her house for days. We were staying in two different rooms. I had not attached too much importance to the phenomenon until then. Unforgettable, however, was a very noticeable sound that made me cringe in the hammock and that produced goosebumps and fear at the same time. I tried to calm down by telling myself that I had heard this sound many times before and that it was a bird sound. But on closer listening, my fear increased more and more, and my impression changed. I became convinced that it sounded like an imitation of the bird sound, which scared me very much and paralyzed me to some extent.

It is said that it is the bird *piesey* that is used by the *kanaima*. But how exactly is this relationship between the bird, the *kanaimaton* and the bird sound to be understood?

The *kanaimaton* use various sound techniques associated with birds in their first approach. Whitehead (2002, 88) mentions the night owl, the goatsucker sound, and a whistling noise, but no more explicit bird. Cooper (in this volume) mentions the descriptions of an Akawaio informant about a man who heard a whistle while cutting a banana tree. After that, he went home and became sick. Cooper's co-researcher Lorendo confirms Whitehead's goatsucker or nightjar (*Caprimulgus*) sound, also known as *pakoorau* (Makushi), which is also noted by Schomburgk (Roth 1915, 274; Cooper 2015, 112, Cooper in this volume). Furthermore, Cooper refers to Daly (2015, 381; Cooper in this volume) that among the Makushi the *kanaima* entity is associated with birds, like *arauwaimî* (*Nyctibius grandis*), *watafaimî* (*Crypturellus undulates*), *kanraiwa'*, *anakwa* (*Ortalis* sp.), and the *ko' sara'* (*Aramides cajanea*).

The whistling I heard in the hammock that night is the typical approach of *kanaimaton*.

It is a sound reference to the mentioned bird, that produced a two- or three-times repetition of one short whistle tone that descends a little at the end. In the morning conversation about the night experience, we talked about the phenomenon that this whistling refers to a bird sound, which is usually produced by the bird *piesey*. We discussed the whistling, and she thanked me for being in her house overnight. When asking why she thinks we were not attacked, she argued that the *kanaima*-bird sound came very close to her house on the previous night. She assumed that the reason was that her family was not with her. That night, my presence was the reason why she was not attacked, since I am a white person connected to *rató* (water spirit). This association is attributed to many light-skinned people. *Kanaima* do not like to mess with possible spirits. Later, when I told the stories of my *kanaima* experiences here and there, I heard the comment that "my white flesh rather stinks and would be of no use for *kanaima*."

When thinking about the texture of the heard *kanaima*-bird sound, we initially concluded that it is an imitated bird sound. However, there was also a slight anthropomorphization in it, which has the quality of human whistling. So, there is a small difference in the sound quality that links to an attack and to an accusation of being a victim because a possible *kanaima* is nearby. This little difference is mentioned by Saigo Williams in the interview with Whitehead when saying that *kanaima* make their own whistling sound, which she described as a "strange sound" (see above).

The *kanaima* whistling sound is a unity of bird vocalization and human voice creating their very own sound ontology. In this case, the *piesey* is just a reference. The *kanaima* interiority does not use the bird's body – as, for example, the *mawaritón* (spirits of table mountains) practice with bird bodies. Another case of a purer bird sound is mentioned by Whitehead referring to Michael Anthon, who describes a Guardia Nacional soldier and his experience of imitating a bird sound in interaction with a real bird. The soldier communicated with the bird, which kept luring him until he encountered a *kanaima*. This one, however, was surprised by the non-Indigenous soldier while lying in wait to attack one of his victims (Anthon 1957 in Whitehead 2002, 279). In this case, there are a few possibilities to consider. Shamans are said to use the spirit birds to know who is approaching their house. Thus, it was said of Usankoro that certain bird sounds announced the arrival of possible enemies. Just hearing these bird sounds meant that the shamans knew exactly who was coming. This is also a protection of shaman-*kanaima* to keep *kanaima* hunters at a distance. Otherwise, Anthon's descriptions rather point to a non-shaman-*kanaima* who was either a novice or who was simply not interested in a non-Indigenous person.

Even if the bird is not visible, a sound difference from the anthropomorphic imitation can be detected. If the listener is certain about hearing the pure bird sound, he can understand the sound as a warning, because the bird sound is considered as a sign that a *kanaima* is nearby. However, the *kanaima*-bird whistling, which refers to a bird sound, is not an imitation, but a quality of merging two sounds into one that has a certain calculated effect. The *kanaima* is aware of the quality of imperfect bird call imitation, i.e., the potential victim hears a sound that resonates from his own experience to the actual bird sound. Accordingly, this sound structure has a supporting function in attacking and dealing with the victim, like other paraphernalia (e.g., snake venom to stun the tongue), aiming to paralyze and limit the victim's ability to communicate (i.e., crying for help). This sound property of *kaniama*-bird-sound is on a par with those material utensils and practices described by Whitehead (2002).

Conclusion

In closing, when dealing with sound phenomena in connection with the *kanaima* rituals, two qualities or modes of being kanaima can be distinguished. One is the type of shaman-*kanaima*, the other is the type of non-shaman-*kanaima*.

Regarding the use of magical incantations (*tarén*) with the aim of changing the other's point of view, it can be said that both types of *kanaima* use these incantations. This is also the case when considering the interaction and use of *kanaima*-bird sounds. This is the case even if shaman-*kanaima* lay a false trail to bring non-shaman-*kanaima* into the suspicion of the deed. That is, shaman-*kanaima* use the pattern of non-shaman-*kanaima*, as they are proficient in the killing. An important form of distinction is the demarcation between shaman and shaman-*kanaima*. Not every *pia'sán* necessarily acts as a *kanaima*. Especially in healing, many shamans face the insurmountable task of averting *kanaima* attacks (Lewy 2018).

The first attack is thus a sound attack that generates the knowledge and experience complex of the victims without textual-semantic references. The *kanaima* reference sound for the victim is a hybrid sound texture, consisting of reference to a bird sound and the aspect of the anthropomorphized voice. The bird-*kanaima* sound entity that intimidates the victim is thus attributable to this group.

In terms of song genres, the linkage of formalized sounds (e.g., *murúa*, *warepan* [*oarebá*] and *amanawui* genre) is evident. The shaman-*kanaima* is in direct communication with the mountain spirits, who are mostly birds. They also control the plants, which is why they act by means of the *murúa* genre and do not necessarily have to use the *oarebá* genre. However, there is no danger of losing their body to the plant, since they remain the *esak* (master, body). On the contrary, they use the plant itself. As for the genres, the songs make sense for both types of *kanaimaton*, since they produce deterrence and fear.

A clearly recognizable musical structure refers to the reflexive level of the ritual performance of re-transformation. An increasing textual incomprehensibility and complex musical variations show the degree of trans-specific communication between the *kanaima* and the respective entities (plants).

The particularity of the need for concrete function is evident in the relationship of ownership and nurture (Brightman, Fausto, and Grotti 2016). The non-shaman-*kanaima* is the slave of the plant (Levy 2003, 2, note 2) or, better to say, the plant is the *esak* (master, body) of the *kanaima*, which is especially visible in the ritual phase for re-transformation. The *alimentation* of the plant means the chance of re-transformation. For this, either the meat of the victim or the intonation of one of the song genres can suffice.

Finally, who becomes the body of the plant and who does not depend on the level of knowledge of the particular *kanaima*. This level of knowledge also plays a role when it comes to white or non-Indigenous people involved with *kanaima*. It is said that the more knowledge they acquire, the more they intend to become *esak* (body, master) of *kanaima* knowledge. Conversely, this also means that plants become aware. However, non-Indigenous human flesh does not feed them as it stinks, an argument that makes it less likely to become a *kanaima* victim as a non-Indigenous human.

References cited

Anthon, Michael
1957 “The Kanaima.” *Timehri* 5, no. 36: 61-65.

Armellada, Cesáreo de
1972 *Pemontón taremurú. Lenguas indígenas de Venezuela*. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB).
1989 *Tauron panton. Cuentos y leyendas de los indios Pemón (Gran Sabana, Estado Bolívar, Venezuela)*. Quito: Abya-Yala.
2007 *Diccionario pemón*. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB).

Brightman, Marc, Carlos Fausto, and Vanessa E. Grotti, eds.
2016 *Ownership and nurture. Studies in native Amazonian property relations*. New York: Berghahn.

Butt Colson, Audrey
1977 “The Akawaio shaman.” In *Carib-speaking Indians: Cultures, society and languages*, edited by Ellen B. Basso, 43-65 . Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
2001 “Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure.” In Beyond the visible and the material: the Amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière, organized by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 221-234. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butt Colson, Audrey J., and Cesáreo de Armellada
1989 “The Pleiades, Hyades and Orion (Tamökan) in the conceptual and ritual system of Kapon and Pemon groups in the Guiana highlands.” *Scripta Ethnologica* Suppl. 9: 153-200.

Cooper, Dan G.
2015 “Under Mount Roraima: The revitalization of a shamanic landscape and practice”. PhD thesis, University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment.

Daly, Lewis
2015 “The symbiosis of people and plants: Ecological engagements among the Makushi Amerindians of Amazonian Guyana.” PhD thesis, Oxford University.

Farage, Nádia
1997 “As flores da fala: práticas retóricas entre os Wapishana.” PhD thesis. Universidade de São Paulo (USP). http://biblioteca.funai.gov.br/media/pdf/TESES/MFN-1075.PDF (15.05.2024)

Fiorotti, Devair A.
2007 *Panton pia'*. Boa Vista: Universidade Estadual de Roraima (UERR)/Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq).
2017 “Erenkon do circum-Roraima. Ou uma poética da repetição.” *O Eixo e a Roda* 26, no. 3: 101-128. https://doi.org/10.17851/2358-9787.26.3.101-128

Halbmayer, Ernst
2004 “Timescapes and the meaning of landscape: Examples from the Yukpa.” In *Kultur, Raum, Landschaft: Die Bedeutung des Raumes in Zeiten der Globalität*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer, and Elke Mader, 136-154. Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel.
2010 *Kosmos und Kommunikation. Weltkonzeptionen in der südamerikanischen Sprachfamilie der Cariben*. Wien: Facultas.

Janik, Tarryl
2018 “A return to dark shamans.” Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834 (15.05.2024)

Koch, Lars-Christian, and Susanne Ziegler

2006 *Theodor Koch-Grünberg. Walzenaufnahmen aus Brasilien 1911-1913. Theodor Koch-Grünberg. Gravações em cilindros do Brasil 1911-1913*, vol. 3. Berlin: Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv.

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor

1916 *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco. Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. 2. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

1923 *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco: Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. 3: *Ethnographie.* Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/c2tvqtbn/items (06.02.2024)

Levy, Gabriela

2003 "Vozes inscritas: o movimento de San Miguel entre os Pemon, Venezuela". Master's thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp). https://doi.org/10.47749/T/UNICAMP.2003.294353

Lewy, Matthias

2011 "Die Rituale areruya und cho'chiman bei den Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)". Doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin. https://doi.org/10.17169/refubium-6806

2012 "Different 'seeing' – similar 'hearing.' Ritual and sound among the Pemón (Gran Sabana/Venezuela)." INDIANA 29: 53-71. https://doi.org/10.18441/ind.v29i0.53-71

2017 "About Indigenous perspectivism, Indigenous sonorism and the audible stance. Approach to a symmetrical auditory anthropology." *El oído pensante*, 5, no. 2. http://revistascientificas2.filo.uba.ar/index.php/oidopensante/article/download/7491/6703 (15.05.2024)

2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

2023 "How to transform the world(s). Generating transactive timescapes through myths, songs, and magic formulas in the Guianas." In *Creation and creativity in Indigenous Lowland South America*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer, and Anne Goletz, 173-197. Oxford: Berghahn.

Overing, Joanna

1985 "Today shall I call him 'Mummy': Multiple worlds and classificatory confusion." In *Reason and Morality*, edited by Joanna Overing, 152-179. London: Tavistock.

2004 "The grotesque landscape of mythic 'before time'; the folly of sociability in 'today time': An egalitarian aesthetics of human existance." In *Kultur, Raum, Landschaft*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer, and Elke Mader. 69-90. Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel.

Roth, Walter Edmund

1915 "An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians." In *Thirtieth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1908-1909*, 103-386. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology/Government Print Office. https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/91737 (15.05.2024)

Santilli, Paulo

2002 "Trabalho escravo e brancos canibais. Uma narrativa histórica Macuxi." In *Pacificando o branco: cosmologias do contato no Norte-Amazonîco*, edited by Bruce Albert, and Alcida Rita Ramos, 487-506. São Paulo: Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP).

Thomas, David

1982 *Order without government. The society of the Pemón Indians of Venezuela*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Whitaker, James Andrew
2016 “Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana”. PhD thesis, Tulane University. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (17.05.2024)
2020 “Water mamas among the Makushi.” *Folklore* 131, no. 1: 34-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.2019.1626063
2021 “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta.” *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726

Whitehead, Neil L.
2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima Mountains, Guyana.” In *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura M. Rival, and Neil. L. Whitehead, 235-247. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kanaima (E'toto) and the Ecology of Violence in the Circum-Mount Roraima Landscape[1]

Daniel G. Cooper
University of San Francisco, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5385-2544
dcooper10@usfca.edu

Story of Urubere

A family was cutting farm when their 10-year-old son disappeared. Years passed and the boy's brothers grew up to become good hunters. They would travel three to five days away near Mount Roraima to hunt. On one expedition, a brother was looking for a deer when he saw a giant bush cow [tapir]. He shot an arrow at the giant animal, but it was too big to have an impact, so it ran away. He told his brothers about his encounter, but they didn't believe him. He convinced them to go look for it the next day.

They set out early in the morning, but couldn't find any footprints, so they began to think their brother was crazy. The next day, they decided to go again. This time, they saw the cow, shot arrows with *urari* [curare, poison], but it disappeared without leaving any hoof prints.

That night, while they were camping, it became windy as if nature was angry. Suddenly, a strange sound came from the bushes. With a gust of wind, a creature that was half-human and half-dragon appeared and said: "Don't be afraid. I'm your brother who was taken from the farm by Urubere [a dragon] who has a hollowed-out back where he carries all his meat. I grew up with the dragon and his daughter near Karabu Tepui. Urubere wanted me to become his son-in-law, but first I had to prove that I could hunt. He told me to go hunting and turn left when the trail forks, but I went right and was pleased to find a large deer. I brought it back to the cave to show him, but he was not satisfied; he told me to eat it all and said: 'Look at me; see how much I can kill and eat. You are useless as a son-in-law!'"

Then the dragon chopped the boy into pieces. He took part of his own flesh and mixed it with the boy's so that he was half-human and half-dragon. The dragon-boy went out hunting with the dragon and turned left at the fork in the road, while the dragon turned right. This time he caught more than the dragon and brought it back to the cave. The dragon was impressed and told the dragon-boy to eat everything he had killed.

Urubere began to terrorize the village where the brothers were from by taking people and eating them. Fifty of the best hunters decided to search for the dragon near Weroban Tepui to kill it. One hunter went to the cave to draw out the dragon by letting it smell him. Urubere emerged from the cave with fire, lightning, and thunder. Then the rest of the hunters began to shoot arrows and spears with *urari* until the dragon became weak and died. The young dragon-boy was afraid that he would also be killed, so he went away with his wife to the mountains.

---

[1] This chapter is based on a subchapter in my doctoral dissertation (4.3 *Kanaimɨ*: the cult of fear; Cooper 2015). It was presented as a paper: "Kanaima (e'toto) and the culture of fear" at the Ways of Knowing, 7th Annual Conference on Science and Religion at the Harvard Divinity School on October 26, 2018. This updated version incorporates feedback from the conference, novel fieldwork data, additional references, and questions for further research.

> Several months later, hunters returned to the spot where the giant dragon was killed and found many *bina* plants [*muran*, charms plants] in the area. The leaves of these plants looked like animals such as deer and fish. There was also a lightning *bina* with a lightning bolt on it that makes you very fierce so you can kill a person.
>
> *Bina* comes from this dragon. Hunters take these and use them for hunting so they can be dragons. If you don't use it in the right way, you can become a *kanaima* and kill people.

Introduction

This *panton* (story, plural: *pantoni*) – documented during ethnogeographic fieldwork in the circum-Mount Roraima Landscape (Cooper 2015, 153) – expresses a wealth of knowledge, especially within the context of hunting. *Pantoni* from this landscape share many of the same characters, places, and principles, although each *panton*, community, and individual that tells them is unique. These stories often include the following themes: abduction, adoption by animals, bestiality, therianthropic offspring, and twin creation heroes that are the first people known as Makunaima and Chikɨ/Pia[2] among the Akawaio (Insikiran and Anike or Negi in Makushi). At a time of origin known as *pia'atai* (*pia'ton*, 'beginning times' in Makushi), when everyone spoke the same language, the twin boys were very hungry so they chopped down the Waiaka (a 'tree of life' or 'food tree'), leaving behind the Waiaka Piapɨ (a 'petrified tree stump' and granite rock feature near Mount Roraima) and a dangerous or 'spoiled' world where people, animals, and spirits began to speak different languages and take on antagonistic relationships.[3]

According to an Akawaio *panton* about the Waiaka, Mount Roraima was created from a cashew branch (*eroi-imu*) that broke off from the giant tree when it fell (Cooper 2015, 57). As explained by the hunter and guide who told the story above, in Taurepan, *rora* means 'green', and *imu* means 'blue', a description of Mount Roraima's appearance from a distance; and a part-whole relationship between the descendants of Makunaima and Chikɨ/Pia who have blue-green eyes and live around the mountain (Cooper 2015, 57; see Mount Roraima in Figure 1).

Dismemberment and reconstruction are common themes in *pantoni* that often portray dragons, serpents, fearsome monsters, and brave hunters who slay them or become ripped apart and (sometimes) put back together (Cooper 2015, 154). Heavy winds and storms foreshadow danger. *Pantoni* often articulate the uxorilocal marriage system practiced in the area, including the expected relationship between father and son-in-law (Butt Colson 2009, 110). The *panton* above includes each of these aspects,

---

[2] Chikɨ is sometimes called Pia. Butt Colson and Armellada (1990, 7) speculate that the word *pia* means 'stump', 'root', 'essence', 'origin', or 'genetic code.' It is a critical component of *taren* (invocations; see Butt 1956) that summon the *pia* of counteracting agents. It is also associated with the word *pia'san* (*piyai'san* or shaman).

[3] See image of the Waiaka Piapɨ in Butt Colson (2009, 140); and the following publications for additional interpretations of Pemón and Ka'pon *pantoni*: Brett (1880), Roth (1915), Koch-Grünberg (1923), Armellada (1964; 1972; 1973), Butt Colson and Armellada (1990), Cooper (2015), Daly (2015), and Whitaker (2016).

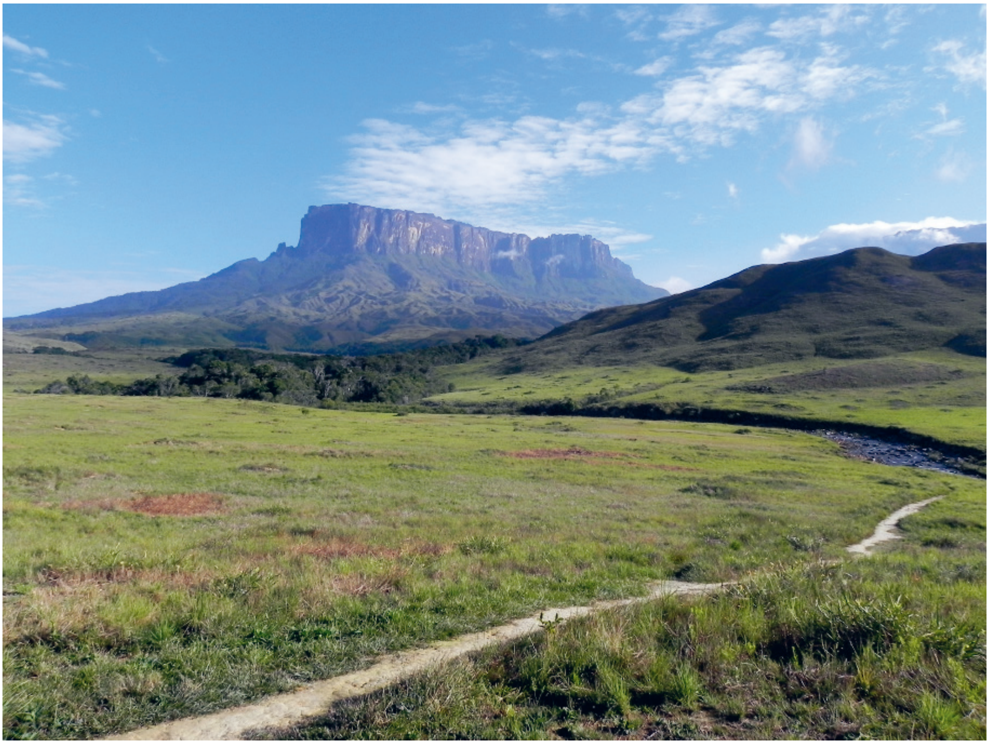


Figure 1. Mount Roraima from Paraitepui, Venezuela (photo: D. G. Cooper, 2012).

but most significantly it explains the origin of hunting charms known as *muran* or *bina,*[4] and the consequences of misusing them. As clearly stated at the end of the story, if these powerful hunting charms are not used properly, then you may become a *kanaima* that kills people.

Kanaima

A *kanaima* is many things: It is a person; a spirit; a real or imaginary group; an outsider, intruder, enemy, or jealous killer; an avenger; a murderer who strikes at night; a hunter that uses harmful plant and animal charms (*muran*/*bina*), stone charms (*tipu*), crystal projectiles/darts known as *warwu'* (see Cooper 2018, 12), *taren* (invocations), poison such as *urari* (curare; see Schomburgk 1873), and/or songs (Lewy 2018) on people; a dark shaman (Whitehead 2002); a *jumbie* or malevolent shaman (Daly 2015, 61); a stealthy reprisal force (Whitaker 2017, 164); a shapeshifter, jaguar (Whitehead 2001), bird (Cooper 2015, 112; Daly 2015, 381), or bat (Forte and Melville 1989, 26-28);

---

[4] The Arawak phrase *bia-bina* means "to entice or attract" (Cooper 2015, 154).

an expression of male autonomy and power (Janik 2018, 34); hyper-traditionalism (Whitehead 2001); anti-structure and a social control on violence and hoarding (Butt Colson 2001); death incarnate; and more.

Many have written about the dark side of the shamanic arts in Northern Amazonia, including Rivière (1970) who worked with the Trio in the border region between Suriname and Brazil; Wilbert (2004) who refers to various kinds of shamanism (i.e., priest, weather, light, and dark) among the Warao of the Orinoco Delta in Venezuela; Buchillet (2004) who writes about sorcery among the Desana in the Upper Rio Negro of Brazil; and Wright (2013) who describes sorcery among the Baniwa in Northwest Amazonia. This chapter does not analyze these geographies and linguistic associations, since they do not refer specifically to *kanaima* or *e'toto* (pronounced dōdō with a silent 'e'; the Akawaio word for 'enemy' or *kanaima*); however, they represent important references for comparative studies and suggest that sorcery is not isolated to the circum-Mount Roraima landscape that transcends the triple border point between Guyana, Brazil, and Venezuela.[5]

Numerous scholars have discussed sorcery and *kanaima* within this landscape, including as far back as the early nineteenth century (Hilhouse 1825; Hancock 1835). It was also mentioned early in the twentieth century (Gillin 1936, 149-152; Koch-Grünberg and Hübner 1908, 10-11; Roth 1915, 320-331; Schomburgk 2010 [1922], 251-254). More recently, it was analyzed among the Akawaio (Butt Colson 2001), Patamona (Whitehead 2001; 2002; 2003; Janik 2018), Makushi (Daly 2015; Whitaker 2016; 2017; 2021a), Pemón[6] (Lewy 2018), Wapishana (Stafford-Walter 2018), and Ingarikó (Amaral 2019). Others take a regional and comparative approach to the topic (Forte and Melville 1989; Rival and Whitehead 2001; Whitehead and Wright 2004).

This chapter builds on a foundation of ethnographic literature with a landscape approach that focuses on *pantoni* and oral histories documented during multi-sited ethnogeographic doctoral fieldwork in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape in 2011-2013 (Cooper 2015). It analyses these data within decolonizing (Smith 2012), historical ecological (Balée 2013), spiritual ecological (Sponsel 2012), spiritual geographical (Cooper 2019), and political ecological (Peet and Watts 1996) frameworks. Each of these fields provides unique perspectives and interpretations of the relationship between violence and territory that constitutes an interconnected ecology of violence (Pye-Smith and Robins 1997).

---

[5] Butt Colson (2009) and Daly (2015) refer to the "circum-Roraima region." Butt Colson and Armellada (1990, 63) mention the "circum-Roraima peoples," also known as the "Roraimagok" (Butt Colson 2009, 403). This chapter uses the "circum-Mount Roraima landscape" as a unit of analysis because it is grounded in the geographical theory of landscape (see Sauer 1925; 1963; Balée 1998; Rival 2006; Cooper 2015; 2019).

[6] Pemón is both a subgroup of the Carib linguistic family that includes the Makushi, Arekuna, Taurepan, and Kamarakoto; as well as a specific group in Venezuela referenced in this instance.

An historical ecology of the circum-Mount Roraima landscape

The Guiana Shield is a Precambrian craton of basement rock in the northwest portion of the South American Plate that lies beneath Mount Roraima and contains abundant mineral deposits (Roopnaraine 1995). On the surface, this area has many rivers, savannahs, and rainforests. Trekking through these tropical forests can be intimidating for those who are not familiar with this domain. There is a palpable sense of mortality where tangles of plants and trees compete to access life-energy from the light above and nutrients underground. One must step carefully to avoid tripping on roots, brushing against thorny branches, or disturbing a well-camouflaged venomous snake underfoot or perched on a branch at eye-level. The experience is not only visually confusing and disorienting, but also auditory. There are constant buzzing, humming, chirping, and screeching sounds from invisible creatures lurking in the underbrush or canopy above. Visitors must also be aware of potential threats from jaguars, mosquito-borne illnesses, falling limbs, and more. For Indigenous peoples, the forest is not only a potentially dangerous place to visit demanding keen awareness to sounds and visual cues; it is also an important source of food and resources.

Among the Ka'pon (Akawaio, Patamona, and Ingarikó) and Pemón (Makushi, Arekuna, Taurepan, Kamarakoto, and Pemón), who have lived in this landscape since 'time immemorial', knowledge is often held in a *panton* and place that contextualizes meaning. Landscape is a helpful framework to analyze these dynamic physical and cultural interactions (Sauer 1925; 1963). Historical ecologists (Balée 1998; Balée and Erickson 2006) use landscape to evaluate the coevolutionary dialectics between people and the land, focusing especially on the capacity to modify landscapes over the l*ongue durée* (Balée 2013). As Balée and Erickson explain (2006, 2):

> The product of the collision of nature and culture, wherever it has occurred is a landscape, the central object of analysis in historical ecology. The landscape is where people and the environment can be seen as a totality – that is as a multiscalar, diachronic unit of study and analysis.

Laura Rival clarifies the significance and applicability of landscape in the following statement (2006, 90): "As defined by historical ecologists, 'landscape' becomes a bridge between a whole range of disciplines and sub-disciplines pertaining to both the natural sciences and the humanities." This interdisciplinary exploration uses landscape as a bridge to evaluate the historical, geographical, spiritual, ecological, and political dimensions of violence in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape.

A spiritual ecology of the circum-Mount Roraima landscape

A spiritual ecological (Sponsel 2012) interpretation of this landscape includes complex networks and hierarchies of spirit beings (Butt Colson and Armellada 1990) situated within an animist conceptual system (Descola 2013; see Whitaker 2021b in relation to the Makushi) mediated by three principle shamanic practitioners (Whitehead 2002; Cooper 2015; Whitaker 2016) who spiritually sanction stewardship of the land and its resources through self-transcendence: (1) the *piyai'san*, *piai'san*, or *pia'san* (*p-*, 'one who is'; *iyai*, *iai*, or *ia*, 'spirit'; *-san*, 'kin'; *payé* in Brazilian Portuguese; *shaman*, *piyaiman*, or *piaiman* in English); (2) the *kanaima* (*e'toto* in Akawaio, meaning 'enemy' or sorcerer); and (3) the Alleluia *pukena'*, a 'wisdom-possessor' or 'prophet leader.'[7] These three figures work in corresponding ways to maintain balance and continuity by resisting (Staats 1996) and creatively adapting to intrusion and unrelenting waves of change within an interconnected spiritual geography (Cooper 2019).

Among the Ka'pon and Pemón, all beings can be helpful, harmful, or both. According to the Akawaio, everything and everyone is composed of both *akwa* (light) and *ewarupɨ* (dark) energy (Cooper 2015, 85). This dualism and ambivalence clearly manifests in the *piyai'san* that has capacities to heal and harm. Most think of the *piyai'san* as a healer, priest, medicine man, or doctor; however, as spiritual warriors that are 'kin to the spirits' with specialized knowledge of toxins and the wider community of beings, they also have abilities (and sometimes obligations) to harm others. As transcendent individuals that achieve ecstatic states during séances in order to shapeshift and travel through diverse domains (Cooper 2015, 124), they are often feared and/or perceived as a *kanaima*, *e'toto*, or enemy.

Most Indigenous peoples in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape believe that illness and death are the result of an attack from another individual, spirit force (sometimes referred to as a 'nature spirit', *imawari*, master or mistress of species and resources, or *chiwönoton* among the Akawaio; Butt Colson and Armellada 1990, 34), *piyai'san*, *kanaima*, or *e'toto*. The force that attacks, or the agent who sent it, can both be referred to as a *kanaima* or *e'toto*. These agents use shamanic capacities to harm, kill, and take energy from others to gain power until they are capable of shapeshifting into anything. Roy Marcelo explains *kanaima* in the following statement (Cooper 2015, Fieldnotes):

> What they call *kanaima*. It does to get knowledge, to get power. It's something like this black art. They turn themselves into different things. It could be a bird; it could be an animal of some sort. You could get near to a deer to kill it. You kill it because you want it to eat. Every time they kill, it's an exam they pass and they goes high into this thing, higher. They actually does it; people does it.

Conversely, the *kanaima* loses power (and possibly gets killed) if they are known, so they live in complete isolation and are considered outsiders. The *piyai'san* also lives in relative isolation, usually on the periphery of a village, though they are generally known within the community.

According to many who live in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape, every *piyai'san* is also a *kanaima*. As explained by Clifton Lorendo who identifies as a Christian (Cooper 2015, 111): "After interacting with the harmful spirits for a long time, a *piyai'san* becomes part of the spirit tribe, which always leads to evil." As he and many other Indigenous Christians believe, if you use *muran* or *taren*, then you will become a *kanaima*. This is especially true if such tools are used on people rather than game animals, as explained in the story of Urubere above. Lorendo reiterates this point in the following statement (Cooper 2015, 111): "They use *muran* to fly far away, disappear, and change into different things. They have their own *muran* for this. There is a *muran* for hunting every kind of animal. If you use these *muran* on people, then you become a *kanaimɨ*."

---

[7] See Butt Colson (1971; 1985; 1998; 2009) and Cooper (2015; 2020) for further information on the *pukena'* and the Alleluia religion/highland revitalization movement.

In the following passage, Butt Colson explains the meaning of the word *kanaima* (2001, 224):

> Etymologically therefore, the word Kanaima (Kana-*imi*) may translate as 'the great—powerful, terminator' (or cleaver, stunner, severer). This etymology certainly coincides with assertions as to what Kanaima (Itoto) does to his victim. His sudden, violent attack frightens the vital force out of its customary body. He then fills the body with poisons, through piercing the tongue and making cuts where the bones articulate. He blocks up all the body orifices, blowing poisonous powders into the mouth and up the nostrils, pulling out and knotting the intestines. Thereby the victim's alienated vital force is prevented from re-entering its body, which, left poisoned and lifeless, dies rapidly.

In the next excerpt, Butt Colson (2001, 226) describes the meaning of the word *Itoto*, presented in this chapter as *e'toto* since this is the way that Akawaio translators wrote the word during fieldwork:

> Human agency is implicated in the etymology of the Akawaio word *Itoto*, for in several Carib languages in Guiana it means 'human being', ethnic filiation unspecified. Even if it does not mean 'enemy' as such, 'other' humans are invariably ambivalent and potentially dangerous. In making the assumption that irrevocable death from unseen causes is due to evil human agency, the political-social context becomes pre-eminent, for the basic supposition is that individuals and their communities have enemies who want to destroy them.

Kanaima and *e'toto* are different words that refer to an equivalent figure within the circum-Mount Roraima landscape. The Akawaio use the words *e'toto* and *kanaima* interchangeably. They are aware that others are more familiar with *kanaima*, so it is difficult to know whether these are the same precise figure or if each term is used to adhere to their audience. Further research is needed to achieve a more nuanced differentiation between these two closely related words and figures. This chapter primarily focuses on Akawaio conceptualizations with reference to other groups, such as the Makushi, for the purpose of comparison and contrast.

Art of the hunt

> A few years ago, around Christmas, there was a man who was alone at home one night when *e'toto amu'* [multiple *kanaimas*/enemies] came by after a hunt. The man offered the hunters some *kasa'* [fermented cassava drink]. They tried to get him to join them for a hunt, but he said: "No, it is late and I'm tired." Then the hunters offered the man *kumi* [an unidentified *bina*] to chew and swallow, and they told him: "Take this and it will give you energy, make you strong, let you fly away, help you change into different things, and disappear in a second." The man was eating cassava bread for dinner, and he smarted [tricked] *e'toto amu'* by putting the *kumi* under the table and making them think that he was eating it, but he was only eating his bread.

> When the men left, he put the *kumi* on the table. Then another man came by, saw the *bina* on the table, asked where he got it, and said: “Don’t use this – it’s used to kill people. Give it to me.” The man said no, and the visitor left. The man was curious about the plant so he ate a little piece and then threw it away. That night he couldn’t sleep and the heat of the fire was bothering him so he went outside, but his mother told him not to go outside at night because: “*E’toto* will kill you!”
>
> A few days later, on his way to go fishing, the man met *e’toto amu’* but they looked like children wearing school uniforms. When he saw them, he dropped his bag, ran home and then fell down. Then they blew him with *taren* and he got better. Another time, when the man was cutting a banana tree, he heard a whistle then he returned home and became sick. *E’toto* is not something you have to be trained for. If you use it, it will harm you.

This *panton* documented in the Akawaio village of Phillipai (Cooper 2015, 109) describes many aspects of an *e’toto* attack. For example, they often travel in a group (*amu’* means ‘multiple individuals’) and utilize certain plant charms that make you hot, awake, and capable of traveling great distances in a flash. Much like the *piyai’san* and *kanaima*, *e’toto* has the power to shapeshift into any kind of animal or person and use them as a ‘mask’ (see Whitehead 2002).[8] In the *panton* above, *e’toto amu’* change their form to appear as school children. The story also suggests an association between the work of *e’toto* and the night as the unwanted visitors stop by at night after a hunt. Not only is it dangerous to go outside at night because this is when *e’toto* is active; it is also not advisable because of the nocturnal predators such as snakes and jaguars that become active at night, as well as the possibility of tripping, falling, getting lost, or being abducted when there is not much light to see.

The Akawaio regularly frame their Patamona neighbors as dangerous enemies. Likewise, the Makushi can be fearful and apprehensive about their Patamona neighbors to the north and the Wapishana to the south. This distrust is also common between different villages within the same dialect. For example, the Akawaio in Jawalla often depict those in Phillipai as potentially dangerous. Conversely, people in Phillipai are skeptical of those who live in Jawalla. Whenever there is death or sickness in a village and an outsider is visiting, these individuals (or the local *piyai’san*) are often the first to be suspected. Accusations of *e’toto* are therefore often a function of ethnicity, dialect, or geography.

As referenced in the *panton* above, Christmas is thought to be an especially dangerous time of the year. This is partly a reflection of the fact that many animals in the forest are hungry this time of year because fruiting trees and other foods are scarce. This is also a time when many travel to visit family and friends in different villages where they may drink alcohol, argue, carouse, wander around at night, and cause conflicts. Further evidence of the dangers that exist around the Christmas holiday appears in The “Constitution of the Alleluia Church” that states the following (Alleluia Church Leaders 1985, 8):

---

[8] There is a broader debate in Amazonian ethnology about whether shapeshifting involves changing containers/masks, perspectives (but not bodies), or physical bodies. See discussions of perspectivism by Viveiros de Castro (1998) and transformationalism by Rivière (1994).

"We believe that during the Christmas season the devil is ever so close, trying to deceive all Christians. We should, therefore, be very careful not to be tempted by the wicked spirit."

Cuthbert Cary-Elwes, also known as Fr. Cary-Elwes, a Jesuit missionary who visited Amokokupai in 1917, recorded the following (Butt Colson 1998, 72-73):

> I am told that a certain Indian called Ipéru was killed by Kanaimas (evil spirits), but being a clever piaiman (witch doctor), he brought himself to life again. He was again killed by Kanaimas and again came to life. Then all the Kanaimas of the district assembled together and killed him so thoroughly that even he, great piaiman though he was, could not succeed in coming to life again.[9]

The Akawaio Alleluia in Amokokupai have contended with *kanaima* attacks for many years. The statement above supports the idea that *kanaimas* are known to work in groups.[10] It is also worth noting that Cary-Elwes uses the term "Kanaimas" and not *e'toto amu'*.

More recent fieldwork suggests that the story of Ipéru (Abel) recorded by Cary-Elwes was actually about I'siwon (Pichiwöng or Bichiwöng in Makushi; Chiwöng in Brazil), the Makushi prophet credited with starting Alleluia in the lowlands of the Rupununi Savannah (Cooper 2020, 248). Abel's death is explained by the Alleluia elders in the following statement (Cooper 2015, 224):

> Abel was killed [once] by a man named Pipɨ' from Kako who was *e'toto*. He was jealous of Abel because he received God's word and was spreading it around. Pipɨ' broke both of Abel's legs causing him to get a fever and die. After attacking Abel, Pipɨ' returned to Kako but Abel's followers drowned him at the Arubaru, a branch of the Kako River.

Despite the confusion, the oral histories recorded by Cary-Elwes and Cooper suggest that Abel (Ipéru) and I'siwon, significant Alleluia *pukena'ton* (prophet leaders) who were previously *piyaimen*, were both killed by *kanaima* or *e'toto* attacks.

Alleluia elders in Amokokupai explained how pastors from Brazil brought a mirror to Ipéru and said (Cooper 2015, Fieldnotes): "Look in the mirror and repent your sins because you preach Alleluia. The mirror is like God, it sees everything." They went on to say that a *kanaima* looked into the mirror and said, "Make me pure." Ipéru told the pastors to take the mirror back with them, then he told his Alleluia followers that there is a giant mirror in heaven that sees their sins.

Indigenous communities in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape (including the Alleluia) are known for inviting and hosting special guests and other villages for song and dance sprees that last through the night and go on for days (Butt Colson 2009, 254; Cooper 2015, 198-204; Daly 2015, 210-220; Whitaker 2021b, 80). Historically, these events were celebrations with plenty of singing, dancing, wrestling, eating, and drinking fermented concoctions; however, sometimes these gatherings were used as pretense for an attack on inebriated locals or adversaries. The collective memory of this tactic has likely caused further suspicion of outsiders.

---

[9] See Whitaker (2016, 260) for similar references to the deaths of Youd and Bichiwung.

[10] The *piyai'san* also works in groups. If presented with an especially challenging task, they may call on allies or teachers (alive or 'dead') to come to a séance. As explained by Butt Colson (1977, 47): "It was several months before I realized the significant fact that some of the present Akawaio shamans had learned their profession from ghost teachers – that is, from shamans who were already dead. I was also surprised to learn that it did not make much difference whether a teacher was dead or alive."

Another defining characteristic of *e'toto* and *kanaima*, is the sound of a whistle. In the story above, the man hears a whistle when cutting a banana tree that turns out to be a bad omen foreshadowing an attack. The Makushi make a connection between *kanaima* and the pavonine cuckoo (*Dromococcyx pavoninus*), or the nightjar, also known as the goatsucker bird (*Caprimulgus*; *pakoorau* in Makushi; Cooper 2015, 112).[11] Schomburgk explains the suspicion of the nightjar in the following statement (quoted in Roth 1915, 274):

> The Indians have the greatest superstition with regard to this bird, and would not kill it for any price. They say it keeps communication with the dead, and brings messages to their conjurers... Its nocturnal habitats, the swiftness and peculiarity of its flight, and its note, which breaks the silence of the night, have no doubt contributed to the fear.

The *panton* at the beginning of this section explains how *e'toto amu'* tried to recruit a man to join them. Cary-Elwes references a group of *kanaimas*. In the following passage, Terrence Fox (son of Desrey Fox; see Caesar-Fox 2003) explains how hunting and warfare tactics converge in action (Cooper 2015, 113):

> *Kanaimɨs* always attack in groups. They were originally used as special forces, like ninja warriors or secret assassins. If the ordinary warriors weren't successful in fighting a neighboring tribe or village, they would send the *kanaimɨs* at night to get the job done. Whistling was how they communicated between themselves when doing their wickedness at night. They would hide in trees waiting for people to be alone and then communicate with each other with a whistle in order to signal an attack.

This statement clarifies the connection between certain whistling sounds and nocturnal birds (or bats; see Forte and Melville [1989, 26, 28] for an association between the *kanaima* and bat whistles among the Carib and Patamona). In order to be effective and maintain stealth, "special forces" strike at night and use whistling sounds to mimic various birds, nightjars, and bats.

The art of ventriloquism is not only central to the work of *e'toto* and *kanaima*, it is also an important component of becoming a *piyai'san* where initiates go to the forest, a tree, a mountain, or near a waterfall to learn songs and animal calls, such as that of the moriche oriole (known as a *cadouri* or *waiowra* among the Akawaio; *Icterus chrysocephalus*), a bird that is valued for its singing and ability to mimic others (Butt Colson 1977, 57; Cooper 2015, 87). This shared skill is further evidence of the similarities between *e'toto*, *kanaima*, and the *piyai'san*.

---

[11] According to Daly (2015, 381), among the Makushi in Yupukari, *kanaimî* is associated with the following birds: *arauwaimî*, great potoo, *Nyctibius grandis*; *watafaimî*, undulated tinamou, *Crypturellus undulates*; *kanraiwa'*, *anakwa*, chachalacas, *Ortalis*; and the *ko' sara'*, grey-necked wood rail, *Aramides cajaneas*.

Another significant aspect of the *panton* at the beginning of this section relates to its reference to *kumi*, a common (unidentified) *muran* for the Akawaio that functions as a hot stimulant.[12] This charm plant is especially helpful if you want to sharpen your senses and maintain energy during a hunting expedition.

Not only can *muran* be used to hunt animals and people; they can also be guards. Many believe that an open door to your home is a dangerous invitation for a *kanaima* attack. During fieldwork in Phillipai (Cooper 2015, 161), an Akawaio woman demonstrated how she protects her home from *kanaima* by chewing and *a'pa-ing* (spitting) *empukuit* (an unidentified charm plant referred to as a 'ginger') around her door. She explained that this 'ginger' was female and therefore it protects against the male *kanaima* form of power (see Janik 2018, 35). After the demonstration, she said that the guard works best if a *taren* is applied to it, such as one that invokes the power of the sun, making you invisible, "like *kanaimɨ* was blinded by the sun" (Cooper 2015, 161).

Another helpful *taren* is called *wakaneku*, named after a small unidentified bird that you often hear but can never see that makes the following sound: wa-ka-ne-ku. According to the Akawaio woman, this *taren*/bird has a particular *panton* associated with it (Cooper 2015, 161):

> A man went to the farm and saw an agouti run into a log. He wanted to kill and eat the agouti so he called to his wife: "*waka* [axe] *neku* [bring]" because he wanted to cut into the log and get the agouti. He kept calling to his wife: "*waka neku, waka neku*", but she didn't hear him and never came. The man was calling so much that he finally turned into the *wakaneku* bird.

Every plant is potentially a medicine and/or a poison that can heal you or make you sick. The *piyai'san*, *kanaima*, and *e'toto* are experts in this domain. As explained and demonstrated by the woman above, many plants can be used as guards or sentries. Chili peppers (*Capsicum*) are: an integral ingredient for pepper pot (*tuma*); a stimulant; a remedy for a headache; a punishment for children; and a guard applied to the eyes before traveling and looking at unfamiliar places, especially rocky outcroppings, because it "disturbs the spirits" (Cooper 2015, 93).

Certain stones known as resource stones, *töpu* (Butt Colson and Armellada 1990, 35), or *tɨpu* (see Cooper 2018, 14) are commonly used as conduits for spirits. The *piyai'san*, *kanaima*, and *e'toto* often use various stones, including crystals known as *warwu'* that can be sent as darts/projectiles to kill others (see Butt Colson and Armellada 1990, 5; Cooper 2015, 181). A *tɨpu* can be used to attract game animals or helpful spirit forces such as Eki No'soto (Cassava Grandmother in Akawaio; *kîsera yun* or Cassava Mama in Makushi; Daly 2015, 123) who brings fertility and abundance to gardens. Stones can also be used as vessels to trap the spirit of an enemy, a harmful spirit force, or any other individual thereby giving more power to the owner of the stone. A *kanaima* can also increase strength by killing a human and going to the grave to drink and get 'high' on putrid remains (see Whitehead 2002, 92-97).[13]

---

[12] See Butt Colson (1976) for a discussion of hot and cold classification among the Akawaio.

Wild and savage archetypes

Violence and cannibalism are central themes in colonial discourse often used to justify the occupation of the Americas, the conversion of Indigenous peoples to Christianity, and the development of new territory (Barker 1998; Whitehead 2000; 2003). Indigenous peoples were depicted as 'savage', 'uncivilized', and 'wild.' These words were further reinforced through the idea of a 'noble savage' and campaigns to 'kill the Indian and save the man' through ethnocide, missionization, boarding schools, and adoption to become more 'civilized' (see Gregg 2018).

These perceptions were also adopted by Indigenous communities that framed neighbors, rivals, and enemies as somehow more brutal and dangerous. For example, the Akawaio and Makushi often depict Caribs as especially belligerent. This perception is also reflected in the word 'cannibal' that derives from the Spanish *caníbales* or *caríbales*, terms used by Christopher Columbus to describe the people he encountered in the Caribbean that would eat human flesh (Boucher 2009, 37; Cooper 2015, 114).

Oral histories and places in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape provide evidence of tribal warfare and cannibalism. As explained by an Akawaio elder, the word *kuayau* refers to "a big group of enemies that would raid your village and kill everyone, unless you are at your farm" (Cooper 2015, Fieldnotes). There is a cave near the Akawaio village of Amokokupai known as *mo'kari yen*, which means 'taking out cave' where they used to "take enemies and eat them" (Cooper 2015, 91).

The Makushi village of Surama in the North Rupununi Savannah derives its name from the word *suramata*, meaning 'barbecued meat' (Cooper 2015, 114; Whitaker 2016, 40-41). As explained in a *panton*, many years ago, Caribs invaded this territory, captured some locals, cooked them, and ate them.

There is also evidence of exocannibalism on Awarmi Mountain near the Makushi village of Rewa at the confluence of the Rupununi and Rewa Rivers where there is a rock that looks like a giant pot or cauldron (Cooper 2015, 114-115; see Figure 2). As explained by Sean, a Makushi guide from Rewa (Cooper 2015, Fieldnotes):

> Ok, this stone here, or we call it a pot of a long time people. And it's very serious for me and for young people. This pot here, you will have them long people, the Carib, the warriors. We the Makushi people now, if you go and hunt for very distance, people, they meet you, they kill you, and they bring you, they cook you. So this here, we call the pot where they carry the bad people. You can't really think hard about it. If it's the first time you saw that or see it, and you got that in your mind, and you know, you will go home and you will get headache, maybe heart attack.

---

[13] Among the Makushi in Yupukari (Daly 2015, 381), a *kanaimî* will transform into *wainîripî*, a red-eyed rat or lizard that feeds on rotting corpses that taste like pineapple to them.

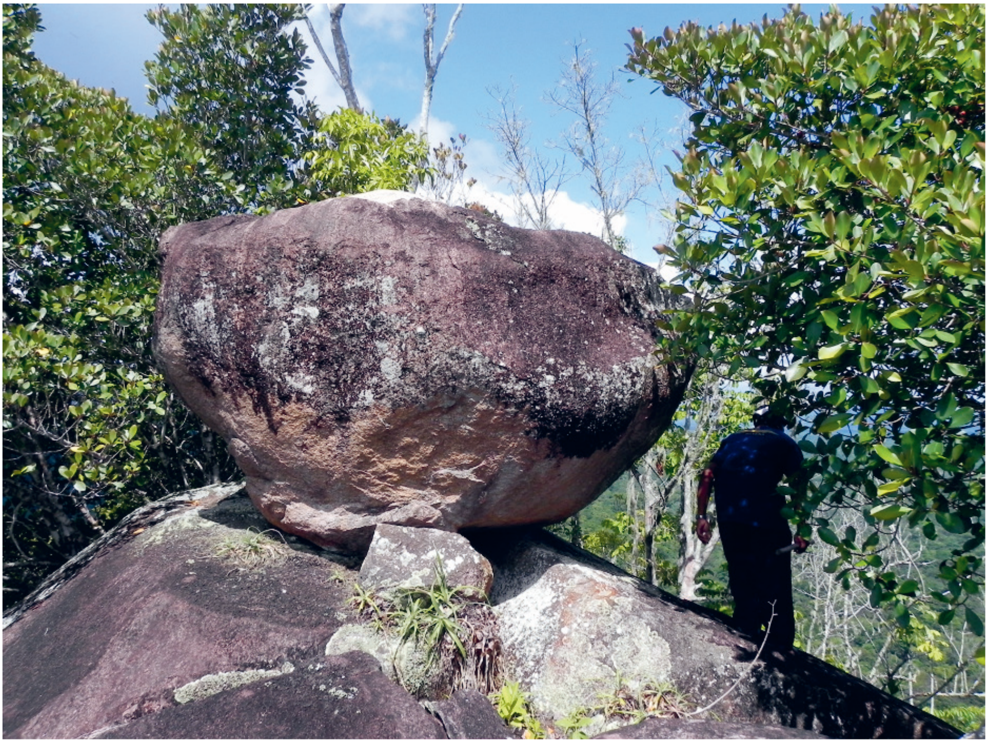


Figure 2. A large rock on top of Awarmi Mountain (photo: D. G. Cooper, 2012).

Reciprocity is central to the Ka'pon and Pemón conceptual systems (Edwards 1986, 59; Kenswil 1946, 11; Cooper 2015, 115). According to Whitehead (2002, 97), this essential principle is expressed through the *kanaimà*, "the shaman of Makunaima," also known as a "dark shaman":

> These "gifts of death" from the kanaimàs to their kanaimà'san [kanaimà adept] are part of and historically drive the unending exchanges between divine animals and mundane humans in the guise of hunter and prey. It is this relationship that the kanaimà'san claims to sustain or influence through his special access to Makunaima, ultimate creator of animals and plants.[14]

A connection between Makunaima and *kanaima* was also noted by Hancock (1835, 44). More recently, Whitaker (2021a, 2), who conducted fieldwork in Surama and Yupukari among the Makushi, also suggested this connection. Some of Whitaker's interlocutors in

---

[14] The Makushi in Yupukari kill and bury caimans and snakes in their gardens as symbolic and nutritive sacrifices for cassava and the garden spirit (Daly 2015, 148). They also ritually kill boas and the *tanuaka* (*Pandion haliaetus*, osprey; Cooper 2015, 158) to grow new *bina* plants. Arekuna hunters kill and leave one, two, or three small birds – or the first catch of a new fish trap returned alive to the river – for the *muran* before taking home any meat (Cooper 2015, 166).

Surama (2016, 405-408; see also Whitaker 2021a, 4) associated the name Makunaima with Negi while others saw it as a non-Makushi name or were unfamiliar with it. In contrast, Cooper's (2015, 81) and Daly's (2015, 72) interlocutors in Yupukari associated Insikiran and Anike with Makunaima and Chikɨ/Pia, respectively.

Reflecting the variety of forms across the region, Butt Colson (2001) has a different understanding of Itoto (*e'toto/kanaima*). She doesn't make a connection between this figure and Makunaima or the shamanic arts, but rather she argues that Itoto is merely a category of accusation and expression of anti-structure that is not actually practiced as Whitehead (2001) suggests. She explains that it is believed among the Akawaio that hoarding will attract an Itoto attack or an accusation of being an Itoto; therefore, it functions as a magical, invisible, and symbolic way to limit violence and hoarding.

More recent fieldwork confirms this category of accusation as a control on hoarding expressed in the following statement by an Akawaio woman in Phillipai who asked to remain anonymous (Cooper 2015, 117): "*E'toto pasi* are ladies that sleep around. They say they are more beautiful, but they just can't refuse sex because their father sexually abused them." This is a clear example of the use of the word *e'toto* to shame and threaten other women in the village who are sleeping with married men and hoarding sexual or reproductive resources. The statement is also interesting because the informant uses it to shame men who practice incest and pedophilia.

Emphasis on the fierce aspects of any society risk reification (see Chagnon 1968). This chapter moves beyond colonial archetypes by using historical ecological (Balée 1998), spiritual ecological (Sponsel 2012), spiritual geographical (Cooper 2019), and in the next section, political ecological perspectives to interpret violence in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape.

A political ecology of violence

Indigenous peoples in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape have endured centuries of colonial and postcolonial intrusion and exploitation. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Spanish, Dutch, French, English, and Portuguese struggled for control of this territory, often allowing Christian missionaries to lay the foundation for acculturation. Initial contact with Indigenous populations contributed to the spread of devastating diseases. When European powers were firmly established, they began to develop plantations for sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco, requiring large labor forces. This led to slaving raids into Indigenous communities (Whitaker 2017) and the importation of Africans and later indentured servants from India (see Northrup 1995). Subsequently, cattle ranchers, balata bleeders, conservationists, and miners meddled and laid claim to the landscape and its resources.

The Ka'pon and Pemón are exposed to diverse linguistic, cultural, and political ecological frameworks (Peet and Watts 1996; Cooper 2015, 35-40) that contribute to regional imbalance, discord, and ontological dissonance (Lupovici 2012). Not only are they subjected to exogenous political pressures, but they historically competed amongst each other for access to resources (Kenswil 1946) which often leads to conflict and violence (Martinez-Alier 2003). One example of contemporary intrusion comes from *garimpeiros* (Brazilian prospectors or miners) who enter this landscape illegally in search of gold, diamonds, and other resources causing tension and a race to the bottom.

Much of the Brazilian portion of this landscape is designated as a Terra Indígena known as the Raposa Serra do Sol. The Venezuelan side of Mount Roraima is part of Parque Nacional Canaima[15] that includes majestic tepuis (table-top mountains or mesas) and the highest free-falling waterfall in the world known as Salto Angel or Angel Falls. This area is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Guyanese section of the landscape in the Upper Mazaruni River basin is subjected to the least amount of coherent management compared to the Brazilian and Venezuelan sides, making it especially vulnerable to exploitation (see Butt Colson 2013).

Not only is this landscape contested among those that inhabit this permeable border region, but it is also disputed at the highest levels of government. For example, a large portion of Guyana (west of the Essequibo River) is claimed by Venezuela in La Zona en Reclamación. Guyana's southeastern border with Suriname, and its southern border with Brazil, are also unclear causing ongoing disputes that date back to colonial times. Large deposits of gold, diamonds, bauxite, and other rare earths – particularly in the Pakaraima Mountains – as well as large stores of carbon, water, timber, biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge, and oil contribute to ongoing political violence and manipulation (Roopnaraine 1995; Martinez-Alier 2003).

Kanaima and *e'toto* continually evolve and take on new meanings. *Kanaima* was first depicted "at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a defensive magico-military technique to ward off the new and overwhelming gun violence and slave raiding" (Whitehead 2002, 250). More recently, it was adopted by non-Indigenous populations and the state as a way of referring to the dangers of Indigenous peoples and the hinterland in general (Whitehead 2003). This form of dialogue with and about modernity continues to serve a variety of cultural purposes that have adapted to various frontiers and forms of unwanted intrusion (see Taussig 1980).

The circum-Mount Roraima landscape is a highly forested and bioculturally diverse space (Maffi 2001) where the Ka'pon and Pemón, missionaries, *garimpeiros*/miners, government officials, researchers, extractive industries, NGOs, multilaterals, birders, fishermen, and eco-tourists compete for access to resources. In this context, the *kanaima* and *e'toto* play integral adaptive roles in limiting violence, encroachment, disease (most recently, COVID-19), and hoarding within and between communities of finite life-energy.

---

[15] The fact that this national park is named Canaima is evidence that its inhabitants, the Pemón, also believe in this fearsome trope. It also suggests that it is a well-known concept within the wider Venezuelan society that is used to demonize the Pemón (see Lambos and Lewy this volume).

Conclusion

Despite the natural and cultural diversity within the circum-Mount Roraima landscape, there is also a great deal of commonality and connectivity. The *piyai'san*, *kanaima*, *e'toto*, and Alleluia *pukena'* are distinct figures that work in complementary ways, though there is a great deal of overlap as they all have capacities to achieve ecstasy/self-transcendence/soul flight through fasting, binging, singing, dancing, and/or dreaming, and are known to transition from one role to another. The *piyai'san*, *kanaima*, and *e'toto* do their work at night, live in relative isolation, often work in groups, are capable of violence, associate with harmful spirit helpers, and use many of the same hunting charms/*bina*/*muran*, *taren*, songs, and charm stones (*tɨpu* and *warwu'*). The Alleluia *pukena'* dreams and, on special occasions, leads dances through the night, although their work is primarily done during the day.

The *panton* about Urubere explains how to be a good son-in-law and hunter; it also describes the origin of *bina* and how to become a *kanaima* by misusing them and/or using them to hunt people. The *panton* about *e'toto amu'*, which visit a man at night during the Christmas holiday to convince him to join them by giving him *kumi* that he later eats making him feel hot and sleepless, is an example of how some *binas* stimulate activity and make you feel 'more willing.' It also explains how *e'toto amu'* can shapeshift into anything, including school children. Both *pantoni* serve as warnings against using *bina* plants that could harm you and/or turn you into a killer.

When someone is stimulated to action, they are more likely to work, fight, hunt, protect, and contribute to their communities. Violence, hoarding, and lethargy are unwanted in any population since they lead to disfunction, discord, and disintegration. The *kanaima* and *e'toto* are not only associated with an active and equitable society, but also with nocturnal creatures such as jaguars, birds, and bats, poison, Makunaima (the 'greedy' brother of Chikɨ/Pia, the benevolent *pia'san* or *piyai'san*), tribal warfare of the past, resistance to modernity, outsiders, jealousy, sexual violence, male forms of power, pathogens, and death.

Kanaima and *e'toto* are prominent in the oral traditions, places, and ethnographic literature from the circum-Mount Roraima landscape. Further research is needed to clearly differentiate between *kanaima*, *e'toto*, and other sorcerers in Amazonia and beyond. Overemphasis and misinterpretation of the violent aspects of these individuals and societies by outsiders perpetuate colonialism. This chapter reveals how *kanaima* and *e'toto* limit violence and hoarding by maintaining principles of reciprocity, balance, and continuity within an interconnected and highly contested living landscape.

References cited

Alleluia Church Leaders
1985 "The constitution of the Alleluia Church." Unpublished. Amokokupai Village.

Amaral, Maria Virgínia
2019 "Os Ingarikó e a religião Areruya." PhD thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

Armellada, Cesáreo de
1964 *Tauron Panton. Cuentos y leyendas de los indios Pemón, Gran Sabana, Estado Bolivar, Venezuela.* Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.
1972 *Pemonton Taremuru*. Caracas: Ediciones Ministerio de Educación.
1973 *Taurón pantón II: así dice el cuento*. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

Balée, William
1998 *Advances in historical ecology.* New York: Columbia University Press.
2013 *Cultural forests of the Amazon: A historical ecology of people and their landscapes.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Balée, William, and Clark Erickson
2006 *Time and complexity in historical ecology: Studies in the neotropical lowlands*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Barker, Francis
1998 *Cannibalism and the colonial world*. Cambridge University Press.

Boucher, Philip
2009 *Cannibal encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492-1763*. Balimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Brett, William
1880 *Legends and myths of the aboriginal Indians of British Guiana*. London: William Wells Gardner.

Buchillet, Dominique
2004 "Sorcery beliefs. Transmission of shamanic knowledge, and therapeutic practice among the Desana of the Upper Río Negro region, Brazil." In *In Darkness and secrecy: Amazonia*, edited by Neil Whitehead and Robin Wright, 109-131. Durham: Duke University Press.

Butt, Audrey
1956 "Ritual blowing. Taling – a causation and cure of illness Among the Akawaio". *Man* 56: 49-55. https://doi.org/10.2307/2793660

Butt Colson, Audrey
1971 "Hallelujah among the Patamona Indians." *Antropologica* 28: 25-28.
1976 "Binary oppositions and the treatment of sickness among the Akawaio." In *Social Anthropology and Medicine*, edited by Joseph Loudon, 422-499. London: Academic Press.
1977 "The Akawaio shaman." In *Languages*, edited by Ellen B. Basso,43-65. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
1985 "Routes of knowledge: An aspect of regional integration in the circum-Roraima Area of the Guiana Highlands." *Antropológica* 63-64: 103-149. https://biblat.unam.mx/hevila/AntropologicaCaracas/1985/no63-64/7.pdf (12.01.2024)
1998 *Fr. Cary-Elwes S. J. and the Alleluia Indians.* Georgetown: University of Guyana.
2001 "Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure." In *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 221-233. New York: Oxford University Press.

2009 *Land: its occupation, management, use and conceptualization*. Somerset: Last Refuge.

2013 "Dug out, dried out or flooded out? Hydro power and mining threats to the indigenous peoples of the Upper Mazaruni District, Guyana, FPIC: Free, prior, informed consent?" London: Survival International.

Butt Colson, Audrey, and Cesáreo de Armellada

1990 "El rol económico del cháman y su base conceptual entre los Kapones y Pemones septentrionales de las Guyanas." *Montalban* 22: 7-98.

Caesar-Fox, Desrey Clementine

2003 "Zauro'nodok agawayo yau: Variants of Akawaio spoken at Waramadong." PhD thesis, Rice University, Houston. https://hdl.handle.net/1911/18513 (06.02.2024)

Chagnon, Napoleon

1968 *Yanomamö: The fierce people*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Cooper, Daniel G.

2015 2015 "Under Mount Roraima: The revitalization of a shamanic landscape and practice". PhD thesis, University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment.

2018 "Romancing the stone: Ka'pon and Pemon perspectives of Guyana's mineral landscape." *Archeology and Anthropology, Journal of the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology* 22: 4-24.

2019 "The spiritual geography of landscape." *PRism* 15, no. 1: 34-49. https://www.prismjournal.org/v15-no1.html (06.02.2024).

2020 "Alleluia and the Akawaio: The spiritual geography of a highland revitalization movement." In *Indigenous Amazonia, regional development and territorial dynamics: Contentious issues*, edited by Walter Filho, Victor King, and Ismar Borges de Lima, 239-255. Cham: Springer.

Daly, Lewis

2015 "The symbiosis of people and plants: ecological engagements among the Makushi Amerindians of Amazonian Guyana." PhD thesis, University of Oxford.

Descola, Philippe

2013 *Beyond nature and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edwards, Walter

1986 *Focus on Amerindians*. Georgetown: University of Guyana.

Forte, Janette, and Ian Melville

1989 *Amerindian testimonies*. Boise: Boise State University.

Gillin, John

1936 *The Barama River Caribs of British Guiana*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 14, no. 2. Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press. https://peabody.harvard.edu/publications/barama-river-caribs-british-guiana (06.02.2024)

Gregg, Matthew

2018 "The long-term effects of American Indian boarding schools." *Journal of Development Economics* 130: 17-32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2017.09.003

Grund, Lisa Katharina

2017 "Aasenîkon! Makushi travelogues from the borderlands of Southern Guyana." PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews. https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/12167 (06.02.2024)

Hancock, John

1835 *Observations on the climate, soil, and productions of British Guiana*. London: Richard Taylor. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/yafpd4bc/items (06.02.2024)

Hilhouse, William
1825 *Indian Notices*. S/l: Published by the author.

Janik, Tarryl
2018 "A return to dark shamans." Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834 (01.11.2023)

Kenswil, Frederick
1946 *Children of silence: An account of the aboriginal Indians of the Upper Mazaruni River, British Guiana*. S/l: Interior Development Committee.

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor
1923 *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco: Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. 3: *Ethnographie.* Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/c2tvqtbn/items (06.02.2024)

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor, and Georg Hübner
1908 "Die Makuschí und Wapischána." *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 40: 1-39. https://www.digi-hub.de/viewer/image/1575560976448/ (06.02.2024)

Lewy, Matthias
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

Lupovici, Amir
2012 "Ontological dissonance, clashing identities, and Israel's unilateral steps towards the Palestinians." *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 4: 809-833. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000222

Maffi, Luisa
2007 "Biocultural diversity and sustainability." In *The SAGE handbook of environment and society*, edited by Jules Pretty, Andrew S. Ball, Ted Benton, Julia S. Guivant, David R. Lee, David Orr, Max J. Pfeffer, and Hugh Ward, 267-277. London: SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607873

Martinez-Alier, Joan
2003 The environmentalism of the poor: a study of ecological conflicts and valuation. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Northrup, David
1995 *Indentured labor in the age of imperialism, 1834-1922: studies in comparative world history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peet, Richard, and Michael Watts
1996 *Liberation ecologies: Environment, development, social movements*. London/New York: Routledge.

Pye-Smith, Charlie and Nick Robins
1997 "The ecology of violence." *New Scientist* 153, no. 2072, 12-13. https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg15320722-200-the-ecology-of-violence/ (06.02.2024)

Rival, Laura
2006 "Amazonian historical ecologies." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12: S79-S94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2006.00274.x

Rival, Laura, and Neil Whitehead, eds.
2001 *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rivière, Peter
1970 "Factions and exclusions in two South American village systems." In *Witchcraft confessions and accusations*, edited by Mary Douglas, 245-256. London: Tavistock.
1994 "WYSINWYG in Amazonia." *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 25, no. 3: 255-262. https://www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/jaso-1990-1995 (06.02.2024)

Roopnaraine, Terry
1995 "Shout on the border: Minerals, social tension and the frontier." *Journal of Archaeology and Anthropology* 10: 36-42.

Roth, Walter E.
1915 "An inquiry into the animism, and folk-lore of the Guiana Indians." In *Thirtieth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1908-1909*, 103-386. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology. https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/91737 (06.02.2024)

Sauer, Carl
1925 *The morphology of landscape*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
1963 *Land and life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schomburgk, Richard
1873 "On the Urari: The deadly arrow-poison of the Indian tribes in British Guiana." In *Papers Read Before the Philosophical Society and the Chamber of Manufactures*, 29-42. Adelaide: W. C. Cox. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/smrvurbh/items (06.02.2024)
2010 [1922] *Travels in British Guiana, 1840-1844*. Vol 1, translated and edited by Walter E. Roth7. Reprinted, Charleston: Nabu Press.

Smith, Linda
2012 *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, second edition. London/New York: Zed books.

Sponsel, Leslie
2012 *Spiritual ecology: A quiet revolution*. Santa Barabara: *ABC-CLIO*.

Staats, Susan
1996 "Fighting in a different way: Indigenous resistance through the Alleluia religion of Guyana." In *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992*, edited by Jonathan Hill, 161-179. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Stafford-Walter, Courtney
2018 "The sickness: Sociality, schooling, and spirit possession amongst Amerindian youth in the savannahs of Guyana." PhD thesis, University of St Andrews. https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/15549 (06.02.2024)

Taussig, Michael
1980 *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo
1998 "Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 4, no 3: 469-488. https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157

Whitaker, James Andrew
2016 "Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana." PhD thesis, Tulane University, New Orleans. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (12.01.2024)

2017 “Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and Kanaima among the Makushi.” *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15, no. 2: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4 (01.11.2023).

2021a “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta.” *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726

2021b “Totemic outsiders: Ontological transformation among the Makushi in Guyana.” *Religion and Society*, 12, 70-85. https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2021.120106

Whitehead, Neil

2000 “Hans Staden and the cultural politics of cannibalism.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4: 41-71. https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-80-4-721

2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima Mountains, Guyana.” In *Beyond the visible and the material: The amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 235-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

2003 “The sign of kanaimà, the space of Guayana and the demonology of development.” *Cahiers des Ameriques Latine*s 43: 67-86. https://doi.org/10.4000/cal.7271

Whitehead, Neil, and Robin Wright, eds.

2004 *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wilbert, Johannes

2004 “The order of dark shamans among the Warao.” In *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil Whitehead and Robin Wright, 21-50. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wright, Robin

2013 *Mysteries of the jaguar shamans of the Northwest Amazon*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Revisiting Kanaima Among the Patamona: Tracing the Footsteps of Neil L. Whitehead

Tarryl Janik
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0937-5488
tjanik@uwm.edu

The 2017 Miss Indigenous Heritage Pageant

In September 2017, which is also Amerindian heritage month in Guyana, I conducted ethnographic research in Paramakatoi, a small Patamona village in the Pakaraima Mountains. During Amerindian heritage month many Indigenous villages throughout the country celebrate with a variety of festivities whose apogee, every few years, is the Miss Indigenous Heritage Pageant in Georgetown. At this pageant, each region of Guyana is represented by their 'queen', a young woman chosen by elders to represent their region and compete for the title of Miss Indigenous Heritage.

In 2017, Paramakatoi chose A. Sherryanna to represent Region 8 (*Kaieteur News*, 3 October 2017, 18). Because I was in the village and had known artistic skills, I was asked by Sherryanna's mother to help in some of the preparation for this event, which included designing traditional garb for Sherryanna to wear on stage. While using the WIFI at her family's shop I was asked to help design a necklace for Sherryanna to wear at the pageant that represented both Orinduik and Kaiteur Falls (two waterfalls that have historical and cultural significance to many Patamona in Paramakatoi). The original design for the necklace Sherryanna's mother showed me was from a photo on the Internet. The photo was of a similar necklace that was worn by a native North American Indigenous individual. So, drawing on this design, I helped design the necklace for Sherryanna to wear at the national competition (Figure 1).

Sherryanna not only went on to win the pageant, but also won the best gown and traditional wear prizes. The Guyanese newspapers said that she had "limited support from the audience", and that "the now reigning queen confidently highlighted the common misconceptions about Guyana's first people, who are falsely dubbed 'stupid and uncivilized' as she urged Indigenous persons to pursue advanced education to discredit the stereotype – while advocating for the preservation and maintenance of ancestral traditions" (*Kaieteur News*, 3 October 2017, 18). In the Miss Indigenous Heritage Pageant the ladies competed in four categories: the introduction, talent, evening gown and the intelligence segments. Sherryanna's platform was "Targeting Deforestation as a means of Countering Climate Change". She addressed her platform in the talent portion of the contest by performing a *kanaima* skit (Figure 1) wherein she crept out onto the stage towards a lone man while making strange whistling noises, she then confronts him and kills him:

> Who is this stranger in my forest that I see? Doesn't he know strangers are not to be lonely? For there are evil vices out there. I must tell this stranger that he ought to beware. Look at you all on your own, you shouldn't be alone. Ah! What is this? A bible and a knife? I know what you've come to do. You've come to take my jungle's life. Oh Kai-kusi, my dear sister the jungle, do you know who I am? You see this forest, you see how it's pristine? Well, I am the protector of it. And they call me the *kanaima* … and for your vices you will pay … we kill this way. First, a paralyzing with a *bina* … Next, I'll injure his rib and make him feel sick … Next, I'll prick his tongue with a snake's fang … then I'll pull on his toe and the doomed man will go. Ha ha ha … oh the doomed man will go. Bruising, fever, sweat by the liters. And all the ailments that you'll feel and see, they'll know it was me. And no medicine man can cure my curse [she shakes her finger in the air at the audience] three days later he's put into the earth … I'll visit the grave in the midst of the night, and I'll knock on the tomb with my bamboo. And I'll taste the succulent juices … I'll even have a few. Don't you dare cross me! Don't you dare trouble my trees! Don't you dare come into my jungle and diminish my biodiversity. And if you need not heed this warning, and if you choose not to hear, I swear I'll be your worst nightmare, so you better, you better beware! [She sings out] You better beware! (Transcribed by T. Janik, 2017).

Sherryanna's *kanaima* performance was one of the ways that I experienced the ongoing relevance and significance of *kanaima* in Paramakatoi. In this chapter, I will look at *kanaima* in the Patamona art, narrative, self-defense, and performance that I encountered

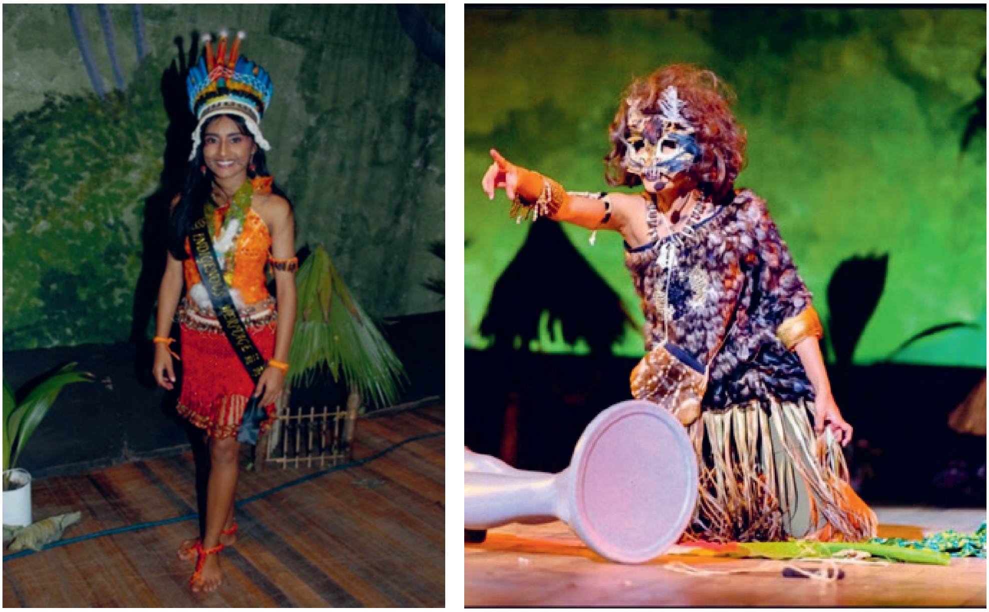


Figure 1. A. Sherryanna as a *kanaima* (right) and posing for media wearing the necklace the author helped design (left) (photos acquired by T. Janik from *Stabroek News*, 2017).

while doing fieldwork in Paramakatoi in 2017 and argue that *kanaima* is an important multivalent cultural repertoire of violence – not just a Patamona cultural expression of hyper-traditionality. In further building upon Whitehead's (2002) interpretation, I also argue that *kanaima* is much more of a multivalent symbol of meaning making in Patamona culture than even he envisioned, and it is through Patamona art, narrative, self-defense, and performance that we can see this.

Kanaima in Paramakatoi

Paramakatoi is a large Patamona village (with a population numbering just over three thousand) located in the jungle of the Pakaraima Mountains near the borders of Brazil and Venezuela. The Patamona are one of Guyana's first Indigenous peoples, specifically Amerindians of Carib descent. The Makushi call the Patamona *Ingari-kok*, or "people of the cool wet place," and to the Akawaio the Patamona are known as *Ka-pohn*, or "sky people" (Whitehead 2003, 64).

Kanaima is a Carib/Karinya word that translates into 'secret assassin' and refers to both the killers and the practice – *Kanaima* perform *kanaima* upon their victims (Whitehead 2002, 1). *Kanaima* in Guyana refers to a method of terror and violence that involves prolonged stalking, spirit attack, ritual body mutilation, jaguar transformation, sonic intimidation, songs, and chants and violent death (See Whitaker, Lewy, and Cooper, this volume). Symptoms of a *kanaima* attack include bruising, dislocated joints, swollen tongue and or the inability to speak, and sexual assault via the anal cavity (Whitehead 2002, 14-15). *Kanaima* death both in oral testimony and the literature is said to be due to diarrhea, vomiting, and acute dehydration derived from the initial physical attack (see Whitehead 2002, 14-15).

Whitehead (2002) examines the historical emergence and cultural significance of *kanaima* in Paramakatoi and argues that *kanaima* is an act of poetic cultural expression in the face of successive modern colonizing forces – missionaries, loggers, miners, and development agencies – that *kanaima* has become an assertion of 'hyper-traditionality' and native autonomy/sovereignty (Whitehead 2002, 1-9; Whitehead and Wright 2004, 4; Whitaker 2017, 158-159). He categorizes *kanaima* as 'dark shamanism' – "to disaggregate our concept of 'shamanism' and to show how it has obscured important differences and purposes in the range of shamanic techniques" (Whitehead 2002, 5). *Kanaima* is one of three shamanic complexes Whitehead identified within Patamona culture, the other two being *piya* (primarily used for healing and engaging the spirit world) and *alleluia* (a combination of Patamona animism and Christianity that involves singing and dancing (Whitaker 2021; see also Monticelli this volume). Whitehead explored the ways in which *kanaim*a mediates local, national, and international impacts on the Patamona of Paramakatoi and considered the significance of *kanaima* in the discourse of shamanism and religion and theories of war, terror, and violence – conversations that have continued within the anthropology of shamanism (see Riboli and Torri 2013).

Butt Colson stated that *kanaima* or *itoto*:

> […] has been described in the literature as 'secret killer' and as 'one who kills suddenly.' They are terms which refer to a complex set of beliefs, constituting a conceptual system within the society and culture of the two Carib-speaking peoples of the circum-Roraima region of the Guiana Highlands, the Kapong (Akawaio and Patamuna) and the Pemong (Arekuna, Kamarakoto, Taurepang, and Makushi), whose lands are the border areas of Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela. The two terms are co-equivalent. *Kanaima* is a Pemong word, whilst *Itoto* (*Idodo*, *Toto*, *Dodo*) is used by the Akawaio. Of the two, *Kanaima* has a greater extension, being in use amongst neighbouring indigenous peoples, the Lokono (Arawaks) and Kari'na (Caribs), who sometimes attribute deaths to *Kanaima* action that comes from outside their own communities, often, it is believed, through the hire of Kapong or Pemong Kanaima assassins (Butt Colson 2001, 221).

Butt Colson examined *itoto* (*kanaima*) as death and anti-structure. She argued that *kanaima* belief was strong among the Akawaio and that *kanaima* death, in the form of *itoto*, "is synonymous with the death of particular sets of relationships and alliances, and by dissolving these it destroys a corporate unity, a polity" (Butt Colson 2001, 231). She went on to say that "individuals in mourning still experience the horror and implications of death by *itoto* (*kanaima*) as a destroyer of the fabric of life in its variety of facets" (Butt Colson 2001, 231), and provided an account of *kanaima* equally descriptive as Whitehead's in terms of its rituals and violence, stressing the utility of *kanaima* in social relations in an inter-regional context. In Butt Colson's and Whitehead's accounts we learn how *kanaima* is a form of warfare exchange between communities or individuals in conflict, specifically as a method of secret revenge killing.

Kanaima is as much productive of society as destructive or the Patamona would not be using it as a powerful symbol in pageant performance during Amerindian Heritage Month. *Kanaima* also has dynamic creative force within Indigenous identity making through the enhancement of personal power and masculinity (Janik 2018, 25). *Kanaima* structures interpersonal relations with insiders and outsiders beyond the scope of revenge killing, and its Carib historicity has been linked to ancient warfare (Whitehead 1992, 1-11 ;2002, 245).

Forte (1997, 230) defined *kanaima* based on numerous Indigenous accounts:

> A highly feared form of black magic widespread throughout the Amerindian peoples of eastern Venezuela and Guyana. Beliefs vary as to what a kanaima actually is, but most agree that it is a person turned into a monster, jaguar, snake, etc., who ruthlessly kills for revenge, hire, or just the pleasure of it.

The many accounts of *kanaima* that I heard over the course of fieldwork in Paramakatoi, which is the same village where Whitehead conducted fieldwork in the 1990s, are in line with Butt Colson's, Forte's, and Whitehead's description and collected *narratives* of kanaima. For as one interlocutor told me:

> A 40-year-old man was attacked by *kanaima* when he went to Kurassubai in Region 9. They thought he was a *kanaima* so they attacked him. He came back spitting blood, had a fever, and black and blue marks all over his body. He also had blood all over his butt. He died. I was skeptical of *kanaima* at first, but now I am starting to believe. I am ninety nine percent sure of it now since the 40-year-old man died. I saw the body firsthand. The black and

> blue marks and the bloody trousers on his backside. People in Kurassubai thought he was a *kanaima* and in turn *kanaima*'d him.

I also spoke with an individual from a very small Makushi village by the Brazil border who told me that:

> *Kanaima* is a criminal with evil in him. There is a whole village in Region 7 of *kanaimas*. 40 to 50 people come down at once to terrorize Region 8. My uncle knows more. The *kanaima* has evil powers. You should come to Kanapang, we would be glad to have you take interest in us. We have caves with bones in pots that go back to Carib warfare too. My father would kill up to three *kanaima* a day. Cause once you kill one, they never stop coming. The village of *kanaimas* is an Akawaio word for satellite, *chi chi* or something is the name. Even children are being taught *kanaima* in this village. My uncle shot a *kanaima* at point blank range when he was climbing a tree to hunt late at night.

Another individual from Paramakatoi defined *kanaima* as:

> Known in all Amerindian tribes in Guyana. A person gives himself to do evil and uses evil charms for strength and speed. He can separate his spirit from his body and travel long distances to kill. He will meet an unsuspecting person and injure him. The person will go home and not remember or tell of the meeting until just before he dies. Death is rapid from the meeting, usually the same night. Almost all Patamona and Akawaio deaths are explained by *kanaima*. I can usually find a scientific reason for the death.

One of the more graphic accounts was given by an elder Patamona man's wife:

> *Kanaima* put pepper stuff on your clothes. You can wash off the pepper stuff with plant slime. You can use a mixture of bleach, shampoo, soup powder and laundry soap. *Kanaima* kill and use an armadillo tail in anus for fun. They tie up intestines with a stick. Dogs bark different when a *kanaima* is around. If someone is in the bush prowling around at night, dogs bark different. *Kanaima* kill dogs and children. Anyone can come into Paramakatoi at night. [Name redacted] left his hat in the farm one night, he came back the next day to get it and put it on. Suddenly he got sick, he was coughing, sneezing, a *kanaima* put something in his hat. *Kanaimas* use all kinds of *binas*, they are passed down from father to son, from mother to daughter. *Kanaima* can be a woman too.

Another individual also elaborated upon the methods and symptoms of *kanaima*:

> They squeeze a plant in their eyes to make themselves nocturnal. They use a plant to make you sleepy. There used to be a cone house by Bamboo Creek that was used for *alleluia*. A *piya* is a healer. An elder from Tuseneng was the last *piya* and may be dead. He was the founder of Tuseneng. People fear *kanaima*, that's why you never go alone in the bush. They pierce you with fangs or bones of poisonous reptiles. Leave bruises. The *kanaima* will talk about what he did to kill a man and the stories of bodily harm on the corpse match up. You can never prove it, but you would think admitting guilt is proof and stories matching prove guilt. They usually kill people in other communities, not Paramakatoi. But revenge killings can happen. If someone dies from weird bites or stings or symptoms of *kanaima* then they say it was *kanaima*.

I also spoke with a few Kato police officers, one of whom gave this account:

> *Kanaima*, *obeah*, *bina*, all black magic. Any sickness or death is *kanaima*. An officer I knew was staying in the guest house in Kato and a *kanaima* put something on the bed sheets and his clothes that were hanging out on the line to dry. The man survived but had to leave due to illness. Witchcraft and black magic is prevalent all over, but can't prove anything because you can't tell what's real and what's myth or suspicion.

I too was told about the efficacy of using pieces of the victim's body in *kanaima*:

> A group of *kanaimas* will attack a man, but mainly women. They do it for revenge, they don't trouble outsiders. Someone caught a *kanaima* in the bush once, the *kanaima* was drinking something strange, so he snatched it out of his hands. It was a piece of human anus, dried up, if you drink it with water, it is a charm to lure victims to you. That's how he gets people to come to him in the bush. *E'molong* or sleeping plant, is the plant they use to put you to sleep. Sopaineyeng is a cave in the Yawong Valley wherein *kanaimas* will go until they get over the *sopai* madness derived from killing. *Sopai* also means shapeshifter.

While I was in Paramakatoi there was a death that was suspected by many of my interlocutors to be a *kanaima* death. In response to this rumored *kanaima* death during my stay in Paramakatoi someone had this to say:

> She died in three days, she had a fever, then swelling by her ear and under her throat. I was there when she died. Her body did show signs of physical attack. It could be *kanaima*. The police come, but do not investigate, and they don't always come, because it depends on if they have transportation and when they come into the village the village has to buy their food and give them a place to stay in the guest house. So, police don't always come, they're not dependable. I write a report about the cause of death and police won't bother to investigate further. I'm on call 24 hours a day unless I take a day off. I get training in Georgetown, where autopsies do take place. There are no autopsies here in the hinterland. The victim said she was struck in the side of the head where the swelling was, but it could have been an infection too. Her cause of death could have been from years of illness, but people say *kanaima*. I've seen evidence of *kanaima*, but her cause of death is unknown.

The notion about the *kanaima* returning to the grave of the victim to consume and disinter the body as part of the ritual complex of *kanaima* was also parsed out to me by one of my closest interlocutors:

> *Kanaima* buries the victim and the night after they sleep in caves. Anytime even a fly touch their body the *kanaima* can't come back into flesh. Their spirits go out and into animals … in night they come and open the grave and get a piece of bone by sticking a stick through the navel. It taste like honey after nine days. It smells sweet. They go back to the body and if they cannot eat or anything they go mad. They cannot drink *cassiri* until after a certain period of time. The Kopinan *kanaima* killed a lot of people. He died. He went mad. Crazy. Headache. He put ginger and pepper in his nose. *Kanaima* are so smart, always watching their back.

One last description of *kanaima* was given to me by a visitor to Paramakatoi:

> *Kanaimas* are shapeshifters, they kill. Hide. Are evil. Can travel miles quicker than any human. Can be in people or look like animals when disguised. In other words, can be anyone or any animal. Can take over people. Poison you. Stick sticks inside you. They can turn good people bad. Take over your personality. You can't fight them. They can hide, disguise, or become invisible. And vanish into nowhere. Such was their power and people we saw were so scared to talk for fear that they could hear what was said. But I got the feeling

> there was *kanaima* among us all the time. Embodied in different people in our group even. Nobody could therefore be trusted. People were scared. That fear was genuine. Even though the stories didn't make a lot of sense in a 'Western' way.

Kanaima is woven deeply into the fabric of everyday Patamona life and is still a central preoccupation of the Patamona as these testimonies suggest. Kanaima significance exists in rumor and hearsay, signs and presentiments, and in the living jaguar itself (connected through the notion of jaguar transformation). The open secret of *kanaima* concealment paradoxically reveals and hides the work of dark sorcery, its techniques, the identity of its ritual specialists, and the interpretation of its effects.

My experience in discussing *kanaima* in Paramakatoi was similar in regards to Falen's (2018) study of Beninese witchcraft in Africa where some informants were afraid to talk about the occult because they feared it might put themselves or him in danger. Much like the witches who Beninese believed to have the ability to hear distant conversations, so too do many Patamona believe *kanaimas* can take many non-human forms (jaguar, bats, anteaters, and other spirits or animals) and may too be listening to distant conversations. I also found, like Falen, that many people discussed the occult/*kanaima* openly and freely possibly because my outsider status reassured them that I would not use their testimony against them.

The term *kanaima* can also be used to delineate ethnic boundaries between Indigenous groups from other regions of Guyana. As an interlocutor told me, the "Akawaio of Region 7 are *kanaimas*", and "when Patamona go to Akawaio villages they too are called *kanaimas*". This distrust between groups is a remnant of a negative reciprocity earlier enacted in inter-group warfare. Based on Guyanese literature, Cambraia Neiva (2021, 11) argues that *kanaima* is a multifaceted symbol, an ongoing marker of difference in the Guianas, which I too see taking place in Paramakatoi both in literal and symbolic contexts.

Symbolic anthropology has long studied symbols and their assignment of meaning in an effort to better understand human social action (Douglas 1966; Turner 1967; 1980; Geertz 1973; 1974; 1983; Sahlins 1976; Schneider 1980; Spencer 1996). Geertz (1973, 45) argued that humans need symbolic "sources of illumination" to position themselves vis-a-vis systems of meaning within cultures. Turner (1967, 36) stated that symbols foment social action and are "determinable influences inclining persons and groups to action". Turner employed hermeneutics as a method for understanding the meanings of cultural performances like the Balinese Cockfight, in an effort to bridge the gap between symbols and social reality, or how symbols are interpreted and how the interpretation of symbols plays out in the real world.

The poetics of *kanaima* are complex, full of many nuanced overlapping layers, even more so than Whitehead conceptualized in *Dark Shamans* (2002). There are myriad registers of *kanaima* at play at any given moment in Patamona culture – as stigma, as healing, as actual killing, as moral panic, as protector, as tradition, but also as cultural narrative and symbolic performance. In the face of modernity *kanaima* becomes a potent symbol to draw from as we saw in the 2017 Miss Indigenous Heritage Pageant – a cultural repertoire of violence, a multivalent symbol of meaning making that Patamona continue to engage and use creatively.

The Luring the Jaguar art program

The late and great Guyanese artist George Simon, Whitehead's colleague and my friend, proposed that while in Paramakatoi, I put together an art program focused upon the jaguar in Patamona culture, and he suggested I call it "Luring the Jaguar". This made sense because both George and I are artists, and we knew that there are many talented artists living in Paramakatoi. The Luring the Jaguar art program uncovered the jaguar's place in Patamona life and even how jaguars are central to and symbolically connected to *kanaima* (especially bodily transformation, see also Whitaker 2021). For as one individual told me about hunting or killing jaguars, "I always cut the head off a jaguar, because it might be a man, a *kanaima*".

The art program began from the onset of my arrival, after the approval by the village council to invite villagers to participate. The village council helped find individuals who were willing and able to participate in the art program and the program itself lasted over a month. On the first day we had a meeting at the village recreation center (Figure 2) where we discussed the goals of the art program (painting the jaguar in a way that was meaningful to the participants; including myths, stories of jaguars, and jaguar encounters, etc.). We handed out supplies (I purchased and brought all the art supplies and gave them away to participants at no cost). It was decided at the first meeting that at the end of the month, which was also Amerindian Heritage Month, we would bring all

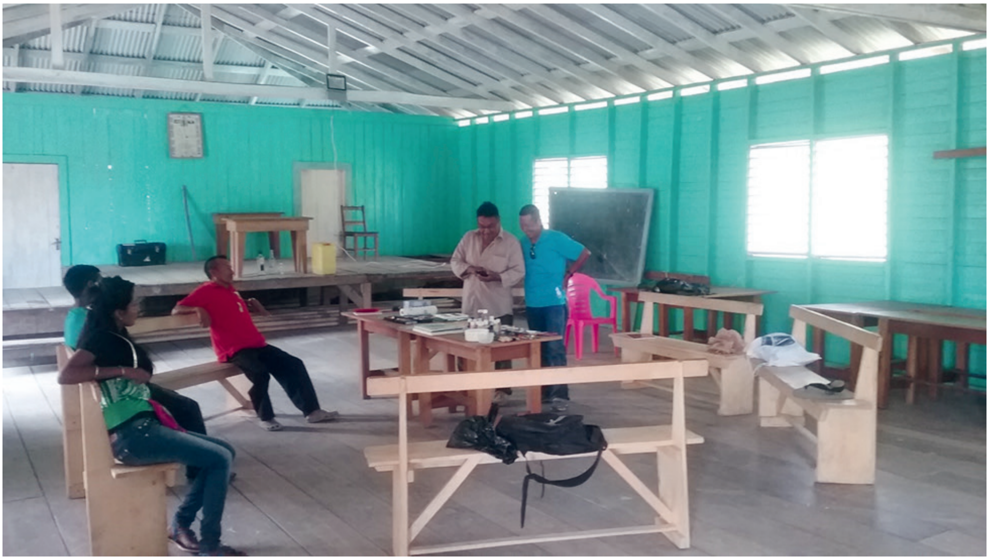


Figure 2. The First Luring the Jaguar art meeting (photo: T. Janik, 2017).

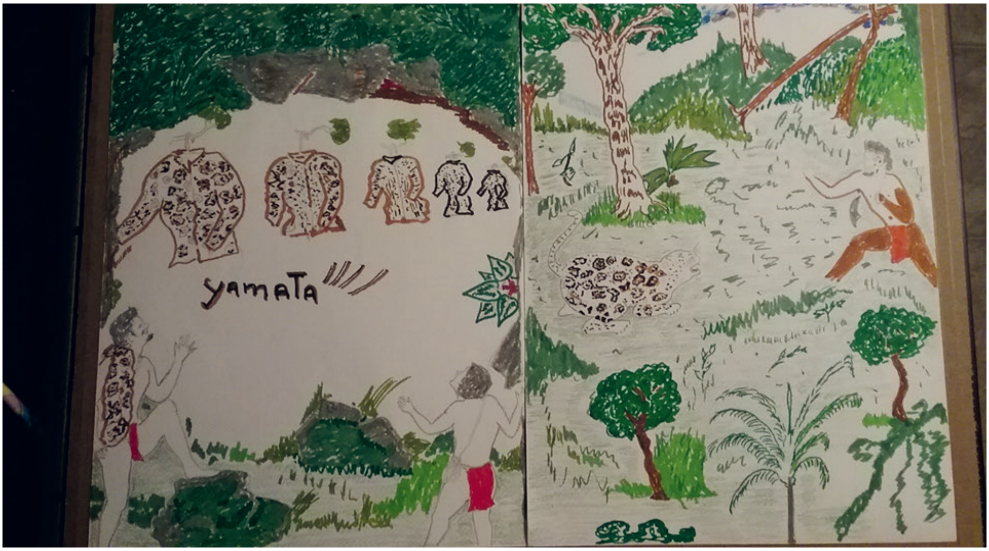


Figure 3. The story of the *yamata* (painted by a Patamona artist, 2017).

the paintings to the guest house to display and discuss their meaning. Over the course of the next month, I met with the participants regularly to talk about their paintings and to offer any help they might need.

One painting that a middle-aged Patamona man created for the art program depicted what he called a *yamata* or jaguar skin coat (Figure 3). In his painting he told the story of the *yamata*, specifically how a Patamona man encountered a *yamata* in a cave, put it on, and then transformed into a jaguar to hunt. He said there "are many different size *yamatas* because there are many different size jaguars". He went on to tell the story of how the *yamata* lead to the man's downfall:

> After the hunter put the *yamata* on he became a jaguar. Now, as a jaguar, he roamed the jungle in search of prey, to hunt. He killed many game and returned to the cave with them. The man took off the coat, hung it up in the cave, and returned home with every-thing he had hunted to his family. They were so happy. The man continued to hunt using the *yamata* for quite some time until one day something bad happened, while as a jaguar he came upon another man, another hunter. They fought and the jaguar killed the hunter. The jaguar was upset and fled back to the cave to take the coat off to become man again, but it would not come off. The man was now a jaguar forever.

Of the many paintings created by Patamona artists, the most interesting piece of art produced, in my opinion, was that by a Patamona man in his twenties. This individual created a beautiful image of a man being devoured by a jaguar (Figure 4). Unfortunately, he did not finish the painting in time to display it at the art show, but he did show me it as I was waiting for my plane to leave Paramakatoi.

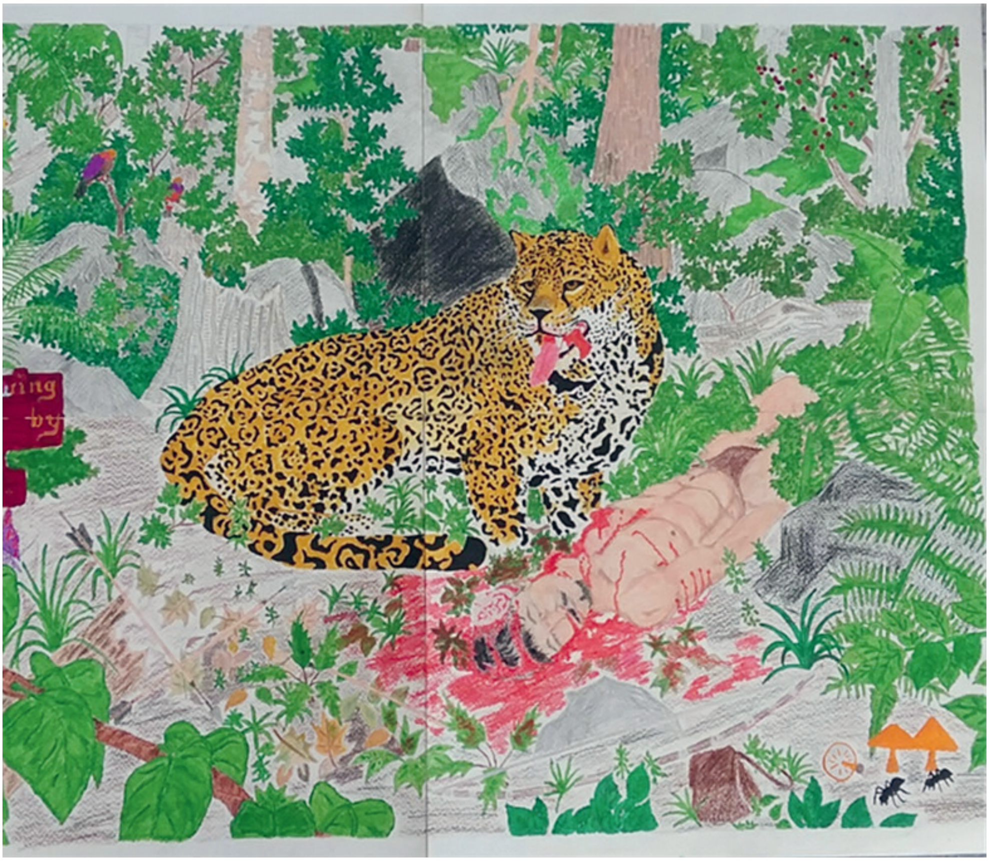


Figure 4. The painting of the jaguar devouring the man (possibly the anthropologist) by the cave (painted by a Patamona artist, 2017).

After showing me the painting, the man quickly offered to sell it to me. His painting was my favorite piece from the art program, so I agreed to buy it and began to haggle on the price. At first, he wanted 100 U.S. dollars for it, but after a little back-and-forth we settled on 75. He seemed quite happy as I folded up the painting and put it in my luggage before boarding the plane. It was not until I arrived home back in the United States, that I fully realized the importance of the piece.

As I hung the painting in my office, I began to notice that the victim looked eerily similar to myself – white skin, a small beard, and even had my same haircut – it was then that I realized that the jaguar in the painting was in all probability devouring the anthropologist. And in that 'ah ha' moment I laughed when I thought about how I had paid 75 dollars for an elaborate depiction of my own demise. However, when I read the story he wrote about the painting, I am still not quite sure what to think:

> Long time ago, in the ancient days there was the people who live in the thick tangled forests. Those people who live there, were the great hunters. In those days, there was plenty wild animals and dangerous animals also, like jaguars, mountain lions, and river tigers. But one of the dangerous animal who live in the cave, nearby their hunting line was Jaguar. It eats the hunters when they go for hunt, where the hungry animal does stay, they never return back. However, they didn't know that animal was there, it happened not every day but once a time, just like the picture that is showing behind. But there was a young man who never scared of anything just like me, he was the person who like to hunt. One morning he went and do hunting through the same line, that line carries a person towards the cave. While he was going through the line he heard the terrible noise in that cave, he didn't know. What was it. So he wasn't scared of it. He still stepped forward toward the cave. Suddenly it jumped from the cave and landed upon the old tree trunk that was close to that young man. Then he saw a huge colored jaguar nearby. There was no time for him to defend himself. But quickly he stepped back and shot it with his arrow. It was not time for he to die, it was the time for that animal. He didn't go more further, he went back and tell all the rest of the people, and jaguar was not there anymore, and these people live long without harm by nothing. This is the end of my story.

This story is an interesting key to Patamona historicity, power, masculinity, terror, and violence. First, the beginning frames the historical narrative: "people who live in thick tangled forests" and who are great hunters who hunt dangerous animals. One in particular (the jaguar) always overcomes the hunter. The death of the hunters is periodic, and the picture portrays this periodic killing. Then, a young man (the Patamona artist – the hero of this story and identified as the mythical hero from the past, who has no fear and is a great hunter) approaches the territory of the cave – the jaguar's killing field. He hears the jaguar and has no fear. Next, the jaguar leaps at him from out of the cave, there is a confrontation, and the hunter (the Patamona artist), the hero, shoots the jaguar. The hero then returns to the village and tells the villagers he has the killed the jaguar. The Patamona artist's killing of the jaguar results in the people living without harm.

In this story, the jaguar/*kanaima*/evil that threatens human beings is overcome. And the subtext also is that the outsider/anthropologist/victim (who looks eerily similar to the victim in the painting) is also overcome leaving the village in peace. This may be a very unconscious story of threat. The jaguar overcomes the hunter, but maybe the *kanaima* overcomes the anthropologist. Or the Patamona artist hero overcomes the jaguar/*kanaima* and the village is at peace. Also notice the large stinging black ants in the bottom corner of the painting – the *binas* or 'charms.' The main structure of the painting is the threat of evil. Both are threats to the people of the forest in a cosmology of threat.

Notice too that the victim is quite identifiable, not completely bones or ripped apart and eaten by the jaguar. I brought many different colors for the artists to use in their paintings, and the victim here is painted clearly as a white man. Here, I argue that the artist wanted the viewer/audience to identify with or identify as the victim of the jaguar/*kanaima*, and I was the only audience for this painting.

Gracie Jiu-Jitsu at the guest house

One of the more intimate and unexpected ways wherein I experienced *kanaima* was at the guest house in Paramakatoi where I was staying. One morning, a man I will call Jared told me, "I want to train Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, so I can protect myself from *kanaima*". He said he knew of other people in Paramakatoi who were interested in training as well. Unbeknownst to me, he had been discussing this with many of the young men in Paramakatoi after a brief discussion about the Gracie Jiu-Jitsu T-shirt I was wearing one day. Jared asked me when we would start training, to which I replied, "I don't know, how about next week?" He seemed pleased and I then asked him how many people he thought would want to train. He said around ten, all of which were young men in their twenties. He then asked where we would train, and I recommended right on the guest house deck. The deck is concrete, but it was the cleanest and safest place to train (no biting insects or dirt). As long as I structured the class to avoid any techniques that might cause injury from hard concrete, I knew it would be sufficient.

I was hesitant to agree to teach Jared and others Gracie Jiu-Jitsu because one has to be a certified instructor in order to do so (which I am not). I simply train at a Gracie University CTC (certified training center) in Wisconsin affiliated with Gracie University in Torrance California which is ran by Rener and Ryron Gracie. Rener Gracie, son of Rorion Gracie, who founded the Ultimate Fighting Championship or UFC, said that "Gracie Jiu-Jitsu is for everyone" and that "everyone in the world needs to know Gracie Jiu-Jitsu", so, I reasoned that teaching the Patamona techniques from the beginner Combatives program would be both ok and a great opportunity for me to develop relationships and give back to the Paramakatoi community.

When Jared told me that he wanted to learn Gracie Jiu-Jitsu to protect himself from *kanaima*, I was intrigued. Why did Jared think that Gracie Jiu-Jitsu could protect him from kanaima? Other young men also seemed to feel the way Jared did and I found that Gracie Jiu-Jitsu was perceived to be a new form of self-defense that could possibly protect people from *kanaima*.

On the first day of training only Jared showed up. We went over two techniques and ended class, which lasted just over half an hour. Jared was hooked from day one. He then told me that more people would show up at the next class. He was right, at the next class over twelve young men from Paramakatoi attended, all of whom seemed eager to participate. One young man named Jacob, had watched the UFC on television, so he was particularly excited to learn. He was one of two young men who showed up to almost every class. After the second class, Jared thought it was best that we have one class per day, five days a week, to take full advantage of training while I was in Paramakatoi.

Over the time I spent in Paramakatoi I taught twenty villagers Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. 19 men, and one young woman (a sister of one of the young men who attended class). She became interested in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu because her brother was interested in it. The class was open to all genders, ages, and people, but primarily only men, ages 13 to 25attended.

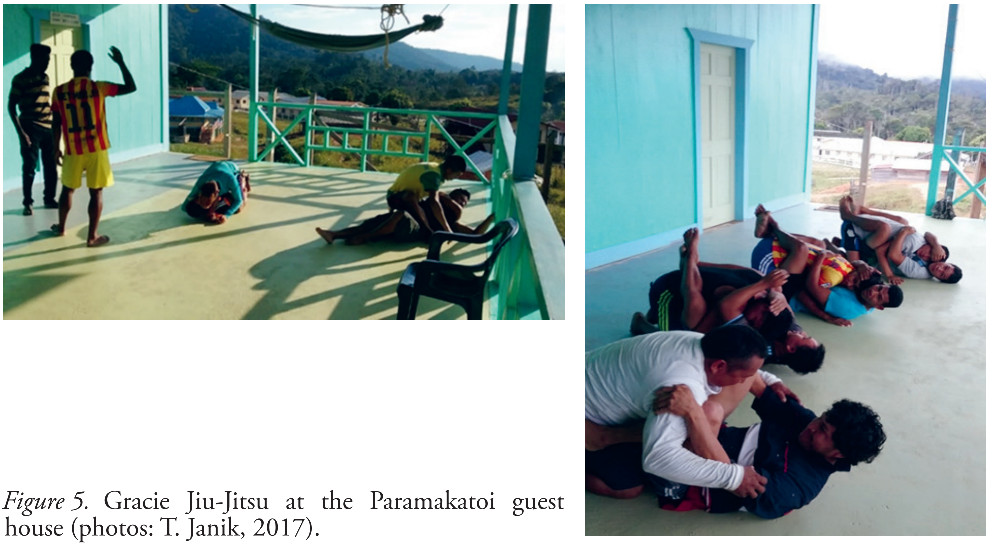


Figure 5. Gracie Jiu-Jitsu at the Paramakatoi guest house (photos: T. Janik, 2017).

When I asked the young men to fill out a survey of why they wanted to train Gracie Jiu-Jitsu they said, "Protection from people. Self defense, knowledge of protection from harm. Self-defense and want to be famous. Protect from harm. Protect myself from *kanaima*".

As classes went on the young men would increasingly make subtle jokes about *kanaima* and how Gracie Jiu-Jitsu would also aid them against bullies, who many times were older kin. I was told by one individual that a Karate instructor had visited Paramakatoi and taught some of the Patamona kicking and punching techniques years ago.

In Paramakatoi, *kanaima* seemed to be a primary motivation for participants wanting to learn Gracie Jiu-Jitsu and this knowledge is learned in part by discourse, but primarily through bodily interaction. In order to learn Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, one has to do Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, which involves complicated grappling techniques and the intimacy of intense close quarters bodily contact.

Dincovici (2012) has examined at how Gracie Jiu-Jitsu communities are built through shared experiences of pain. Dincovinci closely examines Gracie Jiu-Jitsu in Romania, the pain related knowledge of training hard, the role of pain in Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence, and the shared experience of pain (Dincovinci 2012, 41). Kavanagh *et al.* (2019) have employed a psychological approach and studied over six hundred Gracie Jiu-Jitsu practitioners and found that affective experiences of promotional rituals like belt rank promotions were positively associated with identity fusion and social cohesion, more so than experiences of pain. While in Paramakatoi, through the physicality of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, I both learned about the embodied ongoing fear of *kanaima* in Paramakatoi and the collective effervescence that sparked within our small Gracie Jiu-Jitsu group through the shared experience of pain, what Schapira (2021) calls a 'pedagogy of the body'.

Schapira (2021) examined how evangelical Gracie Jiu-Jitsu coaches in Rio de Janeiro Brazil combine "sport and religion to educate 'faithful disciples', making it part of their spiritual and worldly battle against evil forces" (Schapira 2021, 1). The coaches specifically inculcate to underprivileged youth how to be 'good citizens' and thereby not only saving them from a life of criminality, but also combating what coaches perceived as 'society's evil' by instilling a more moral and ethical worldview. For as Schapira states, "Fadda practitioners see society as lacking fundamental values like respect, discipline, and hierarchy, they put exactly these values into their pedagogy of the body [...] Fadda Brazilian jiu-jitsu skills are, therefore, not mechanic movements but a way of being in the world" (Schapira 2021, 1). This pedagogy of the body can also be seen in Paramakatoi where the Patamona Gracie Jiu-Jitsu participants too are not just learning techniques, but empowering themselves to stand up to *kanaima*, which many Christian Patamona told me, is evil.

Embodied knowledge and bodily change have long been topics of interest in Amazonia. Whitaker (2021) recently looked specifically at how bodily transformation attached to sorcery and shamanism in Beckeranta are associated with a desire for well-being. McCallum (1996) looks at how Cashinahua bodies and persons are affected in Amazonia through social processes of health and healing connected to embodied knowledge production. Vilaça (2002; 2005; 2007; 2010) discusses how sharing food, drink and other substances makes for identical bodies.

While training Gracie Jiu-Jitsu in Paramakatoi participants share pain, sweat, and transfer embodied knowledge, transforming and facilitating well-being and persons through bodily interaction. This theme of bodily transformation seen here in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu in Paramakatoi fits within the broader scope of bodily transformation in Amazonia (Fausto 2007; 2014; Vilaça 2002; 2005; 2010; Santos-Granero 2009; 2012; Viveiros de Castro 1998).

Conclusion

Kanaima in Paramakatoi is complex and changes depending on the context as we see in all three of the examples examined herein. The image of *kanaima* is multifaceted and malleable and constantly changing, being reinvented, and creatively imagined in art, performance and Patamona narrative. It has many meanings and many manifestations; it is even more multivalent and important than Whitehead (2002) argued in *Dark Shamans*. And it is ongoing.

The image and lingering threat of *kanaima* death is that which truly terrifies those who become part of its cosmology, even the anthropologist. *Kanaima* terror is a deep seeded fear capable of transcending the boundaries of the Pakaraimas and capable of transforming minds and bodies. It can be equally felt in Georgetown or small-town Wisconsin (see Whitehead this volume). For as one interlocutor told me, "There is a real dangerous *kanaima* in the Amerindian hostel in Georgetown", and "A *kanaima* like me would freeze in Wisconsin". Veiled threats and violent images linger, grow, and stir in the dark depths of the imagination. Artistic depictions and performances of *kanaima* violence in Paramakatoi create a space in which the contemplation of its violence can take place, and a space where even communities can come together through the shared experience of pain, a psychosomatic bond in training Gracie Jiu-Jitsu to combat *kanaima*.

References cited

Butt Colson, Audrey

2001 “Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure”. In *Beyond the visible and the material: The Amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière, edited by* Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 221-233. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Cambraia Neiva, Gabriel

2021 “The fictional Kanaima: Amerindian social thought in the making of the literary space of Guianas”. PhD thesis. Manchester: University of Manchester. https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/the-fictional-kanaima-amerindian-social-thought-in-the-making-of- (14.05.2024)

Dincovinci, Alexandeu Stefan

2012 “Globalization and shared practices: On Brazilian jiu-jitsu and pain communities”. *Annuaire Roumain d’Anthropologie* 49: 36-54.

Douglas, Mary

1966 *Purity and danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. New York: Routledge.

Falen, Douglas J.

2018 *African science: Witchcraft, vodun, and healing in southern Benin*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Fausto, Carlos

2007 “Feasting on people. Eating animals and humans in Amazonia”. *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 4: 497-530. https://doi.org/10.1086/518298

2014 *Warfare and shamanism in Amazonia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Forte, Janette, Ian Melville, and Stephanie Correia

1997 *Amerindian testimonies*. Georgetown: J. Forte.

Geertz, Clifford

1973 *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

1974 *Myth, symbol, and culture*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

1983 *Local knowledge: Further essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Janik, Tarryl

2018 “A return to dark shaman: Kanaima & the cosmology of threat”. Master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834/ (16.05.2024)

Kavanagh, Christopher, M., Jonathan Jong, Ryan McKay, and Harvey Whitehouse

2019 “Positive experiences of high arousal martial arts rituals are linked to identity fusion and costly pro-group actions”. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 49: 461-481. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.251

Kaieteur News

2017 “Region Eight’s, Sherryanna Balkaran crowned Indigenous heritage queen”. *Kaieteur News* 03.10.2017. https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2017/10/03/region-eights-sherryanna-balkaran-crowned-indigenous-heritage-queen/ (16.05.2024).

Lewy, Matthias

2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima". *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

McCallum, Cecilia

1996 "The body that knows: from Cashinahua epistemology to a medical anthropology of lowland South America". *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10, no. 3: 347-372. https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1996.10.3.02a00030

Riboli, Diana, and David Torri, eds.

2013 *Shamanism and violence: Power, repression and suffering in Indigenous religious conflicts*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Rival Laura

2001 "Seed and clone: The symbolic and social significance of bitter manioc cultivation". In *Beyond the visible and the material: The Amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière, edited by* Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 57-79. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

-Sahlins, Marshall

1976 *Culture and practical reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Santos-Granero, Fernando

2009 "Hybrid bodyscapes: A visual history of Yanesha patterns of cultural change". *Current Anthropology* 40, no. 4: 477-512. https://doi.org/10.1086/604708

2012 "Beinghood and people-making in native Amazonia: A constructional approach with a perspectival coda". *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1: 181-211. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau2.1.010

Schapira, Raphael

2021 "Good citizens on the mats: Embodying Fadda Brazilian Jiu-jitsu in Rio de Janeiro's periphery". PhD thesis, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva.

Schneider, David

1980 *American kinship: A cultural account*. 2nd edition. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.

Spencer, Jonathan

1996 "Symbolic anthropology". In *Encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*, edited by Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, 535-539. London/New York: Routledge.

Stabroek News

2017 "Sherryanna Balkaran runs away with Miss Indigenous Heritage crown". *Stabroek News*, 07.10.2017. https://www.stabroeknews.com/2017/10/07/the-scene/sherryanna-balkaran-runs-away -with-miss-indigenous-heritage-crown/ (16.05.2024)

Turner, Victor W.

1967 *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

1980 "Social dramas and stories about Them". *Critical Inquiry* 7:141-168. https://doi.org/10.1086/448092

Vilaça, Aparecida

2002 "Making kin out of others in Amazonia". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 2: 347-365. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.00007

2005 "Chronically unstable bodies: Reflections on Amazonian corporalities". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 3: 445-464. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2005.00245.x

2007 “Indivíduos celestes”. *Religião & Sociedade* 27, no. 1: 11-23. https://www.scielo.br/j/rs/i/2007.v27n1/ (16.05.2024)

2010 *Strange enemies*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Viveiros de Castro, E.

1998 “Cosmological deixis and Amerindian perspectivism”. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, no. 3: 469-488. https://doi.org/10.2307/3034157

Whitaker, James Andrew

2017 “Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and kanaima among the Makushi”. *Tipití* 15: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4/ (16.05.2024)

2021 “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta”. *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726

Whitehead, Neil, L.

1992 “El Dorado, cannibalism and the Amazons. European myth and Amerindian praxis in the conquest of South America”. In *Beeld en Verbeelding van Amerika*, edited by Wil Pansters, and Jan Weerdenburg, 53-70. Utrecht: University of Utrecht Press.

2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

2003 *Histories and historicities in Amazonia*. University of Nebraska Press.

Whitehead, Neil, L., and Robin Wright, eds.

2004 *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Interview with Theresa Whitehead

Theresa Whitehead

Tarryl Janik
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, U.S.A.
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0937-5488
tjanik@uwm.edu

The following interview with Theresa Whitehead, the wife of the late anthropologist Neil L. Whitehead was conducted in December of 2022.[1] The narrative contained herein not only demonstrates the fraught nature and complexity of fieldwork, but the way that studying sorcery, like *kanaima* in Paramakatoi, Guyana, South America, can affect both subjects and objects and their families. The entangled nature of both subject and object seen here contributes to the insider/outsider debate within anthropology and the social sciences at large (Chryssides and Gregg 2019; Becker 1967; Troyna and Carrington 1989; Hammersley 2000) and challenges the binary distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders.' The intersubjectivity seen in Whitehead's testimony blurs the boundaries between insider and outsider which further begs the question about how much the researcher should participate, what are the limits and ethics of studying sorcery as a subject matter and is there an ideal vantage point to studying such a controversial topic beyond reflexive naturalism (Benson and Stangroom 2006) or methodological agnosticism. The ethics of studying violence, sorcery, and other difficult issues are frequently called into question and discussed by anthropologists (Whitehead and Wright 2004; Strathern, Stewart, and Whitehead 2006; Whitehead and Finnstrom 2013; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), particularly the implications of harm to research subjects (Vidich and Bensman 1958; Morgan 1972; Wallis 1977; and Scheper-Hughes 2004) and the consequences of future research (Davis 1961; Erickson 1967; Hammersley 2007). This interview engages this conversation and further demonstrates how fieldwork can affect not just those being studied, but also the families of the researchers themselves.

---

[1] As a behind the scenes, look at Whitehead, Neil L. (2002): *Dark shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

TJ (Tarryl Janik): When Neil first went into the field in the early to mid-90s, to Paramakatoi, Guyana, tell me about your thoughts, what did you know about it? That whole timeline when he first started his *kanaima* research, did he talk about being sick, did he tell you what was going on?

TW (Theresa Whitehead): It was the second visit to South America when more things happened around that subject (*kanaima*). No, when Neil went away, after we had children, he might call me if he was in the States, but anywhere else no. In fact, the only time I ever spoke to Neil when he was in South America was to ask him if he would like a black cat. A rescue cat. (She laughs) Which he said yes to. But when he was sick and had to go to Georgetown, I didn't know about that. I first found out when he came home. He never sat down and said that this was what happened when I was away, bits and pieces might come out over time. So, I might ask him, are you ok? But I wouldn't ask him that because he was never ok doing fieldwork in South America.

So the worst I remember is in 1995, Rose was born in January, he went away in the summer and when he came back, and he had these before, but when he came back he had the sweats and shivers, he was really ill, so I took him to the university department where they deal with international travel and they did all these tests on him and one of the tests that came back was hepatitis C. But the symptoms he was experiencing had nothing to do with hepatitis C. So, he obviously had something, and it did take quite a while for that to get out of his system.

TJ: When was the first time you heard about *kanaima* from him?

TW: When he came back, the time that he met the Nurse Williams, that whole story came out in bits and pieces, it never came out as this is what happened from beginning to end. The first thing about that whole story, it was really about how much he liked her as a nurse, and the work that she was doing, going around the villages and all that. But I really got the feeling that when she gave him the information that she did, that they seemed to have established some sort of relationship before then, because he was very familiar the way he talked about her. I got the feeling from Neil that it was such a weird exchange that he least expected, it was like wow where did that come from.

TJ: Did he tell you about going to Kuyaliyeng Cave, photographing the *kanaima* ritual vessel, taking bone out of there, etc?

TW: All of that, I only found out much much later. You know that was the first time that I didn't really want to read what he had got up to because I could see what he was like when he came back. I've been told by so many people that I should read that bit, that that really explains him, and I was like no, no. (She laughs) So things like that, that would be a little heavier, he might not say anything about it until even a year down the road.

TJ: So how did he talk about *kanaima*, did he talk about it ever?

TW: I don't think he talked about it a lot after his first field trip. It was after his second trip, he talked about a woman who had been down by one of the watering holes and had been killed, and everyone said it was *kanaima*, so he made the point of talking about how victims would more often be single women, on their own, doing domestic duties. But that was different than telling me what he was messing up to basically.

TJ: So, you didn't know too much about what was taking place in the field?

TW: He would tell me about the places that he traveled to, he'd tell me about the old shamans that they'd meet, he told me he was convinced that somebody was *kanaima* and that he didn't feel comfortable.

TJ: How did his *kanaima* research effect you? Did it effect you?

TW: You know it only affected me knowing how his mind was going to be on work, and of course if you start studying something like *kanaima*, while I'm sure that Neil wouldn't give it any sort of spiritual power, he'd also recognize that through history, evil has often had unwanted consequences. I knew that he was going to get really into this, because this was totally freaky.

TJ: So, Neil comes back from Paramakatoi sick the first time, then goes back to research *kanaima* specifically, so you didn't know about what was happening, so you weren't even able to be concerned about what was happening.

TW: No. I probably should have realized how intense he would be about it, that this would consume him.

TJ: Do you think that he imagined that the *kanaima* research would become such a big deal in his academic career? Or one of the main focuses?

TW: You know I have to honestly say, that in all the things that Neil wrote…I might be the one who would pinpoint an area of deeper financial gain than Neil. (She laughs) It took him so long to admit to the bones, and he knows what I'm like, I'm like don't touch, and why would they even bring him there to that cave? You know what he's like? I'm not sure, because I still haven't unpacked everything of Neil's since moving, but if I still did have some of those bones, I would like to get rid of them. When you're unpacking boxes, they wouldn't be loose, they wouldn't have fallen out of the container they were in…but I definitely know there were some bones in his study.

TJ: I did hear the story that there was something in his office after he died, like a *kanaima* vessel or something.

TW: Yeah, I think it was, that he picked up…I heard bits of bone or stones around it, but more likely bone. And I don't know if it's the same thing that I'm thinking about that I remember when I first unpacked all the boxes into plastic containers, I think there were two things, that I remember were stone things having to do with *kanaima*, the very fact that I should be thinking that in my garage in Wisconsin, kind of makes me feel a little bit uncomfortable (she laughs).

TJ: Was Neil afraid of *kanaima*?

TW: God yeah.

TJ: What was his fear? How did it affect him at home?

TW: First of all, I wouldn't say that Neil was a God fearing creature, but it was like… not give fear to a wild animal, you're crazy. I only knew what he told me. I certainly got the impression that, you know, the late hours, the late afternoon or early evening were particularly dangerous in Guyana. I don't know if the light is anything particular to *kanaima*, but that's when they go out to do those sorts of chores, but I do not know if he ever went to any of those areas and what he did. I would think that no one else would go with him, so I don't think that would have happened, but I'm not sure. But I think there was something about the *kanaima*, where this isn't like twenty guys, and you don't know how big they are, but the fear that the people have in them…I think Neil was fascinated by that and what the people were doing.

TJ: So he definitely seemed to believe in it.

TW: Oh yeah. On one of the first trips back he was kind of very strange. Almost within a short period of time he said, "You know there are *kanaima* here." I said, what like in Madison? (She laughs) Jeeze, they must be freezing. He said, "No really, in New York." And I said oh Christ, so it goes on. Now what goes on, whether they spotted you and just waited for you to land in Guyana, I don't know. I can't imagine it would be very easy to kill people in the stages that they do though like that. But the fact that they were kind of around, he definitely believed and was thinking about. He said there was a community of them, they even worked at Menards.[2] (She laughs) I actually started to believe even more then. So, I think the fact that Neil would just, um, see that the people themselves believed in *kanaima*, that he would give that more credence.

TJ: How did it affect him? Did it affect him at all?

TW: Yeah, I think he was scared. I don't think he told me he was scared, but I think the fact that after he was made ill, he um, so after he was sick and tried to get help for him, not all of them were very friendly, I think there was a village that didn't feed them or something. So, they didn't feel as though they were with people who were going to take care of him, like getting that donkey, etc. I think from that point onwards they kind of got him.

TJ: He was drawn into it?

---

[2] US home improvement retail company with its headquarters in Wisconsin.

TW: You know I think, yeah, they made him sick, but Neil had a great interest in it, but would want to take that back to where did it come from. Neil was once talking to one of our children, and it was when the war was going on, what used to be Yugoslavia, and the Serbs, the Bosnians, used some pretty horrendous weapons, ways of dealing with people. Neil said two things; well first of all they did this in medieval times, they're nothing new, and secondly, if you can think of it, it's already been done. And that, if you like, explains *kanaima*. Because it's not so horrendous when all this other information is around and I think maybe that kind of…but I truly think when Neil came back having been made sick, he went to see a shaman, then after he came back, he wasn't directly told, maybe it was by George, but he was told that whoever it was that made him sick was killed in his name.

TJ: How did that news affect him?

TW: It was odd really. It was like oh you do know who I am (she laughs), but he didn't seem surprised, maybe it was because he knew that sort of thing happened a lot, I don't know.

TJ: In the last interview I did with him (2012) he mentioned that his terminal illness maybe had something to do with *kanaima*, is that something he talked about?

TW: No, when people came to Neil's celebration of life, that was like running around the anthropology department and everyone thought he had been made sick by the kanaima and I was like no, no.

TJ: So, it was rumor.

TW: Yeah, that's how far they can get you. Even if it was something that Neil might have thought, he definitely never said a word to me. And, I can't imagine him telling anyone else honestly. So, I don't know, in order to make something of that news and where it's coming from, he would have to have admitted that he had cancer in the first place, and he didn't tell anyone.

TJ: I remember. His death was so shocking because no one knew he was sick. Most people, including myself, found out by a post on Facebook.

TW: I'm sure Neil, if he had been at his own celebration of life standing in the driveway, I'm sure he would have had a good laugh at some of the things people may have blamed on *kanaima* or whatever, but I don't think he believed his cancer had anything to do with it.

References cited

Becker, Howard S.
1967 "Whose side are we on?" *Social Problems* 14, no. 3: 239-247. https://doi.org/10.2307/799147

Benson, Ophelia, and Jeremy Stangroom
2006 *Why truth matters*. London: Continuum.

Chryssides, George D., and Stephen E. Gregg

2019 *The insider outsider debate: New perspectives in the study of religion.* Sheffield and Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Davis, Fred

1961 "Comment on 'Initial interactions of newcomers in Alcoholics Anonymous.'" *Social Problems* 8, no. 4: 364-365. https://doi.org/10.2307/799346

Erickson, Kai T.

1967 "A comment on disguised observation in sociology.'" *Social Problems* 14, no. 4: 366-373. https://doi.org/10.2307/798850

Hammersley, Martyn

2000 *Taking sides in social research: Essays on partisanship and bias.* London: Routledge.

2007 "Against the ethicists!" Unpublished paper.

Morgan, David Hopcraft John

1972 "The British Association scandal: The effect of publicity on a sociological investigation." *Sociological Review* 20, no. 2: 185-206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1972.tb00208.x

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

2004 "Parts unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld." *Ethnography* 5, no.1: 29-73. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138104041588

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Phillippe Burgois, eds.

2004 *Violence in war and peace: An anthology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Strathern, Andrew, Stewart, Pamela J., and Neil L. Whitehead, eds.

2006 *Terror and violence: Imagination and the unimaginable*. London/Ann Arbor: Pluto Press.

Troyna, Barry, and Bruce Carrington

1989 "Whose side are we on? Ethical dilemmas in research on 'race' and education." In *The ethics of educational research*, edited by Robert G. Burgess, 205-223. New York: Falmer Press.

Vidich, Arthur J., and Joseph Bensman

1958 *Small town in mass society: Class, power and religion in a rural community*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wallis, Roy

1977 "The moral career of a research project." In *Doing sociological research*, edited by Colin Bell and Howard Newby, 149-169. London: Allen and Unwin.

Whitehead, Neil L.

2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Whitehead, Neil L., and Sverker Finnstrom, eds.

2013 *Virtual war and magical death: Technologies and imaginaries for terror and killing*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Whitehead, Neil L., and Robin Wright, eds.

2004 *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*.Durham: Duke University Press.

Interview with Matilda Saigo Williams

Matilda Saigo Williams

Tarryl Janik
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0937-5488
tjanik@uwm.edu

Interview with the Nurse from *Dark Shamans*[1] about Neil L. Whitehead, *kanaima*, and *taleng*.

Paramakatoi, Guyana, September 23, 2017

TJ (Tarryl Janik): Ok, if you could please state your name and your former position in Paramakatoi…

MSW (Matilda Saigo Williams): My name is Matilda Saigo Williams, nurse midwife, retired. Five years now, but I still do help at the health center when my service is needed.

TJ: Twenty Years ago, you did an interview with Dr. Neil L. Whitehead from the University of Wisconsin Madison, do you recall what you talked about with him?

MSW: Yes I do, some of it.

TJ: Can you tell me a little bit about what you talked about in that interview with him?

MSW: We talked about the *kanaima* and how other villages used to raid in other villages. We talked about tribal wars.

TJ: And since your interview with Dr. Whitehead, has *kanaima* still been an issue in Paramakatoi and to what extent?

MSW: Yes, it has been an issue, but not to the extent that they have gone to raid places. They are dealing mostly with individuals, not villages as such.

TJ: So this is a person seeking revenge on another person, something like that?

---

[1] Whitehead, Neil L. (2002): *Dark shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

MSW: Something like that, but really they don't have anything to revenge about, but still come or go to these different villages and trouble people.

TJ: Just for the sake of?

MSW: Just for the sake of troubling people, just for the sake of killing people, just for the enjoyment of killing people, I don't know what benefit they get out of this.

TJ: And, how many cases do you think happen here in Paramakatoi per year, of *kanaima* attack or death?

MSW: Can we go to Bamboo Creek?

TJ: Sure.

MSW: There have been two incidents from July to August (2017) with *kanaima* attacking people and they died.

TJ: Can you tell me a little bit about the victims without giving names, like were they men, women, children?

MSW: There was an eleven-year-old girl in July. I was down at Bamboo Creek and went to prepare some *farine* and the afternoon I went, the afternoon after I got there, somebody come telling me "Ms. Saigo, there's a death in the village." And we went to see the victim and that was it. And the other one happened just last Sunday. She died last Sunday.

TJ: Was that the pastor's wife I heard about?

MSW: Yes…*kanaima*. You see how people identify the victims of a *kanaima* is that they have fingerprints on them. Marks of fingers that have turned black and blue. For example; if they would have held the person by the shoulders you would see…they would of held them on the back and you would see fingerprints on the shoulders. If they would of held them on their seat you would see finger marks. They would have turned black and blue.

TJ: So the symptoms, essentially are still the same that you parsed out to Dr. Whitehead?

MSW: Very much.

TJ: The bruises, the piercing with the fangs of the tongue and the anus attack? So these are the same symptoms you saw with the pastor's wife?

MSW: Very much the same…the little girl, apparently somebody held her mouth. There were black and blue fingerprint marks across her face and on her mouth.

TJ): Were there any other symptoms that suggest that it was *kanaima* attack?

MSW: Yes, there were…well, when somebody dies, within a certain amount of hours, *rigor mortis* sets in right. But then even after all here is stiff with *rigor mortis*, the neck would twist. If it was not the neck that was affected it would be here that twist, it would be so limp.

TJ: Broken?

MSW: It wouldn't be broken, but like it's dislocated or something. If it's the leg, the leg would be one side shaking and the other side stiff.

TJ: When was the last one you did examine that you can remember?

MSW: Years ago, I can't quite remember when it was, but it was even before Dr. Whitehead was here. There was a child that died, a nine-year-old boy. He died at the health center, that's why I was able to examine the body. There was a protrusion of the anus that was not normal. Because when anybody dies you don't have a protrusion in the anus… but there was a protrusion in the anus and the anus was leaking a stained substance, not blood as such, but a blood stained something.

TJ: Now, I heard the case of a 40-year-old man who passed away here in Paramakatoi… the same symptoms were suggested to me…there was bruising and hand marks or there was blood all over the backside of the trousers…can you confirm if that was true?

MSW: I heard about that, but I didn't check. You see, I'm no longer in the medical profession so.

TJ: Are there any active or known *kanaimas* in Paramakatoi without giving any names?

MSW: Yes, there are.

TJ: How many do you think there are?

MSW: Paramakatoi proper, there are three and one at Bamboo Creek.

TJ: So do you think *kanaima* is happening more or less since you spoke with Dr. Whitehead?

MSW: Less.

TJ: So it's died down?

MSW: It's dying down.

TJ: So, off of the topic of *kanaima*, I've also heard about the practice of *taleng* in Paramakatoi? Could you tell me what that is and how people practice it?

MSW: It is something very technical, they have some words that they speak and then blow. And these words, not everybody can catch it. I don't even know it; I can't catch it. That is why I've always said that if these Amerindians had gone to the University they would have been perfect. But they only haven't had a chance. Men have 'blow' to go and hunt, 'blow' to catch fish…ladies have 'blow' to catch men (both laugh). And vice versa. Yeah, and they also have 'blow' for when a woman is in labor, and having a prolonged stage of labor, they will 'blow' and help…I have a plant at the health center. I've been a nurse midwife for a long time, but I still believe in these things.

TJ: So you've seen this…and it works?

MSW: Yes. Belief cures and belief kills. I believe because I've seen it work. I have a plant at the health center, I tell those ladies who are working that no they must not cut it. On Sunday, I used it. I used a part of that plant, I rub it, crush it between my hands and I rub the belly down and it works. It's a lily plant.

TJ: This is for medicinal purposes?

MSW: Yes.

TJ: Is it (blow) only for medicinal purpose?

MSW: No, it can also harm you. There have been people that have complained about people 'blowing' something on them. They have suffered from asthma, tuberculosis, migraines, everything after the 'blow.' They wouldn't want to reverse it. But if there are people that suspect that this is a 'blow' story that is affecting you then they can reverse it. They do this antidote thing and it cures them.

TJ: Can you give me a specific case medicinal or not?

MSW: If a birth takes too long, hours and hours, if the person who knows about the 'blow' thing will send some water. After 'blowing' on this water it will be put on the head and the belly, and after drinking a little bit of it, it hastens delivery. I've seen it happen as a midwife. I've seen it hundreds of times. Not only with the first babies you know, also two, three, four, and fifth ones.

TJ: Wow. And the words are spoken in Patamuna?

MSW: Yes they are spoken in Patamuna, but there are some technical words in between there. If they would be talking about this pen, they wouldn't say pen, they would say the technical word. If it was a bird, it wouldn't be the ordinary name for the bird that we know it. It would be such a technical name that even I couldn't catch it.

TJ: This *taleng* how is it passed down?

MSW: Mother to daughter, father to son. Well, men are teaching the men and women as well and the women are teaching the men as well. It's shared through family.

TJ: Do *kanaima* practice *taleng*?

MSW: Yeah they do. That is why when they come around and whistle around, when you're looking at them. They disappear so fast, because of this *taleng* they use, to run away fast or whatever.

TJ: So they still do the whistling?

MSW: Yeah, they still do.

TJ: When Neil was here, the second time, Dr. Whitehead, he said that as he was looking into it (*kanaima*) further and further he started to trouble things…that they (*kanaimas*) would come to his place and scratch on the walls and leave snakes in the building…do you know anything about that? Do you think there was something to that?

MSW: If it is that he went troubling the artifact in the caves, that would be true.

TJ: So do you think *kanaima* would have come here and messed with him?

MSW: Yeah, yeah, they would have come here and try to frighten him.

TJ: I went to Kuyaliyeng Cave, but I didn't trouble anything…

MSW: There's a difference.

TJ: They wouldn't care about that?

MSW: No, no, they wouldn't. They would just see a white man going in there and that he's a tourist.

TJ: In *Dark Shamans*, Neil talks about how the police don't recognize *kanaima* death officially, how has that changed and can you give me an example?

MSW: It hasn't changed here. I don't even know if they check the body or whatever. There was this man who was boasting about being a *kanaima*. The relatives of the person who was attacked and did die did not appreciate that so they went right to his house and shot him dead last year. And then the police just saw the body and said he was shot at close range and that was it. They don't even investigate. It happened at Kurukubaru too and they shot this *kanaima*. And nobody got arrested or followed up on, those two deaths.

TJ: What about the pastor's wife? Did the police get called in for that?

MSW: No they wouldn't even come. So, its just wasting your time and energy calling them. They've had other cases, not with deaths, with fights and cuts and stabs. The police have been called to come and they don't come. And by the time they come, two months or so after, they gone dead already. If it was a hit on the shin or something there is no evidence.

TJ: How quickly do bodies have to be buried here?

MSW: If they die last night, they have to be buried today.

TJ: So that fast? There's really no time.

MSW: This one died Sunday morning and the body wasn't buried until Monday afternoon real late. They had to wait on the granddaughter to come in from Georgetown and her brother was at Monkey Mountain…so they had to wait for those people. They would have buried the body right now or whatever, as soon as the grave was dug and the coffin was made.

TJ: So, as soon as someone is attacked, there is really no time for the police to investigate because the body is already buried by the time the police even show up.

MSW: Yes, it's really hard to get a pathologist to come in here and dig up graves. They have had pathologists come to dig up a body for stab wounds for visible attacks, not like when *kanaima* attack. Invisible.

TJ: That reminds me of the methodology of *kanaima* itself. Once they have hurt someone, they supposedly come back to the grave…is that true?

MSW: That is true, they do come back to the grave.

TJ: That *sopai*? They become boiling mad? A ritual that's done why? What's the purpose?

MSW: (Laughs) *Sopai*, yes. (Laughs) Yes, they go to the grave to ease their tension… they get such a headache that they feel that their eyes are protruding out of their sockets and so they go there to ease their tension.

TJ: Do people protect the body when they know somebody is coming back?

MSW: They try to protect the body, but they wait it out…they don't come. They have an instinct that somebody is by the grave corner, so they don't come.

TJ: So is that one way you can tell someone is guilty of something is because they look like this?

MSW: Yes, yes. They have severe headache and they are very, very sick. Then all of a sudden they are walking around healthy, like they had nothing.

TJ: So the story about Sopainiyeng Cave, is that where they would go to get rid of this? Is that still a place where they go?

MSW: Yes, that's true, but no not anymore, they don't go there anymore.

TJ: Knowing what Neil wrote about in *Dark Shamans* and the interview you did with him, is there anything you want to say about your portrayal in the book or how he portrayed anything? Are there any last comments you have about Dr. Whitehead and your experience with him?

MSW: No I think everything went well and that's it. And, you came on a follow-up and I think it's all gone well.

TJ: I really appreciate you sitting and taking the time to talk with me. Thank you very much.

MSW: You're welcome.

Witches and Witchcraft Among the Asháninka People: Moral, Psychological and Educational Aspects

Susana Frisancho
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP)
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5517-7597
sfrisan@pucp.edu.pe

Enrique Delgado
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP)
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0790-8030
gdelgado@pucp.edu.pe

Introduction

In recent decades, ethnological studies on witchcraft among Amazonian Indigenous peoples have acquired a specificity of their own, without being limited to the classical discourse on shamanism (Erikson 2016). However, there are few studies that address the complex phenomenon of witchcraft from a psychological perspective, and even fewer that focus on Amazonian Indigenous peoples. In this context, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze, from a psychological point of view, some of the moral conflicts arising from accusations of witchcraft among the Asháninka and Asheninka of the Peruvian Amazon.

Undoubtedly, approaching Amazonian cultures from the perspective of psychology may be a source of concern for many readers. There is certainly a risk of 'applying' to the specific reality of Amazonian Indigenous peoples' categories forged in very different cultural contexts, specifically, in 'WEIRD' contexts: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010, 61; Heine 2020, 22). There is also an individualistic tradition within psychology that approaches psychological processes without taking into account the complexity of the sociocultural factors that are related to them (Adams *et al.* 2019; Bronfenbrener 1987). For our part, we distance ourselves from such approaches and rather consider, as raised by psychologist Jerome Bruner (1990, 12) in dialogue with anthropology, that "it is man's participation in culture, and the realization of his mental powers through culture that make it impossible to construct a human psychology on the basis of the individual alone."

Psychological research has shown that individuals view morality as pertaining to fairness and justice while they simultaneously develop cultural identities linked to shared traditions and rules aimed at organizing social groups (Turiel and Banas 2020). Cultural identities are shared norms constructed by individuals on the basis of the messages and ideologies they receive in their socio-cultural contexts, in order to maintain cultural traditions and organize life in common. This set of cultural rules and traditions, by nature particular and arbitrary, is often referred to as the social domain (Turiel 1983). Along with this, morality is understood as pertaining to fair and equitable treatment between people, and has to do, for example, with issues of exclusion and inclusion, people's rights, and social inequalities regarding resource allocation. Frequently, these two social domains, the moral and the social, are mutually challenged. Culture is central to moral development in general and moral reasoning in particular (Turiel and Banas 2020; Turiel 2002; 2012a; 2012b), but none of these domains is defined by the other. As we understand this complex relationship,

> [...] culture is not defined by morality, it is relevant for the ways in which individuals evaluate morally salient decisions, how moral conflicts are resolved, and how messages about social groups that bear on the application of morality in intercultural contexts are transmitted and perpetuated" (Killen *et al.* 2015, 162).

The theoretical foundations for this chapter derive mainly from developmental psychology and cultural psychology. Psychological research has shown that children and adults living in different nations around the world, in rural and urban settings, and belonging to different socioeconomic levels, are able to differentiate moral rules from social-conventional norms and traditions (see Turiel and Banas 2020, 26-28; Turiel 2012a, 20-23; Wainryb and Recchia 2014, 263-265). Contrary to views that think that there are no moral universals and that Indigenous peoples have a value system that follows a completely different trajectory than Westerners, following social domain theory we assume that, while there are cultural particulars in the contents of people's moral concerns, all human beings distinguish social conventions from issues of justice and fairness, welfare, avoidance of harm and respect for rights. Following the above, we attempt in this chapter to shed light on the cultural modes of moral reasoning and the moral conflicts of a group of men and women belonging to the Asháninka Indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon. For this purpose, we will take the subject of witchcraft as an object of analysis.

Witchcraft is a complex phenomenon that generates deep psychological and moral conflicts in people living in societies that accept its existence and have developed diverse practices to deal with it. Belief in witchcraft is a widespread reality among the Indigenous communities of the Peruvian Amazon, which are imagined by the natives as populated by magical beings, many of them dangerous and evil (Garra 2016; Santos Granero 2002; 2004). In this sense, these beliefs constitute what Wainryb and Turiel (1993, 207-209), and Wainryb (1991, 841; 2000, 33-34) have called 'factual beliefs' or 'informational assumptions,' beliefs about the world that nourish the moral reasoning of people in these sociocultural groups. As pointed out in relation to other realities in which belief in witchcraft had a dominant presence (Laskaris 2019, 2), these ideas and their associated practices should not be interpreted as psychopathological or fraudulent but rather as an expression of personal agency in a sociocultural context with particular socio-political and religious characteristics. As Fernández (2020, 2) states, diseases due to witchcraft are one of the most important expressions of affliction in the field of conceptions of illness among Indigenous peoples.

As we have explained elsewhere (Delgado and Frisancho 2021), witchcraft accusations have occurred throughout history mainly at times of social tension, and relate to social issues such as death, disease, poverty, hunger, land dispossession, violence, and other evils. Many of the accusations of witchcraft that occur in the Asháninka people are made against children, who are therefore made victims of violent acts in order to maintain the harmony of the community (Santos Granero 2002; 2004). In our previous work, we explored, from a psychological point of view, the ways of reasoning that six adults belonging to the native Asháninka people of the Peruvian Amazon have about the belief in witchcraft and the cultural practice of eliminating (usually by burning) people considered witches. Adding new interviews with different members of the Asháninka and Asheninka people, we explore in this chapter new examples and different experiences about the relationship between culture and morality, using the practice of witchcraft as a theme that allows us to evidence the cultural and moral reasoning of the participants.

The Asháninka are the most numerous Amazonian Indigenous people in Peru. Although various limitations at the time of data collection, together with the complexity that the term ‘Indigenous’ entails, make it impossible to know with certainty the exact number of their members, there are some official approximations in this regard. Thus, according to the 2017 National Census, around 117 955 people live in the Asháninka communities and, at the national level, 55 493 identify themselves as part of the Asháninka people (Ministry of Culture 2024). In the case of the Asheninka or Asháninka of Gran Pajonal, 15 281 people live in their communities and 11 people at the national level identify themselves as Asheninka (Ministry of Culture 2024). The latter is congruent with what was pointed out by our interviewees, who do not support the sharp distinction between Asháninka and Asheninka, despite the fact that the ethnographic literature has made such a distinction. Our interviewee Guillén said: “I think we are the same people because we have the same customs, the same beliefs, the few differences are in the speech, in the pronunciation.” From an ethnographic point of view, Weiss (2005, 5) considers that the riverine Campa societies (Asháninkas) and Campa del Pajonal (Asheninkas) belong to two different cultural systems, although “these systems are very similar and share a large number of cultural traits.” Along the same lines, Hvalkof and Veber (2005, 160) recall that ethnographic studies call the Indigenous people living in the area “Ashéninka del Pajonal,” recognizing that “they do not constitute a demographic or social unit.”

So many stories of witchcraft[1]

Let's begin with some stories. David,[2] a fifty-year-old Asháninka man living in Pucallpa city, Ucayali region, who currently works as elementary school teacher, narrates what he experienced with his family when he was a child:

> In those days my mother told me that my father was a very bad person. He beat my little sister, he was a *macho* man, he didn't want to have a daughter, he only wanted boys. One day, my father brought two children from a faraway place, a boy and a girl, to help with the housework. My father drank alcohol and mistreated my little sister, and this girl told us: "this man doesn't love his daughter, maybe one day something will happen to her." We did not know that the girl was a witch, we are Adventists, we do not want to accept witches, but the Bible says that witches exist. So, one day, my little sister slipped and hurt her knee. That's where the wound started, little by little liquid was coming out of her knee, it was getting worse and worse, there was a big wound and her bones could be seen. They cured it at home, they took her to the hospital and gave her antibiotics, but nothing happened, she got worse, gangrene set in, and finally she died. And that was because the girl was a witch. When my father arrived home and saw this, he was very upset. He grabbed the girl, hung her by the legs, and told her: "we are going to burn you, you have killed my daughter, we are going to kill you." And a lot of people gathered there. They beat her so many times and she didn't cry, she was quiet. One person said: "let's throw chili pepper in her eyes, if she doesn't cry or blink, it is because she is a witch." And she didn't cry, she cried a little, but she didn't really cry, because she was a witch. "Let's go burn her!" people said. Then the girl said: "don't burn me, I will tell you the truth, I killed your daughter, I am a witch." "And for what reason?" my father asked. "Because you don't love your daughter, you hit her too much. That's why I'd better take her away from you." She was a 10-year-old girl. And although she had confessed she was a witch, some of us were still in doubt.

Hulda[3] is a forty-five-year-old Asháninka woman who is originally from the Kirishari native community in Puerto Bermúdez, Pasco region, but currently lives in the Koshireni native community in Ucayali region, near milestone 36 on the Peru-Brazil border. She works as a teacher in Dulce Gloria native community, in Yurua, also a border community. She stated the following:

> I am going to tell you about an experience I had in my husband's community called Paujil, in the district of Puerto Bermúdez, one hour down the river. At that time there were many sick people, they would get sick with a simple fever or a simple diarrhea, and die. People wondered why they died so much. In the evenings an owl would come out and start screaming after 7 o'clock at night. And there was a wise man who said that there were witches in that place. People did not believe it, because they wondered how an animal could know about

---

[1] The interviews were conducted virtually, in 2022, using Zoom, as the participants were in their communities and it was impossible to interview them in person. All interviews were conducted in Spanish by the authors of this chapter. The participants have given their explicit consent and have expressed their wish for their names to appear in this publication. This study is a continuation of a previous study already published (see Delgado and Frisancho 2021).

[2] The Asháninka name for David is Jiriti. It is a colorful little bird that makes its nest under the ground and sings at dawn and dusk.

[3] The Asháninka name for Hulda is Mawoetyoki. It is a worm that comes out of the earth and eats the seed of the *sapote* (*Quararibea cordata*). Hulda explains that her grandparents gave her that name because when she was born she had a lot of black hair, just like the head of that little worm. "That's why my grandparents gave me that name, like the head of that worm," she says.

> evil. The wise man was a widower, his wife had died, and he lived with his brother who was the chief of the community; his sister-in-law took care of him. Nobody knew that the chief was a sorcerer. One day the chief said to his brother: “Why are you going with my wife to hunt and fish so much? And the wise man tells him that while he is doing the paperwork for the community, he goes to look for food for his sons, the chief’s nephews, because his wife has died and he was alone. Suddenly, one day the wise man felt sick, his stomach hurt, he did not want to eat, when he ate yucca, it made him sick, he could not eat at all. Everybody wondered why he got sick overnight if he worked, he had a farm, etc. And they ask him, and he says: “You know, I dream about my brother. My brother brings me food and tells me: eat this, so you can recover quickly.” They asked the chief if he was a witch, but he denied everything. There was a lady who was 18 years old and who also appeared in his dreams, along with his brother. Then they asked her if she was a witch, but she denied it as well. But many people kept dying in the community and that could no longer be allowed. So, they went to find a doctor who knew witches very well. While they were going to look for this wise man who knows about witches, they told the lady that if she did not acknowledge that she was a witch, the wise man would come, and it would be worse for her. They threatened her by telling that they were going to put chili pepper in her eyes, a strong chili pepper called monkey’s penis. And they did, they put that very hot chili pepper in her eyes, and she didn’t even cry, it didn’t burn her, nothing. That’s why they said she was a witch.

Guillén is a thirty-six-year-old Asháninka man who was born in Puerto Bermudez, Oxapampa, Pasco region, and currently works as an elementary school teacher in the Ucayali region. He remembered this story:

> My dad is also a teacher. When I was a child, he took me to where he worked, which was a place where there was a lot of talk about witchcraft. He told us not to play with the other children because they could teach us about witchcraft. But how, I asked myself? If he wants to teach me, I can say no, but my dad said, “No. It’s not like that, they can give you food, a drink, they pour some witchcraft on it, and you drink or eat, and you become a witch.” When another child gave me something, a cookie or a fruit, I was very afraid and I asked my father if I could eat it, and he always told me not to eat it, because children and young people practiced witchcraft there. I have always lived with that fear of socializing with children, I was afraid of that, because of my father’s warning. Once I didn’t want a child to touch my dog, I didn’t let him touch it, and suddenly it was as if something went directly into my eye, and I was in a lot of pain. They took me to the doctor, they put water in my eye with a syringe, they washed me, and the pain and itching didn’t stop. Then my mother said to me: “Who did you scold, who were you playing with? Go and call him, that child has done something to you.” They went to bring the child, and he began to rub my eye with his saliva, and it was as if he had put an ice cube in my eye, it began to calm the pain quickly. But it was just his hand with his saliva. I was quite surprised.

Raúl is an Asháninka activist and leader who was born in 1954, in San Pablo, a district of Puerto Bermúdez, in the province of Oxapampa, Pasco region. He told us about the death of his son, which he attributes to the power of a witch:

> My son died young, in the year 2000. He was in Pucallpa, he had a girlfriend, a pretty Shipibo girl, her father had already accepted him, he went to her house to visit, they come and go, like all lovers. My son was healthy, he did not have any vices, he studied, he was a painter and was also starting to work as an announcer, he liked to be on the radio. He didn’t smoke, he didn’t drink alcohol, he was a healthy boy with his sweetheart, like every young man. But, suddenly, one day his girlfriend brought her cousin to the house. Well, we

> received them all, but suddenly, that cousin also fell in love with my son and that's when the problems started between the two women and my son. I don't know if my son paid attention to the other one, we don't know really, but just in those days we were thinking of moving from Pucallpa to Yurua, where I am now. So, we talked at home and I told my son "Son, we are going to move to Yurua with your mother, with your brothers. What do you think? Do you want to go there too, or do you want to stay in the city? And he told me "I would like to get to know the place, I like nature, trees, and there is where I want to paint." "Let's go," I invited him. I remember that more or less in May or June 2000, I went with my son there, I took him to Paititi, he got to know the place and liked it; and on the trip he told me "Dad, I think I'm going to come with you to live here, here I will do my drawings and from here I will go out to sell, because this nature will inspire me." "Perfect, it's up to you," I told him. We returned to Pucallpa more or less in the middle of July, he met again with his girlfriend and there was an activity, a barbecue, near the school. Well, they went and when he came back from that barbecue, told me that at the barbecue the two women had an argument. I don't know what they have said to each other, but witnesses have heard the cousin say that "this man is not going to be for you or for me." It turns out that my son came with his girlfriend to the house and a little while later he was complaining of pain, his girlfriend left, and my son's stomach started to twist and one of my daughters told me "my brother is complaining of pain." "What's wrong with him?" "I think he has colic." "Let's see, give him this pill." But it did not work, he was in a lot of pain and was crying there. "I touched his stomach and felt a hard thing. And I say "How long have you had this?" "No, just recently. Yesterday it was a little bit like this, but today is when it hurts the most." I got scared. "Well, let's see, take another pill," but it did almost nothing. "Let's go to the hospital." I got to the emergency room and the doctor came in: "This is a very serious matter," he says. "You know what? Right now, you have to take your son to Lima, to Neoplásicas Hospital. We can't do anything else for him here." "But why?" Cancer, that is, cirrhosis. But cirrhosis, how long has he had that cirrhosis of the liver? Well, the doctor put it to me like this: "There is nothing we can do here. We are going to give him an injection for his colic, but you have to take him to Lima, I cannot treat him here." I got desperate and, really, I don't know what I did but I took him to Lima with cirrhosis. And the doctor says, "Was your son a drunkard, did he drink too much, did he smoke a lot"? "Nothing doctor, nothing, he is a healthy boy." My wife always reproached me because instead of taking him to the hospital, I would have taken him to a *sheripiari* and possibly, I think, I am absolutely sure that, maybe, my son would not have died, because his illness was not natural but the product of witchcraft. Well, December came, and my son died, and after his death his girlfriend's cousin confessed that she hired a witch to harm him so that he would not belong to her lover or to her.

It is relevant to remember that these people are contemporary adults with strong bonds and contact with their communities of origin, as well as with a permanent relationship with the Western world. All of their stories have one thing in common: witches exist; they do evil, harm people, and often kill them.

Who is the sorcerer and how does he act?

The witch, called *matsinti* or *matsi* in the Asháninka language, is, according to David, the person who does evil and changes people's health. For him, witchcraft (or sorcery) is a set of knowledge, practices, and techniques that a person performs to change the state of health of other people. The witch can be a man or a woman. To perform well as a *matsinti*, the person has to undergo many dietary restrictions and drink the liquid from the plants. For the Asháninka people, there are good and bad plants. "They are like doctors, there are good doctors and bad doctors," said David. And then explains: "Doing evil is learned quickly, with diet and plants in a week you are already a witch, it's fast. It is not like being a healer, which takes time." Raul explained further about the opposing forces of good and evil that exist in the Asháninka's understanding of the world:

> In every culture there is good and evil, this is a cosmic conflict, let's say. Both the good represented by Pawa, and the evil represented by Kamari, are invisible, they are mysterious forces, nobody has seen Pawa and nobody has seen Kamari… So, this is health, this is death, and there are plants that cure and plants that kill, that is our cosmovision. Just as there are birds that represent good, there are also birds that represent evil. So, in healing, on one side there is the *sheripiari*, he is the doctor, and on the other side there is the *matsi* which means the sorcerer or the one who does harm.

For the Asháninka people, there are several different ways to do evil and provoke harm to people. David explains that witchcraft can be mild or severe. Mild witchcraft is when the witch does evil to a person and makes their head or their eyes hurt, or gives them a stomach ache or pain in their knees. It can lead to death but very slowly. These are the cases that are brought to the healer, the shaman or *sherepiari*, who has powers and knowledge to extract that evil from the person's body by different techniques. For example, they may use tobacco or vaporization. Severe witchcraft occurs when the witch adds something into people's drink, e.g., puts some poison in their *masato*.[4] In such cases, the person may be dead in a couple of days. David kept explaining:

> Sometimes the witch picks up the soil from where you have stepped and sticks the poison there, and so from a distance you feel a stinging sensation in the sole of the foot. And there remains a small hole and if you do not realize it, it advances and advances, it gets bigger and bigger, goes to your knees, and then to your stomach, until you die. Other types of witchcraft are more spiritual, the connector is the owl.

An explanation of the owl's role in witchcraft according to the Asháninka is described in Delgado and Frisancho (2021, 7).

For the Asháninka, sorcerers always have a special power, something that sets them apart from other humans. They are human beings like any other, but (given their condition as witches) they now possess unique characteristics. For example, they can tolerate blows and physical harm without crying, or even have much greater muscular strength than other people. David recounts the latter in relation to a witch who hurt his grandfather:

> My grandfather got sick, so we took him to vaporize. Bone came out of his body, cassava peel came out, fish bone came out. The woman who did the vaporization told us that this was witch's damage. We took him to the healer, the one who takes ayahuasca and divines; "there is a girl" he said, and we brought her, but she denied, witches always deny, but when people threaten them with death, they always tell the truth. What to do now? She said: "we are going to go under the pallet, and I am going to take out all the damage that I buried." We went, and right where the grandfather is lying on his bed, it's like a figure drawn in

---

[4] *Masato* is a fermented beverage made from yucca, a tuber also known as cassava or manioc.

> the ground, and she asked for a mango stick so she could dig. That part of the soil is hard, very hard, people wanted to give her a machete to dig but she didn't want to, because she said that with a machete the patient will get cut and will die. So with the mango stick she dug, the soil seemed extremely soft, as if it was sand, and where he was affected there was the buried bone, fish, rags, cassava peel, all sorts of things... all the evil she had done. But the soil was very hard, really very hard, only she could get it out, nobody else could, don't know how she could dig so easily. Maybe the devil helped her to make the soil soft.

In this story, we can see what Santos-Granero (2002; 2004) has pointed out: that in the Asháninka belief system, witches, whether children or adults, are under the influence of Kamari, an evil being that has distorted their human nature and given them magical powers and a greater tolerance for pain and death. For the Asháninkas, one way to test the condition of a witch is to observe the powers that the person has and subject her to torture: if she has more strength than normal, or if she can withstand blows without crying, or if she can tolerate chili in the eyes without tearing up, then she is a witch. These are irrefutable proofs in the eyes of many Asháninka.

On frequent occasions, the sorcerer confesses after being punished or even tortured. This seems to generate conflicts and remorse in some people, but not in all. Given the nature attributed to the witch, who is often stripped of his human condition (see Delgado and Frisancho 2021, 10-11), many people think that the end justifies the means, i.e., that it is acceptable to torture the witch if this will bring his confession, which in turn will open the door to a final solution to the problem, either by killing the witch or banishing him to live outside the community. Guillén points to this when he explains that:

> Many times the witch confesses and says: yes, I did it because he was a bad person, he was mean to me, selfish, he didn't want to give me anything. But of course, witches confess after they are punished.

As mentioned above, the use of punishment, usually severe physical punishment (e.g., by whipping the body or putting abrasive and irritating substances in the eyes), as a method of obtaining a confession from an alleged witch is viewed ambivalently. Some of the participants in our interviews showed concern about this practice, aware of the dangers of putting pressure on people who, being innocent, might confess in order to avoid torture. Others, however, showed no remorse or concern for this custom.

The one who can counteract the strength of Kamari and confront the evil caused by the sorcerer is the shaman, called *sherepiari*. Raul explained the power of the shaman, the *sherepiari* who can cure, in relation to the taking of ayahuasca.[5] He stated:

> The *sheripiari*, let's say it this way, is like the priest who has a relationship with the divinity in his visions, he sees the sick person and heals him, and says that it is the damage of Kamari. He consults the ayahuasca and says, "this patient that I have here, what does he have?" then he says, "yes, he has such a disease or such an illness, and his cure is such and such," that is, he receives the instructions. He asks, "is this one hurt by the Kamari, is it because someone

---

[5] Ayahuasca is a brew made from the leaves of the *Psychotria viridis* (*chacruna*) shrub along with the stalks of the *Banisteriopsis caapi* (ayahuasca). It is a psychoactive brew used by Indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin as ceremonial spiritual medicine for ritual and therapeutic purposes.

> hurt him, the witch or whoever, or is it a natural disease?" So, taking ayahuasca is like a way of using the ultrasound to know what the patient has, once he knows that, then he prescribes the medicines. That is why I said at some point, ayahuasca is not to be taken at any time or by any person, there must be a spiritual preparation to participate in an ayahuasca session.

It is important to point out that a clear difference is made in the Asháninka world between natural diseases and those that come from witchcraft, as was seen in the story of the death of Raúl's son. The *sherepiari* has the power to cure illnesses that come from bewitchment, and must be sufficiently aware to be able to recognize the limits of his knowledge and refer the case to another specialist when the illness has a different origin. Similarly, an illness caused by witchcraft cannot be cured if treated by a Western doctor. As Raul explains:

> The *sheripiaris* know, they can tell if that disease you have is to go to the hospital or not. They tell you: "Do you know what? This is for the hospital, so go to the doctor," and when it is not for the doctor, they say: "no, this is for such a thing, you better come here to see me."

In the same vein, Magaly, a sixty-two-year-old Asháninka woman who is a nurse, tells the following:

> Once, I talked to the chief of the community, I told him "Look, I am here because this person is sick, when they told me that so-and-so is sick I came, I took my bag of medicines to attend to that patient." And do you know what they told me? "It is not necessary for you to have come, it is nothing, go away, miss. This gentleman is not sick, they have done witchcraft to him, the *sherepiari* is coming." And really, the *sherepiari* came and grabbed him, he has his special *piri piri*, he chewed it and started spitting it all over his face and the man was cured.

As can be seen, for our interviewees, the world is ordered in such a way that good and evil can be identified with some clarity. There are evil beings, but there are also those who have the power to confront these evil forces. However, people are aware, to varying degrees, of the possibility of failing to recognize who is a witch and who is not, and show concern about the methods they use for this recognition. A much more detailed elaboration, including reasoning about justice and their arguments that they are not being unjust in identifying and punishing witches, can be read in Delgado and Frisancho (2021).

Witchcraft, social control, and intergroup relations

The Asháninka have hypotheses about the reasons that lead a witch to act by hurting people. These hypotheses are of different types. A frequent one is to understand the sorcerer's actions as a reaction to other Asháninka's behaviors that the sorcerer considers unfair and that have annoyed him or her, i.e., as a reaction to anti-normative behavior.

For instance, when asked about the reasons why a witch hurts another person, David elaborates:

> The sorcerer hurts someone out of hatred. For example, if the person has eaten something and has not invited the witch, the witch gets annoyed. So, the witch picks up a bone and introduces it into the person's body, and if not treated by a healer, the person dies. The

> sorcerer can make you choke on your food. For us, the Asháninka people, there is a place where the bones are deposited, it's not like that we throw bones here or there, we don't throw them on the ground because they can be found by a bad person: "Ahhhh, he has eaten and I didn't eat, he didn't invite me." So, with a little bone the witch can hurt a person's body.

Ethnographic literature on the Asháninka highlights the role of practices such as witchcraft as a means of social control, with the *sherepiari* (i.e., the Asháninka shaman) being in charge of identifying witches (*matsi* or *matsinti*) (Rojas 1994, 238; 2014, 264). Being accused of practicing witchcraft carries various consequences, from social rejection, banishment or death in the most severe cases. Hence, the possibility of being accused of being a witch favors social conformity with the norms. Among these, sharing the products of hunting, fishing, or cultivation are particularly important. A word of caution: in no way do we diminish the complexity of the motivations related to witchcraft, which is well documented in the ethnographic literature as well as in the statements of our interviewees. Rather, what we will do in this section is to highlight one element among others, i.e., the relationship of witchcraft practices or accusations to conformity to norms regarding sharing.

Normative behavior can be understood as the rules and standards that are valued and accepted by members of a cultural group, and that guide and/or constrain their behavior. In other words, they are rules that are necessary in order to fit into a particular group. Santos and Barclay (2005, xixx) allude to an Arawak ethical code, which includes peoples such as the Asháninka, Ashéninka, Yanesha, Matisgenga, Nomatsiguenga and Yine, that underpins the various mechanisms of social inclusion and stresses the obligation to share as well as to defend and support each other:

> If you are hungry, I will share with you my hunting and fishing and the fruits of my farm, because you are Campa,[6] and the Campas must love each other with true friendship [...] If you are attacked by an enemy I will expose my life to defend you, because you are Campa [...] If the Camagari[7] (the Devil) makes you die, your children will be mine, because you are Campa (Ordinaire 1988, 91-92, as cited in Santos and Barclay 2005, xxix).

Hvalkof and Veber (2015, 127) also emphasize that "Ashéninka social coexistence requires compliance with the moral imperative that commands all those who have some food to distribute and share it with others." As the authors point out, it is not simply a matter of reciprocity, but of the constitution of a community based on care and interest for the other.

These normative aspects, which are indissociable from censorship when they are not complied with, are evidenced in the statements made by some of our informants. As seen in David's testimony above, the statements point to the dimension of sharing food resources. For instance, Hulda explained that:

---

[6] The Asháninka people are also known as Campa, although this name is currently derogatory.

[7] Kamari. The word *Camagari* that appears in the original has been retained.

> Once we made a witch confess by putting a monkey's penis chili[8] in her eyes and hitting her with a huge donkey bone. At the end she confessed that she was a witch and said that she had done harm because everyone ate without inviting her.

Similarly, Guillén stated that:

> Many times the people [who had done harm through witchcraft] confessed: Yes, I did it, because he was mean to me, he is a bad person, he treated me like that [...] To be mean is, for example, when the family goes to the mountain, brings a *mitayo*,[9] hunts an animal and does not share. So, by not giving to the other family, or to the neighbors, if only they eat, that is being mean.

In these cases, the censure of in-group members who manifest anti-normative attributes is related to what has been proposed by social identity theory and its revisions. From this perspective, it is proposed that we tend to manifest more favorable judgments towards in-group members (Scandroglio, López, and San José 2008). However, endo-group favoritism tends to be reversed when a member of the endo-group manifests anti-normative attributes, in which cases the judgment is particularly severe (Marques and Páez 1996). In these cases, "the greater harshness with respect to the endo-group member who violates the norm is due to the fact that he/she contributes to a negative social identity for the group. It is then a matter of protecting the norms that provide a positive character to the category with which the subject identifies" (Zubieta and Fernández Liporace 2005, 44). In the case of what was expressed by our interviewees, we are indeed facing an unfavorable judgment for behaviors that express anti-normative attributes. However, this 'black sheep effect' responds to the protection of norms that favor collective functioning (sharing food) although the endo/exo-group dynamics and the search for a positive social identity are not evident in relation to it. Rather, we find that intergroup (in this case, interethnic) relations regarding witchcraft are influenced by an additional contextual aspect.

In Amazonian cities, such as Pucallpa, different Indigenous peoples currently coexist. The urban context and the increased articulation with the market have transformed the structure of needs of Indigenous people (Espinosa 2007; Rojas 1994). In many cases, traditional shamanic practices or ayahuasca rituals have been commodified (Frisancho and Delgado 2017, 296; Dobkin de Ríos 2005, 204). In this context, witchcraft practices associated with 'competition in the shamanism market' can also be identified.

Guillén narrates the case of a shaman from his village who, in the city of Pucallpa, cured various illnesses without charging much, which led to an imbalance in the market for shamanic services. In Pucallpa, these services were offered mainly by members of the Shibibo-Konibo people who, in addition to charging a fee, did so at very high rates. For this reason, our informant narrates, the Asháninka shaman was the victim of a spell that left him ill. The shaman recovered but stopped offering his services. When he asked him why, Guillén says that the shaman replied:

---

[8] *Capsicum baccatum*. Popularly named after the genital organ of the Amazonian male primates.

[9] According to Alberto Chirif's Amazonian dictionary (2016), *mitayo* is a term that designates both bush animals and prey. To go to *mitayo* means to go hunting.

> Here the people are very mean. Here the witches and shamans are mean because they have seen that many people come to my house to be cured and they are envious of that because they were no longer going to them, I was taking away their clients. So as a warning to stop me they made me sick so I wouldn't get involved with their clients.

For Indigenous peoples, sharing possessions is expected, so being selfish and eating without inviting others is seen as anti-normative. Witchcraft would be a reaction against this anti-normative behavior. However, there is also the belief that the witch is an inherently evil person, who is going to do evil anyway, inflicting harm for no reason. For example, Auristela,[10] a forty seven year old Asháninka woman from the native community of Alto Aruya, Ucayali, who currently works as an early childhood education teacher, stated that:

> There was this woman who was a witch, and she always did evil but it was not known why. If she was invited to eat she didn't like it, if she wasn't invited she didn't like it either, she always did evil for whatever reason.

It is necessary to point out that, as might be expected, different people have different explanations for making sense of the reasons that lead someone to commit acts of witchcraft. These results allow us to better understand the cultural values and social norms and traditions that are relevant to moral functioning within cultural groups.

Justice for witchcraft victims and concerns about going against one's principles

A deep concern for fairness is common to many Asháninka people. As in any human group, among the Asháninka there are different perspectives on justice, and different degrees of concern about how to obtain it. Raul shares with us his tribulations about justice in relation to the death of his son:

> So, back to the topic, in the Asháninka world justice can be applied as the Bible says, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But, well, I have read the Bible a lot and I am sure that God's command is "do not kill." But, how do we then remedy that? I mean, I feel that someone killed my son, but if I go to the police or the prosecutor and say "I denounce this lady because she has done witchcraft to my son," do you think they are going to do justice?

There is sadness in this story. On the one hand, as can be read in the story of his son's death narrated in previous paragraphs, he regrets having taken his son to the hospital instead of the *sherepiari*. He has to constantly listen to his wife's complaints about this and is burdened with the doubt of whether his son could have been saved if he had taken him to the right place. On the other hand, he also regrets that he has not obtained justice and that the Western world, the police, and the prosecutor's office are not prepared to deal with cases where the victim has died from witchcraft practices.

In many cases, revenge occurs. The victim's relatives take justice into their own hands. But many Asháninka are aware that enormous injustices can be committed in these acts of revenge.[11] Moreover, people position themselves differently in the face of revenge, valuing this practice from different points of view. About this, Raul said:

---

[10] The Asháninka name for Auristela is Nasankaneki Inchateaki, which means 'my heart is a rose.'

> So, cultural justice for the Asháninka is that revenge can only be applied to those who are conscious, that is, to those who morally say "I am not interested in the commandments." Only then you can take revenge, which I cannot do.

It is interesting to note that Raul is questioning his ability to do something that may be socially expected in his community. In fact, although there have been important transformations throughout history, revenge is a behavior that is quite frequent among many Amazonian Indigenous peoples (Romio 2021; Pozo-Buleje 2017; García Serrano 2017; Garra 2016; González Saavedra 2015). But Raul has concerns regarding this response.

Kohlberg (1984) and Piaget (1984) demonstrated that human beings move from understanding morality as a compulsory obedience to norms considered inviolable and socially determined to a more mature moral understanding that takes into account how law and principles of justice are interrelated. This means understanding the validity of principles as independent of both the authority of the social group and one's own identification or affective ties to one's own group. Blasi (1984; 1988; 1993; 1995; Blasi and Glodis 1995) adds moral identity to the equation, which is the area of general identity built around the individual's moral ideals. In other words, in addition to the ability to reason morally, there are differences among individuals in the degree and manner in which morality is integrated into their identity, generating the desire to live in a way that is consistent with their sense of self. The construction of moral identity is a complex process with changes throughout development (Krettenauer and Hertz 2015; Krettenauer 2013).

It is important to emphasize that Raul's rejection of revenge, as well as his recognition of his inability to carry it out, is a sign of the variability of moral stances found among Asháninka individuals.

Can the sorcerer be redeemed? Ideas about redemption and how to solve the problem of witchcraft

There is no consensus among the Asháninka regarding the witch's possibility of redemption, which is understood here as the capacity of turning away from evil and morally improving oneself. For some of them, like Benigno and Hulda, the witch can change his or her behavior and become a better person. They maintain a more benign and flexible theory of human nature, in which a profound transformation of behavior and motivation for living is possible. From their point of view, it is still possible to appeal to the sorcerer's capacity for reason to make him aware of the evil of his actions, he is a human being and can be persuaded and led to reason about his own actions. Because of this, he should not be killed. On the other hand, Guillén and David hold the opposite position: For them the witch will never change, it is impossible for him to become a good person. As they see it, the witch does not care if the person is good or bad, he simply does harm because he is possessed by an evil spirit that pushes him to do evil. He cannot help it, his human nature has been transformed and sometimes even lost and the person can no longer reason or feel. David recalls that the witch child who killed his little sister was being pressured by dark forces, as she told his father that she had killed her because "behind me they demand that I take her away from you." Because of this, the most atrocious punishments are tolerated and even encouraged, as they are considered appropriate and just to end the scourge of witchcraft.

---

[11] See Delgado and Frisancho (2021) for an account of Asháninka opinions on this issue.

With an intermediate position, Aursitela says that there are two types of witches, those who can transform themselves into better people, and those who cannot. The first can change when the harm they do is explained to them and they understand it and do their part to change. The latter are intrinsically evil and cannot redeem themselves.

People construct meanings that allow them to explain, interpret and weigh their relationships with others and with reality as they perceive it. From this perspective, which has its historical roots in the work of Kelly (1966), people construct interpretative models of the environment that fulfill functions similar to scientific theories, as they allow them to explain and predict events. It is assumed that the meanings that people give to their representation of the world have an individual organization that dialogues with the social, both in their origin and formation, as well as in their use (Catalán 2010; 2016). Beliefs and subjective theories are hypotheses generated by people based on their daily experiences to make sense of their environment and to act in it, as they have a regulatory role and guide the behavior of individuals (Catalán 2010).

As can be seen, this variability contradicts the essentialist idea that in the Indigenous world there is only one way of thinking, shared by all members of a group. On the contrary, as in any human group, people in Indigenous communities may develop their own opinions, moral perspectives, and points of view. In any group where people have different ideas, debate arises when trying to analyze social problems and propose solutions. The case of witchcraft is no exception. A shared concern is what to do when a person has been identified with certainty as a witch.

One way out of the problem of witchcraft is to send the witch, usually with his or her family, to live outside the community. Many Asháninka think, according to Guillén, that the witch will no longer be able to harm anyone if living alone and isolated. In any case, interviewees are very aware that this does not solve the problem, it only moves it to another location and creates a problem for somebody else.

Expelling community members who represent a danger to the people (for one reason or another) is a common practice among Amazonian Indigenous peoples (see as an example Teixeira-Pinto 2004).[12] David explains it this way:

---

[12] Teixeira-Pinto (2004) tells the story of a family, belonging to the Arara Indigenous people of Brazil, forced into isolation on the top of a mountain as a result of accusations of witchcraft.

> We have to defend ourselves, the witch is bad, he is a bad person. Many want to kill him but others don't agree. And when we don't agree then we take him out of the community, we send him to another place. We know that it is not the solution but at least we kick him out, and there in the other place they will know what to do with him.

It is interesting that David recounts this by nonverbally showing his ambivalence to this practice. He agrees that it is beneficial for the community to get rid of the problem, but he knows it is transferred to another human group, which is not necessarily fair or right. This generates tension in David, who is somehow caught between the two poles of this conflict. During the interview, it was very difficult for him to take a position on this problem.

Finally: Witchcraft and its possibilities for moral education

Moral development entails several implications for educational practice (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg 1989). This is no different in an Amazonian Indigenous context. In this sense, the complexity of witchcraft as a cultural experience and the moral connotations of the subject offer extraordinary opportunities for moral discussion and for fostering moral reasoning, recognition, moral identity, and a deeper understanding of the other. Witchcraft produces diverse conflicts and emotions, people reason about the rightness or wrongness of practicing it, analyze the reasons that lead the witch to do harm, critically judge the way communities deal with witchcraft, weigh the justice of punishments, and question their own cultural practices when these are considered unfair. As agentive beings, people who experience witchcraft on a daily basis in their communities morally reason and systematically question the aspects of justice involved in the cultural practices that attempt to deal with it. And they value the spaces they can have to collectively discuss these issues and ask for opportunities to critically analyze them and discern what is fair and right, always within their particular worldview and cultural frameworks.

Benigno, who is an elementary school teacher in Ucayali, states that witchcraft should be taught in school and that teaching about this topic is not an apology for witchcraft, just as teaching about terrorism is not an apology for terrorism.[13] He argues that it is necessary to teach about witchcraft so that children can defend themselves from witches and not turn into witches. His reasoning clarifies the need that he sees for children to better understand witchcraft, a practice he considers dangerous and endemic.

In the same vein, Guillén also expressed his need and desire to be trained to deal with these complex issues in the classroom. He points out that bullying practices occur in his school, and that many times these are rooted in the belief that a particular boy or girl is a witch. He explains:

---

[13] Benigno draws a parallel with Peruvian Law No. 30610, the Terrorism Apology Law, which punishes with up to 15 years of imprisonment any statement that exalts, glorifies or justifies terrorism. This law generated undesired effects in that school teachers were afraid to address the subject in their classes, for fear of being convicted of apology, since the law makes special mention of teachers who address the subject of terrorism in their classes.

> There was a boy who came all battered, all beaten up, because he was a witch. The children told me: "teacher, don't punish him because he is a witch." And there is exclusion in the work groups, in the activities, by the children themselves. If the teacher believes that the child is a witch and does not want to get in trouble, he collaborates with the exclusion and allows the bullying to continue. But if the teacher is neutral, he includes the child, allows him to participate in the activities, and makes the students see that he is a classmate, a brother, a friend.

Guillén's statements show that a teacher can make a difference with respect to bullying practices when a child is accused of being a witch. If the teacher believes the child is a witch and does not want to get involved due to fear or other reasons, he or she contributes to the exclusion that the child experiences in the classroom. It is important to understand that the belief in witchcraft is a belief strongly rooted in Asháninka culture. Therefore, and for the sake of the recognition to which Indigenous peoples are entitled and deserve, it is essential to take these issues seriously and include them in the school to promote discussions to better understand them and solve the problems, moral and otherwise, that arise from them. Moral development is a process crossed by the cultural particularities of each society that at the same time has characteristics of universality. It is a complex, and long-term process, and requires significant experiences to emerge in the course of a person's overall development (Kohlberg 1984; Kohlberg and Mayer 1972; Krettenauer 2013; Krettenauer and Hertz 2015). Being aware of this, due to his experience as a school teacher, Guillén regrets that neither the Ministry of Education nor any other intermediate educational office has given him any guidelines to work on the subject of witchcraft in the classroom.

As can be seen, Guillén does not agree with the traditional practice of violently punishing the person accused of being a witch, who in many cases is a child. In this vein, Turiel (2002; 2003; 2008) has shown that fundamental disagreements occur within cultures, that resistance and subversion are part of everyday life in most cultures, and that they are an integral part of the development process.

We can conclude this chapter, which we consider novel as it is one of the few studies on witchcraft among Amazonian Indigenous peoples carried out from the perspective of developmental psychology and cultural psychology, with the following ideas: first, we have shown the existence of different opinions and ways of reasoning about witchcraft among the members of the Asháninka people we have interviewed. This shows the variability of beliefs and points of view existing among members of the same indigenous people, a variability that responds to processes of cognitive and affective development that all human beings go through. In this way, cultures cannot be considered as 'homogeneous monoliths' or an independent variable that homogenizes people and annuls their subjectivity, but as scenarios of debate and contradiction, in which a plurality of voices are found, the ones with the most power being the ones that are most easily heard. This has been amply corroborated by other empirical research (Turiel 2012a; 2012b; Waynrib 2006; Helwig 2006; Nucci and Turiel 2000). As Waynrib states (2006, 214), "the view of cultures as speaking in a collective, shared, voice is inconsistent with evidence pointing to the plurality of concerns of persons within cultures, to the conflicts and disagreements among persons within cultures, and to the multiple interpretations and critical judgments that persons make about their culture's norms and practices."

Along with this, this chapter also shows the possibilities of dialogue between particulars and universals in general, and specifically in relation to witchcraft. People belonging to the same indigenous people may disagree about the meaning of traditional cultural practices, and in fact negotiate these meanings and construct their own views of reality. Last but not least, in this chapter we have also picked up on the need, explicitly stated by interviewees, for education to incorporate complex and controversial topics such as witchcraft in its curricular proposals, and to provide opportunities for teachers to discuss and critically analyze these topics from both an ethical and cultural perspective. This is an explicit request from several of the interviewees, who are faced with conflictive and morally complex situations that they need to address and resolve during their teaching practice.

References cited

Adams, Glenn, Sara Estrada-Villalta, Daniel Sullivan, and Hazel Rose Markus
2019 "The psychology of neoliberalism and the neoliberalism of psychology." *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 1: 189-216. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12305

Blasi, Augusto
1984 "Moral identity: Its role in moral functioning." In *Morality, moral behavior, and moral development*, edited by William Kurtines and Jacob Gewirtz, 128-139. New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
1988 *Identity and the development of the self.* Self, ego, and identity. New York: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-7834-5_11
1993 "The development of identity. Some implications of moral functioning." In *The moral self*, edited by Gil Noam, and Thomas Wren, 99-122. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
1995 "Moral understanding and the moral personality: The process of moral integration." In *Moral development: An introduction*, edited by William Kurtines, and Jacob Gewirtz, 229-253. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Blasi, Augusto, and Kimberly Glodis
1995 "The development of identity. A critical analysis from the perspective of the self as subject." *Developmental Review* 15, no. 4: 404-433. https://doi.org/10.1006/drev.1995.1017

Bronfenbrenner, Urie
1987 *La ecología del desarrollo humano*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Bruner, Jerome
1990 *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Catalán, Jorge
2016 "Hacia la formulación de una teoría general de las teorías subjetivas." *Psicoperspectivas* 15, no. 1: 53-65. http://dx.doi.org/10.5027/psicoperspectivas-Vol15-Issue1-fulltext-739

Catalán, Jorge, ed.
2010 *Teorías subjetivas: aspectos teóricos y prácticos.* La Serena: Editorial Universidad de La Serena.

Chirif, Alberto
2016 *Diccionario amazónico. Voces del castellano en la selva peruana*. Lima: Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica (CAAAP)/Lluvia Editores.

Delgado, Enrique, and Susana Frisancho
2021 "Burning witches: The moral dilemmas of Ashaninka leaders." *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2: 1-20. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/532

Dobkin de Ríos, Marlene
2005 "Interview with Guillermo Arévalo, a Shipibo urban shaman, by Roger Rumrril." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 37, no. 2: 203-207. https://doi.org/10.1080/02791072.2005.10399802

Erikson, Philippe
2016 "Si matamos a un brasileño, ¿en qué le concierne al gobierno?" In *Apus, caciques y presidentes: estado y política indígena amazónica en los países andinos*, edited by Aalexandre Surrallés, Oscar Espinosa, and David Jabin, 179-194. Lima: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA)/Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP).

Espinosa, Oscar
2007 "Relaciones de género en las sociedades indígenas de la amazonía: discusiones teóricas y desafíos actuales." In *Fronteras interiores: identidad, diferencia y protagonismo de las mujeres*, edited by Maruja Barrig, 183-202. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP).

Fernandez, Gerardo
2020 "Cultura, enfermedad y maleficio en los pueblos amerindios. Apuntes bolivianos." *Disparidades. Revista de Antropología* 75, no. 1: e006. https://doi.org/10.3989/dra.2020.006.

Frisancho, Susana and Enrique Delgado
2017 "La ética del chamanismo: conflictos morales de chamanes de los pueblos ashaninka y shipibo-konibo por el uso del dinero. *Schème, Revista Eletrônica de Psicologia e Epistemologia*, 9: 290-319. https://doi.org/10.36311/1984-1655.2017.v9esp.11.p290

García Serrano, Fernando
2017 "Muerte y venganza entre los waorani y tagaeri / taromenane de la Amazonía ecuatoriana. ¿Un caso de fetichismo jurídico o justicia intercultural?" *ABYA-YALA: Revista sobre acesso á justiça e direitos nas Américas* 1, no. 1: 145-169. https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/abya/article/view/47085 (29.02.2024)

Garra, Simone
2016 "Entre la brujería y la ley: los certificados de un iwishin awajún." In *Apus, caciques y presidentes: estado y política indígena amazónica en los países andinos*, edited by Aalexandre Surrallés, Oscar Espinosa, and David Jabin, 195-213. Lima: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA)/Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP).

González Saavedra, Luisa
2015 "Se buscan culpables. Los caminos de la venganza shawi." In *Retórica de los sentimientos. Etnografías amerindias*, edited by Manuel Gutiérrez, and Alexandre Surrallés, 53-84. Frankfurt a. M./Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert. https://doi.org/10.31819/9783954878352

Heine, Steven
2020 *Cultural psychology.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Helwig, Charles

2006 “Rights, civil liberties, and democracy across cultures.” In *Handbook of moral development*, edited by Melanie Killen, and Judith Smetana, 185-210. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven Heine, and Ara Norenzayan

2010 “The weirdest people in the world?” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33, no. 2-3: 61-135. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X

Hvalkof, Søren and Hanne Veber

2005 “Los ashéninka del Gran Pajonal.” In *Guía etnográfica de la Alta Amazonía*, vol. 5, edited by Fernando Santos, and Frederica Barclay, 75-279. Lima: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA).

Kelly, George

1966 *Teoría de la personalidad. La psicología de las construcciones personales.* Buenos Aires: Troquel.

Killen, Melanie, Aline Hitti, Shelby Cooley, and Laura Elenbaas

2015 “Morality, development, and culture.” In *Handbook of advances in culture and psychology*, vol 5, edited by Michele Gelfand, Chi-yue Chiu, and Ying-yi Hong, 161-220. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190218966.003.0004

Kohlberg, Lawrence

1984 *Essays on moral development* (The psychology of moral development, 2). New York: Harper and Row.

Kohlberg, Lawrence, and Rochelle Mayer

1972 “Development as the aim of education.” *Harvard Educational Review* 42, no. 4: 449-496. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.42.4.kj6q8743r3j00j60

Krettenauer, Tobias

2013 “Revisiting the moral self construct: Developmental perspectives on moral selfhood.” In *Self-regulation and autonomy: Social and developmental dimensions of human conduct*, edited by Bryan Sokol, Frederick Grouzet, and Ulrich Müller, 115-140. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139152198.010

Krettenauer, Tobias, and Steven Hertz

2015 “What develops in moral identities? A critical review.” *Human Development* 58, no. 3: 137-153. doi/10.1159/000433502

Laskaris, Isabelle

2016 “Agency and emotion of young female accusers in the Salem witchcraft trials.” *Cultural and Social History* 17, no. 4. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1585316

Marques, Jose, and Darío Páez

1996 “Identidad Social y diferenciación intergrupal: el efecto ‘oveja negra’ como una función y un antecedente del control social subjetivo.” In *Identidad social: aproximaciones psicosociales a los grupos y a las relaciones entre grupos*, edited by Dario Paez, Francisco Morales, Jean-Claude Deschamps, and Stephen Worchel. Valencia: Promolibro. https://www.ehu.eus/documents/1463215/1504267/MarquesyPaez96.pdf (29.02.2024)

Ministry of Culture of Perú

2024 “Base de datos de pueblos indígenas.” https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/ (10.04.2924)

Nucci, Larry, and Elliot Turiel

2000 The moral and the personal. Sources of social conflict.” In *Culture, thought and development*, edited by Larry Nucci, Geoffrey Saxe, and Elliot Turiel, 115-137. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Piaget, Jean
1984 *El criterio moral en el niño*. 5th ed. Barcelona: Martínez Roca.

Pozo-Buleje, Erik
2017 "Un homicidio sin venganza: la violencia intraétnica en comunidades awajún (aguaruna) contemporáneas de la Amazonia peruana." In *Política y poder en la Amazonía. Estrategias de los pueblos indígenas en los nuevos escenarios de los países andinos*, edited by François Correa, Philippe Erikson, and Alexandre Surrallés, 183-206. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Power, Clark, Ann Higgins, and Lawrence Kohlberg
1989 *Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Ordinaire, Olivier
1988 [1897] *Del Pacífico al Atlántico y otros escritos* (Monumenta Amazónica, D1; Travaux de l'IFEA, 40). Iquitos: CETA/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA). https://doi.org/10.4000/books.ifea.6916

Rojas, Enrique
1994 *Los ashaninka, un pueblo tras el bosque*. Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP).
2014 *El morral del colibrí. Mitología, chamanismo y ecología simbólica entre los ashaninka del Oriente Peruano*. Lima: Horizonte.

Romio, Silvia
2021 "¿Shall we kill again? Violencia e intimidad entre los 'nuevos líderes' awajún de la frontera peruana nororiental." *ÍCONOS Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 70: 59-77. https://doi.org/10.17141/iconos.70.2021.4709

Santos-Granero, Fernando
2002 "Saint Christopher in the Amazon: Child sorcery, colonialism, and violence among the Southern Arawak." *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 3: 507-543. https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-49-3-507
2004 "The enemy within: Child sorcery, revolution, and the evils of modernization in Eastern Peru." In *Darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil Whitehead, and Robin Wright, 272-305. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822385837-012

Santos, Fernando, and Frederica Barclay
2005 "Introducción." In *Guía Etnográfica de la Alta Amazonía*, vol 5 (Travaux de l'IFEA, 207), edited by Fernando Santos, and Frederica Barclay, xv-xli. Lima/Panama: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA). https://biblio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/libros/digital/58799.pdf (10.04.2024)

Scandroglio, Barbara, Jorge López, and María del Carmen San José
2008 "La teoría de la identidad scial: una síntesis crítica de sus fundamentos, evidencias y controversias." *Psicothema* 20, no. 1: 80-89. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/727/72720112.pdf (29.02.2024)

Teixeira-Pinto, Marnio
2004 "Being alone amid others. Sorcery and morality among the Arara, Carob, Brazil." In *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia* edited by Neil Whitehead, and Robin Wright. Durham: Duke University Press.

Turiel, Elliot

1983 *The development of social knowledge: Morality and convention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2002 *The culture of morality: Social development, context, and conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613500

2003 "Resistance and subversion in everyday life." *Journal of Moral Education* 32, no. 2: 115-130. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724032000072906

2012a "Moral reasoning, cultural practices, and social inequalities." *Innovación educativa* 12, no. 59: 17-32. https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1665-26732012000200003 (29.02.2024)

2012b "Moral universality and relativism: variations in social decisions, social opposition and coordination as bases for cultural commonalities." In *Construyendo mentes. Ensayos en homenaje a Juan Delval*, edited by Juan García Madruga, Raquel Kohen, Cristina del Barrio, Ileana Enesco, and José Luis Linaza, 229-243. Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED).

Turiel, Elliot and Amy Banas

2020 "The development of moral and social judgments: Social contexts and processes of coordination." *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 20, no. 85: 23-44. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ejer/issue/52308/684952 (29.02.2024)

Wainryb, Cecilia

1991 "Understanding differences in moral judgments: The role of informational assumptions." *Child Development* 5, no. 62: 840-851. https://doi.org/10.2307/1131181

2000 "Values and truths: The making and judging of moral decisions." *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 89: 33-46. https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.23220008904

2006 "Moral development in culture: Diversity, tolerance, and justice." In *Handbook of moral development*, edited by Melanie Killen, and Judith Smetana, 211-240. Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Wainryb, Cecilia, and Holly Recchia

2014 "Moral lives across cultures: Heterogeneity and conflict." In *Handbook of moral development*, edited by Melanie Killen and Judith Smetana, 259-278. London: Psychology Press.

Wainryb, Cecilia, and Elliot Turiel

1993 "Conceptual and informational features in moral decision making." *Educational Psychologist* 3, no. 28: 205-218. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2803_2

Weiss, Gerald

2005 "Los campa ribereños." In *Guía etnográfica de la Alta Amazonía*, vol. 5, edited by Fernando Santos, and Frederica Barclay, 1-74. Lima: Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute/Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos (IFEA).

Zubieta, Elena, and Mercedes Fernández Liporace

2005 "El 'efecto oveja negra'en jóvenes estudiantes de psicología." *Psicodebate* 5: 41-52. https://doi.org/10.18682/pd.v5i0.450

The Body as a Battleground: Embodiment and Sorcery in Shamanic Tourism

Evgenia Fotiou
University of Crete, Greece
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2410-0124
evgeniafotiou@gmail.com

Introduction

This chapter looks at the embodied complexity of sorcery in the context of shamanic tourism in the Peruvian Amazon (Fotiou 2020). While shamanic tourism initially tended to 'sanitize' ayahuasca shamanism or to at least deprive it of one of its most real dimensions, which is the manipulation of violence, its inherent power inequalities have exacerbated sorcery-related discourse and accusations and allowed them to enter the global arena. Approaching sorcery as embedded in particular social and geographical locations, the paper places it in the midst of Western modernity.

The chapter is based on data collected between 2003 and 2015 in and around Iquitos, Peru – the center of ayahuasca tourism in the Peruvian Amazon – while working primarily with mestizo *ayahuasqueros* (i.e., healers working with ayahuasca) who work with both western visitors and locals (Fotiou 2020). In addition to participation in rituals, I worked closely with some of the healers with whom I discussed at length the ideas presented in this paper. Since 2013, I have been working with a Spaniard, whom I will call Juan. He has trained in the Amazonian tradition for fifteen years and works as a shaman. Sorcery has played a pivotal role in his life, and he has shared many of these stories with me over the years. He and his teacher were often attacked during ayahuasca rituals. I was present during several of these attacks. In this context, I observed that shamanic tourism and the influx of Westerners training to be healers in the last decades have increased competition and accusations of sorcery.

When I first met him in 2005, Juan was not entirely ontologically committed to the existence of sorcery. Back then he shared an emotions-focused approach with me, one that attributed harm to people's negative feelings toward another. Although this did go a step further from the common Latin American belief that emotions can cause sickness in the person who has them (Rebhun 1994, 360), he essentially shared with me that sorcery existed because so many people believed in it. This implied what has been argued in the literature, that belief in sorcery causes a stress response that can have negative physiological effects (Burbank 2017,286). This belief is not uncommon among Westerners for whom personalistic explanations that attribute disease or misfortune to an outside agency are less palatable. It has, in fact, been suggested in the literature that Westerners tend to explain sorcery using medical diagnoses such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),[1] thus building a bridge between Western and non-Western epistemologies (Gearin and Labate 2018, 193).

Today, Juan's position has changed in that he attributes many of his misfortunes to sorcery mostly inflicted by local shamans. During the last three research trips, he routinely reported attacks during rituals. I learned to recognize the signs: he would start calling certain protective and combative spirits and often lost strength during the ceremonies. Over time, I became interested in the embodied aspects of sorcery (i.e., the ways that Juan subjectively experienced these attacks). Juan's way of conceptualizing sorcery has oscillated between embracing a psychological explanation and adopting a personalistic explanation that attributes disease or misfortune to an outside agency (Foster 1976, 773). Through our discussions over time, he also emphasized bodily sensations and seemed to be developing an embodied theory of sorcery. This embodied experience provided for him more certainty in the existence of sorcery as he "felt it in his own flesh" (in his own words).

Scholars have discussed how empirical observation or rational deduction – the mainstays of science – are equally prevalent in magic and witchcraft (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Hviding 1996; Brown 2014). Similarly, I approach sorcery as another knowledge system among others and will discuss embodied knowledge acquisition in Amazonian shamanism. As has been argued, the study of sorcery and magic went hand-in-hand with colonial domination and the legitimation of the "imperial domination of the West" (Kapferer 1997, 9). It remains a challenge to find ways to approach sorcery in the twenty-first century, since most anthropologists have distanced themselves from this heritage. The paper is not about the rationality of sorcery, or lack thereof. Rather, it is about how sorcery is weaved into the practice of a Western shaman "as a form of discourse whose practice is simultaneously and in varying degrees verbal, emotional, psychological, sociological, and cultural – in a word, real" (Whitehead 2002, 40).

Since almost nobody admits to committing sorcery, but rather talks about others attacking them, discourses about sorcery are interpreted in the literature as a way of distinguishing oneself from the 'other' (Hayes 2011, 13-20). This challenges us to confront an unsettling kind of cultural difference. In Amazonia, since the boundaries between healing and sorcery are blurred, local societies have been ambivalent about shamans (Brown 1989, 8; Whitaker 2021, 78; Whitehead and Wright 2004, 1-20). For reasons related (in part) to a colonial view of 'otherness', shamanism was often idealized and deprived of one of its dimensions, which is the manipulation of violence, both symbolic and non-symbolic. Recent scholarship departs from this early framework (Riboli and Torri 2013; Bacigalupo 2016). Existing literature on shamanism in Latin

---

[1] Post-traumatic stress disorder is a debilitating and often underdiagnosed syndrome "that causes extreme states of fear as the result of a deeply distressing experience" (Nielson and Megler 2014, 42). Many recent scientific studies are exploring the therapeutic potential of psychedelics for its treatment.

America (Whitehead and Wright 2004) has addressed indigenous or mestizo conceptions of sorcery but no scholarly work has delved in depth into how Westerners involved in Amazonian shamanism perceive sorcery and how they incorporate it in their worldview. I will first address local Amazonian conceptions of sorcery that inform contemporary ayahuasca shamanism and will then finish with a reflection on the subjective/embodied experience of sorcery as it is reflected in the ethnographic data.

Sorcery

As has been argued by other scholars, sorcery reveals a lot about social relations, as well as, in this case, potential social tensions. While such beliefs and accusations might exacerbate social conflict, they might also be a way to keep people in check. In fact, beliefs in sorcery have been seen as "social equalizers ensuring that people of all ages and both sexes receive the respect of others" (Lepowsky 1993, 201). In Amazonia, as well as in other cultures where social life is based on an ethic of sharing and cooperation, people depend on each other for subsistence and all difficulties are believed to be the result of malevolent action by someone (Lepowsky 1993, 201). Today, envy as well as sexual jealousy, are the most common motives for sorcery.

Amazonian shamanism is inherently ambivalent and shamans have an "ambiguous position in society" (Langdon 1992, 14). This is because they may employ power in both harmful and beneficial ways, especially when they direct it against enemies outside of their social group. On the other hand, they are often accused of misfortune among their community and shamans have been murdered because of such suspicions in recent years (Brown 2014, 49). In the scholarly literature this ambivalence has been described either as sociopolitical, in which case shamans use their powers to harm enemies on the one hand and cure members of their own group on the other, or as the product of apprenticeship, in which case shamans who fail to exercise self-control and master their emotions or aggressive desires become sorcerers (Hugh-Jones 1994, 35). As one of my interlocutors warned me, shamanic powers entail a certain risk. Not only must all shamans contend with the fact that certain spirits ask them to commit harmful actions in return for their healing powers, but novice shamans also frequently experience (and must learn to control) their own urges to harm or kill (Perruchon 2003, 189; Beyer 2009, 46). Others have argued that "illness, harm and healing are conceptualized as a balance of power managed by people and entities capable of sending magical items and beings over distances" (Brabec de Mori 2017, 2). Since "healing" is linked to magical thinking, "the one who commands the power of song at the same time wields the forces of sorcery and disaster" (Brabec de Mori 2017, 2).

In and around Iquitos, during my fieldwork, what people defined as *brujeria* (sorcery) were negative intentions directed to a person in order to harm them. The *brujo* or *hechicero* commits ritual violence often on behalf of a client; he or she sends their spirit helpers, to harm or poison a person. Plants or trees are widely used in *brujeria*. For example, if one wants to harm someone, they gather the leftovers of the food of the victim then carve a hole in a particular tree's bark and put the food there. Over time the person will feel sick, experience pain in the abdominal area, which will swell, and the person will eventually die. In cases like this, when the *brujo* (sorcerer) introduces harmful energy into somebody's body nothing can be diagnosed by medical doctors. Often *brujeria* is suspected when someone frequently faces exceptional obstacles and bad luck, as was the case with Juan during certain periods of his life. In order to heal a patient afflicted by sorcery, a shaman often has to engage in battle with the shaman responsible for the affliction. Battles in the spiritual realm are very common among shamans with motivations ranging from stealing a rival's powers to eliminating competition. These battles take place in what Juan called the "astral plane" and I have been told by him and other interlocutors that the rival shamans do not need to be in this plane at the same time – i.e. be in a ritual or altered state of consciousness at the same time. They often will leave something – e.g. hot air or another weapon – that will await the rival shaman the next time they ingest ayahuasca and enter the astral plane. I was told that this is because time is not linear in this realm and the past and future can exist simultaneously.

In 2013, Juan led a ritual for a small group of friends at an abandoned building of what he said used to be a drug detoxification center on the *carretera* – the road that connects Iquitos to the town of Nauta. Juan had recently returned to Peru after a long absence and was hoping to find a permanent space where he could hold ayahuasca rituals for clients. Someone was letting him use this building for the night and had discussed the possibility of building a ceremonial *maloca* on the land near it. During our conversation after the ritual, Juan explained that he had been attacked and that the attackers, in an effort to disrupt the ceremony, were preventing him from singing. During the attacks, he was surrounded by darkness as they were attempting to "tumble" him. He asked them to leave us in peace, promising that we would leave after the ceremony, but not before it ended. He thought that the attacker was a local shaman who clearly did not want him to work there, and it became clear that he was not going to be able to build his *maloca* at this location. If he did, his problems with this person would never end. He said that "it's someone working around here, and he does not want anyone else to do so. Yes, ayahuasca is like that. Ayahuasqueros are like that."

Embodiment and sorcery

The shaman's body is both a battleground and a weapon against sorcery. First, it is changed by the shamanic apprenticeship during which knowledge and power are literally embedded in the shaman's body. For the Achuar, shamanic apprenticeship involves "a change in the ecology of his physical system" (Descola 1997, 338). This is achieved through "ascetic discipline" involving purging and a strict diet (Descola 1997, 338). At the end of a Desana shaman's training, a closing ceremony leaves the knowledge acquired dormant in the initiate's body; therapeutic spells are placed in his brain, while evil ones reside in his belly (Buchillet 2004, 125). For the Siona, a substance called *dau*, which is the root of the shaman's power, forms and grows in the shaman's body as he continues to ingest *yagé*.[2] This accumulation of knowledge in his body makes a shaman vulnerable and in need for continuous protection to avoid potential damage to his *dau* (Langdon 1992, 48). A similar process is present with the shamanic phlegm and *virotes* (darts) found among the Shuar (Harner 1973, 17) as well as mestizo shamans in the Peruvian Amazon today, who still practice fasting and sexual abstinence during their apprenticeship.

In several Amazonian cultures, the training of the shaman often requires fasting, vomiting, and sexual abstinence (Mezzenzana 2018, 287) and the novice must obtain several spiritual weapons and tools of the trade. All this is done while spending long periods of time in the jungle in isolation from the community and building relationships with the spirits from which they learn. In the Peruvian Amazon, the apprenticeship is a vital part of a shaman's credentials and the lineage to which healers belong is important. What is transmitted through the lineage is esoteric knowledge specific to the practice of the lineage – especially in regard to the spirits that they work with – ceremonial practices, and other spiritual 'property' or powers that reside in the shaman's body. Some of these powers are passed on by teachers to students. An example of this is the *yachay* (knowledge phlegm), which resides in the shaman's body and needs to be fed with tobacco (Freedman 2015, 73). A relationship with certain plant spirits is also expected; a respected shaman is someone who has received powers from his teacher as well as directly from the spirits of the plants. Some of the shamans with whom I worked started their apprenticeship after a life-threatening disease healed by a shaman. A central theme in the stories of the shamans I interviewed was the physical, spiritual, and psychological cleansing that preceded the beginning of the apprenticeship. The future shamans had to purge all dark and negative elements before they could accept the spirits of the plants and their teachings in their bodies and become healers. Juan, who was a drug addict before his first ayahuasca ceremony in Spain, says that he vomited large quantities of a black and malodorous substance during his first ayahuasca experiences. Others have reported a similar process involved in shamanic apprenticeship involving several stages during which the body is purified, intuition and sensitivity are developed, the body is strengthened, and finally the body is protected (Jauregui *et al.* 2011, 739).

According to my interlocutors, warfare between shamans is very common and can take many forms. While combating sorcery in order to heal patients during the ceremony, the shaman is vulnerable to attacks. Shamans find different ways to attack their rivals. For example, if a client has drunk ayahuasca with a rival shaman and that person drinks with someone else afterwards, the rival tries to interfere in the ceremony through the person who was previously their patient. Their interference might manifest through the body of the patient making noises that are distracting for the rest of the participants or directing negative energy to the rival shaman.

In warfare, shamans need to have weapons. In several Amazonian traditions, including the mestizo shamanism of the Northwest Amazon, the weapon of choice that shamans use is the magic dart or *virote* (Brown 1989, 8; Harner 1973, 17). Much like the medicine substance, *virotes* are stored in the phlegm that resides in the shaman's body and he can retrieve them as necessary. Shamans project *virotes* to make someone sick or to attack another shaman and they can be removed from the body of the victim by sucking. I was also told that *icaros*, the songs sung in ayahuasca rituals, which are passed down from teacher to apprentice and often directly from the spirits, live in the healer's body. "The *icaros* come from inside the shaman's body", Juan told me once showing his abdomen. For these tools to retain their power, shamans need to practice discipline and keep their bodies clean and strong by avoiding the ingestion of things that can weaken them, such as pork and alcohol. During periods when Juan experienced frequent attacks, he would recruit the help of a local shaman to cleanse and fortify his body.

---

[2] This is another word for ayahuasca.

The practice of a *dieta* often serves the same purpose when shamans ingest specific trees or plants for protection and fortification of the body. During this time *dieteros*[3] follow a limited diet without salt. This was the case with Juan who in 2014, decided to diet the *ayahuma* tree to fortify himself because he was experiencing attacks by other shamans during his ceremonies. His teacher had taught him that the spirit of *ayahuma* was very powerful and that it was a very good guardian. The spirit of *ayahuma* is believed by locals to be a headless man dressed in black that can teach one sorcery, a necessary step in learning how to protect oneself from it. The *dieta* consisted of drinking an infusion of the *ayahuma* bark on the first day and bathing with the pulp of its fruit on consequent days to protect the body.

In addition, Juan shared the importance of discipline to keep himself protected and able to deal with attacks. As someone who struggled with his weight throughout his life, his weakness was food and he often struggled with abstaining from things that would weaken his body, such as alcohol or processed foods and meat. If he broke the diet or succumbed to temptation, he was more vulnerable to attacks during ceremonies. He commented that his weakness was the way that rival shamans could 'enter', in a sense it was as if it opened a doorway that allowed them to attack. In all the years that I have known Juan, he has been in a constant struggle with himself by trying to maintain a discipline and occasionally failing and paying the price. After one of the ceremonies, during which he was attacked, Juan shared that the spirit of ayahuasca told him not to drink again until he is completely healthy. If not, he would not be able to bear the attacks. On another occasion, he had a stern conversation with someone who wanted to be his apprentice. The man was a Peruvian named Jaime[4] who, after a ceremony, started retelling the story of a business endeavor that had failed due to sorcery. Juan interrupted him. He said:

> I will now tell you something and forget about all this. That is over. If you had been correct, like God commands, that wouldn't have happened. You know well what you have done with your body and everything. You abandoned yourself. Wasting money and beer, beer, beer,

---

[3] A *dietero* is someone undergoing a *dieta*.

[4] This is a pseudonym.

> beer, beer, wasting money. You must look into that. Forget it, if you are like you are now, they can't do anything to you. If I were like I used to, I wouldn't have been able to sing today, and they would have toppled me over.

He also maintained that outside interference usually aimed to disrupt the flow of the ritual and that continuing to sing the *icaros* during an attack was extremely important to prevent that from happening. For a while, he had a Russian apprentice, whom I will call Sergei. He had very different ideas from Juan about ayahuasca shamanism in that the local reality had not sunk in yet. He had used several types of drugs in the past and had numerous times, in the eyes of Juan, approached ayahuasca in a disrespectful way, which was often a point of conflict between apprentice and teacher. I have witnessed several ceremonies during which Sergei was disruptive either because he was not singing in sync with Juan or because he talked or made other noises. Juan had to repeatedly chastise him for his behavior by saying that he was "cutting" his energy or the energy of the ceremony, which Juan considered dangerous. In some ways Sergei's behavior was that of a child who could not help himself and was unaware of the potential consequences of his actions.

During my 2016 visit they were planning to buy a small plot of land to build an ayahuasca retreat that would be financed by Sergei. Juan had mentioned several times that he did not want to advertise and preferred to attract clients by word of mouth. I felt that he wanted to avoid unwanted attention but the reason behind this became clear later. During that time, Sergei would often go to the town to buy supplies, where he would meet people and inadvertently talk about their plans. During the ceremony after one of those visits, Juan was under attack and had a rather hard time repelling the attackers. After the ceremony he severely chastised Sergei. He attributed the attacks to the fact that he had attracted the envy of local shamans due to Sergei revealing their plans. He forbade him to talk to strangers when going to town and asked him to stop talking about their retreat plans.

After knowing Juan for many years, I was able to tell when he was losing his energy during a ritual. He would sing slower and less energetically. Often his throat would appear to close, which would interrupt his singing. Over the years, he told me that it is extremely important to continue singing no matter what in order to deflect attacks. Having memorized enough of the *icaros* myself, I often sang along not only to support him but also because I found it enjoyable. I made an extra effort especially when he started calling particular helper spirits – such as a giant – which he called in the case of an attack. During those times, I felt how much energy singing for several hours required and there were times when I found it impossible to utter a single sound. He often thanked me for my support after difficult ceremonies and encouraged others to sing along, although if someone was not following the melody of the *icaro* by singing out of tune he would ask them to either stop or correct it. He believed that this either allowed sorcerers to enter and to disrupt the ceremony or that it was the result of a rival shaman trying to interfere.

In 2014, about three hours into one of the rituals, I realized that Juan was calling his protective warrior spirits, including the giant that was one of his defensive spirits. This is the portion of the *icaro*[5] calling the spirit of the giant:

Gigante, gigante mamancuna llamuicuna callari
Gigante mamancuna llamuicuna callaririri
Legitimo guardiancuna…
Batea,[6] *batea guaguancito* […]
Batea, batea guaguancito ninini

In between singing, he blew forcefully as if he was trying to send something away. Knowing what this meant, I became concerned. In the recording, Juan's voice is steady and calm during that time but it is clear that he does not have much energy. Nevertheless, he was able to continue the ceremony without disruption. The only other indication that something was wrong was that he mentioned that he was not well soon after getting up to blow on my head and hands.

The way that Juan described the attacks after they had happened also demonstrates the embodied nature of sorcery. During a particularly difficult ceremony, unable to continue, he laid down for a while and his apprentice tried to tend to him. While he was lying down, Sergei held his hand and massaged his fingers while singing and whispering something that I could not hear. The moon was full, and I could observe that Sergei, clearly worried about his teacher, kissed his hands and at times his face and chest. After the ceremony was over, Juan was very stern with his apprentice because he did not feel that he had supported him during the ritual. Rather, Sergei had acted in a way that was disruptive either because of ignorance or because Sergei's weakness allowed for outside interference. He said that he had been viciously attacked and almost died – he had been stabbed in the chest and almost stopped breathing. He kept repeating that he felt the sorcery "in his own flesh."

Since 2013, according to Juan, sorcery has played an instrumental role in his life and often changed his life's course. Since we decided to work on a book together, he often experienced sorcery attacks during ceremonies and he was not able to complete any of his projects – e.g. a retreat center. During the attacks, he would often comment that "they don't want us to write the book." In 2014, I got severe diarrhea almost immediately after arriving in Iquitos and subsequently (probably due to dehydration) got a bladder infection, which went undetected until my body started shutting down. I had no desire to eat and had no energy to do anything. At that point, Juan took me to the hospital where I was diagnosed and was given antibiotics.

Because of these events and the fact that we were close, as well as because I had started perceiving certain things during ceremonies, Juan suggested that we both diet the *ayahuma* (*Couroupita guianensis* Aubl.) tree to fortify ourselves. His teacher had taught him that the spirit of *ayahuma* was very powerful and that it was a very good guardian. It could teach one sorcery, which is necessary to learn how to protect oneself from it. Juan's apprentice, Sergei, had just finished a long diet with *ayahuma* and felt extremely strong. In his lineage, the *dieta* also involved immersing oneself in water every morning, eating very little bland food, not talking, or coming into contact with people, and avoiding direct exposure to the sun.

---

[5] *Icaros* like this one are in a mixture of Spanish, Indigenous words, including Quechua, as well as incomprehensible words sometimes referred to as 'spirit language.'

[6] In this, he is asking the giant to hit the attackers to protect the ceremony and himself.

Juan also had me diet *camalonga* (*Strychnos sp.*), which I took on the second day of the *dieta*, in order to heal. During one of our conversations, he said that it would help me accept the sickness and its larger significance. For him, everything that happened to the body, including sickness, was not merely a biological event but had wider implications. He said:

> The gift (of the illness) is to contemplate the negative parts that it brings you. Meditate, feel, think about it. Why are you here? What is the gift that you are bringing me? Whether it is physical, mental or what the disease is. What does it create in you when you think about the disease? What patterns of behavior? […] Because the root, if it is a gift sent to you from above, the root is not here. It is not in the physical. Even if it looks to me as if it's here. But the root [...] you see the tree, but the root you do not see (Interview by author, June 18, 2014).

In 2015, I was once again in Iquitos ready to head to the jungle to begin a series of ayahuasca ceremonies, when my purse containing my passport was stolen on the night before we were scheduled to leave. Putting this in the context of the attacks Juan was experiencing, as well as my illness during the previous year's visit, he determined that shamanic intervention was needed. He was concerned that our work on the book was not welcome by local shamans and that they were trying to stop it. He decided that a powerful purging followed by a protective bath was necessary to cleanse and fortify my body against future attacks. The protective bath contained tobacco, *toé* leaves (*Brugmansia suaveolens* (Humb. & Bonpl. ex Willd.) Bercht. & J.Presl) and *patiquina* (*Dieffenbachia spp.*). The latter is generally known in the area to be a protective plant. Other friends in Iquitos have commented on its protective qualities and often people plant it near a house door for protection. This course of action had worked for him in the preceding year when he was experiencing repeated attacks. He said:

> [during that time] I learned about plants that sorcerers dieted but could be used as protection as well. Dieting these plants for long periods of time could become a means to do evil. It is ideal to diet them for short periods of time, so they become protectors. After my diet with tobacco and the baths with *patiquina*, tobacco and *toé*, I started feeling better and the ceremonies became more lucid. I felt much stronger, safer, and protected. The attacks did not end, but I dealt with them better (Interview by author, June 7, 2015).

To induce the purge, he procured the resin from the plant *ojé* (*Ficus insipida* Willd.), which is a plant that is mentioned in the literature as a powerful plant teacher (Luna 1992, 237). The plant is often ingested to get rid of parasites, but I have seen it used before to cleanse the body before taking ayahuasca. A local mestizo shaman, who was also present and administered the cleanse and protective bath, told me repeatedly that I would feel stronger after the cleanse and that I would "glow." For him, none of this was a metaphor. Instead, it was based on his own experimentation with plants and the effects he had observed in his own body. Taking such local ethnobotanical knowledges seriously has been a persistent call in recent anthropological literature (Daly *et al.* 2016, 6; Daly and Shepard 2019, 17). On that day, I ingested the tree resin and spent the rest of the day by the riverside drinking gallons of water. This induced vomiting and diarrhea. By late afternoon, I was exhausted and hungry, after which I rested and had a light meal. In the following days, we had several ayahuasca ceremonies. This last ethnographic example is typical of how people use plants alongside ayahuasca in contemporary ayahuasca retreats and the types of interventions used to manipulate the body.

Conclusion

In the last decade, numerous Westerners have flooded the Peruvian Amazon seeking to apprentice with a 'shaman' and to become shamans themselves. Their motivations and the challenges they face in immersing themselves in a worldview so radically different from their own are equally numerous. Some recount stories of a spiritual crisis similar to shamanic initiation stories in Indigenous cultures. Some are in pursuit of healing and sometimes become healers themselves. This has clearly changed the landscape and has increased competition and accusations of sorcery. While sorcery has been a part of traditional Amazonian shamanism, some of my interlocutors were concerned that shamanic warfare has increased because of tourism.

From the perspective of the sorcerer, sorcery is sometimes an attempt to gain power within the societal chaos. In Amazonia, among the locals, often it is the financially successful shamans who are considered sorcerers and it is often believed that these shamans have managed to be successful with outsiders due to the assistance of powerful spirits. At the same time, financially successful shamans also attract sorcery attacks by envious rivals. Even though Juan does not fit the profile of the successful shaman, he claims to experience attacks, perhaps because of his status as an outsider or his perceived inherent privilege as a European. The challenge remains of how to approach sorcery from the perspective of the receiver of attacks and a cultural outsider. For the purposes of this paper, I chose the lens of embodiment to honor the way that my interlocutor described his subjective experiences. My aim was to provide an empathetic picture of how spiritual practice is informed by larger societal processes and I approach sorcery and shamanism as "lived religion" (Whinfrey-Koepping 2008, 2) – in other words, as situated where society and the individual meet, amidst mundane concerns of life, as well as "embodied practice" (Stoller 1997, xvi).

My focus here has been in the "corporeality" and "materiality" of sorcery (Kapferer 1997, 12). Embodiment in medical anthropology is often used to refer to the "sensations, perceptions and experiences bounded by the interior, frame, and flesh of an individual" (Greenway 1998, 148). This is significant for a couple of reasons. The body has generally not been central to Western epistemologies – with exceptions like Merleau-Ponty and feminist scholars who have focused on the corporeality of knowledge (Santos 2016, 26).

For the purposes of this paper, bodies are understood not as isolated subjectivities but instead as intersubjective milieus (Csordas 2002, 244) attending to the bodies of other subjectivities. In addition, by focusing on the subjective, corporeal experiences of my interlocutors, I approach shamanism as another knowledge system relying on empirical observation, thus, demonstrating, as others have, that shamanic ontology is not radically different from Western ones (Campbell 1989, 67).

Amazonian sorcery has been shaped by particular historical and cultural circumstances and can offer insight into suffering inflicted by colonialism and more recently by the inequalities shaped by global capitalism and neoliberal economic principles. Others have made the connection between sorcery and the "violence of economic and political 'development'" (Whitehead 2002, 8-9; Taussig 1980), although not in the context of shamanic tourism. Sorcery, including *kanaimá* as an example of ritual violence (Colson 2001; Janik 2018; Lewy 2018; Whitaker 2017; 2021; Whitehead 2002), is not only directed at locals, but also towards outsiders that are encroaching through shamanic tourism. It has been argued that bringing foreigners into the discourse on sorcery and making them susceptible to it might be an attempt to render them less threatening (Whitehead 2002, 38), but this has mostly not been analyzed from the perspective of the recipients of such ritual violence, such as my interlocutor Juan. While sorcery and witchcraft have often been described as ordinary for ethnographic others (Olivier de Sardan 1992), this has not been the case for Westerners. Discussing Amazonian sorcery as a part of modernity alongside the Internet and iPhone – will contribute to a reexamination of Indigenous or local forms of knowledge and urge us to think beyond hybridity and toward translation, traversing dichotomies between self and other, the rational and the irrational, modern and traditional, or global and local. My data shows that sorcery is not a relic of pre-modernity, but with its own rationality and embodied experience, it can give shape to the nature of the contradictions of capitalism (Kapferer 1997, 21; Taussig 1980). At the same time, it creates potential spaces of resistance to oppressive globalization as it attempts to address some of the contradictions and power relations inherent in shamanic tourism. Ultimately, their embeddedness in global spiritual tourism circuits might be a way for Amazonians to be liberated from the role of underdeveloped 'others.'

Finally, I showed that sorcery in ayahuasca shamanism is an embodied cultural process. During ceremonies, it manifests through several somatic events, such as purging, pain, weakness etc. When seen in the light of the ideologies I discussed in this chapter, these subjective experiences reveal the body as the locus of power as well as a battleground. Indeed, in the words of Thomas Csordas "the body is the existential ground of culture" (Csordas 1990, 39), never taken for granted and always in need of some form of manipulation.

References cited

Bacigalupo, Ana Mariella
2016 *Thunder Shaman: Making History with Mapuche Spirits in Chile and Patagonia*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Beyer, Stephan
2009 *Singing to the plants: A guide to Mestizo shamanism in the Upper Amazon*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Brabec de Mori, Bernd
2017 "Paths of healing, voices of sorcerers: The ambivalence of Shipibo curative songs in Amazonia." *Terrain: Anthropologie & Sciences Humaines* 68. https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.16425

Brown, Michael F.
1989 "Dark side of the shaman." *Natural History* 98, no. 11: 8-10.
2014 *Upriver: The turbulent life and times of an Amazonian people*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Buchillet, Dominique
2004 "Sorcery beliefs, transmission of shamanic knowledge, and therapeutic practice among the Desana of the Upper Rio Negro region, Brazil." In *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 109-131. Durham: Duke University Press.

Burbank, Victoria
2017 "The embodiment of sorcery: Supernatural aggression, relief and envy in a remote Aboriginal community." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 28, no. 3: 286-300. https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12228

Campbell, Alan Tormaid
1989 *To square with Genesis: Causal statements and shamanic ideas in Wayāpí*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Colson, Audrey Butt
2001 "Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure." In *Beyond the visible and the material: the Amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière*, organized by Laura Rival and Neil Whitehead, 221-234. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Csordas, Thomas J.
1990 "Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology." *Ethos* 18, no. 1: 5-47. https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.1990.18.1.02a00010
2002 *Body, meaning, mealing*. New York: Palgrave.

Daly, Lewis, Katherine French, Theresa L Miller, and Luíseach Nic Eoin
2016 "Integrating ontology into ethnobotanical research." *Journal of Ethnobiology* 36, no. 1: 1-9. https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-36.1.1

Daly, Lewis and Glenn Shepard Jr.
2019 "Magic darts and messenger molecules: Toward a phytoethnography of Indigenous Amazonia." *Anthropology Today* 35: 13-17. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12494

Descola, Philippe
1997 *The spears of twilight: Life and death in the Amazon jungle*. New York: New Press.

Foster, George M.
1976 "Disease etiologies in non-Western medical systems." *American Anthropologist* 78, no. 4: 773-782. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1976.78.4.02a00030

Fotiou, Evgenia
2020 "Shamanic tourism in the Peruvian lowlands: Critical and ethical considerations." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 25, no. 3: 374-396. https://doi.org/10.1111/jlca.12508

Freedman, Françoise Barbira
2015 "Tobacco and shamanic agency in the Upper Amazon: Historical and contemporary perspectives." In *The master plant: Tobacco in lowland South America*, edited by Andrew Russell and Elizabeth Rahman, 63-87. London/New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gearin, Alex K. and Beatriz C. Labate
2018 "'La dieta': The Western reinvention of Indigenous Amazonian food shamanism." In *The expanding world ayahuasca diaspora: Appropriation, integration, and legislation*, edited by Beatriz C. Labate and Clancy Cavnar, 177-198. London/New York: Routledge.

Greenway, Christine
1998 "Objectified selves: An analysis of medicines in Andean sacrificial healing." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 12, no. 2: 147-167. https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1998.12.2.147

Harner, Michael J.
1973 "The sound of rushing water." In *Hallucinogens and shamanism*, edited by Michael J. Harner, 15-27. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hayes, Kelly E.
2011 *Holy harlots: Femininity, sexuality, and black magic in Brazil.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hugh-Jones, Stephen
1994 "Shamans, prophets, priests and pastors." In *Shamanism, history, and the State*, edited by Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, 32-75. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hviding, Edvard
1996 "Nature, culture, magic, science: On meta-languages for comparison in cultural ecology." In *Nature and society: Anthropological perspectives*, edited by Philippe Descola and Gísli Pálsson, 165-184. London/New York: Routledge.

Janik, Tarryl
2018 "A return to dark shamans." Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1834 (01.11.2023)

Jauregui, Xabier, Zoyla Mirella Clavo, Eduardo M. Jovel, and Manuel Pardo de Santayana
2011 "'Plantas con madre': Plants that teach and guide in the shamanic initiation process in the East-Central Peruvian Amazon." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 134, no. 3: 739-752. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jep.2011.01.042

Kapferer, Bruce
1997 *The feast of the sorcerer: Practices of consciousness and power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Langdon, Esther Jean Matteson
1992 "Dau: Shamanic Power in Siona Religion and Medicine." In *Portals of power: Shamanism in South America*, edited by Esther Jean Matteson Langdon and Gerhard Baer, 41-61. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Lepowsky, Maria
1993 *Fruit of the motherland: Gender in an egalitarian society*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude
1966 *The savage mind.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lewy, Matthias
2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018v20n1p89

Luna, Luis Eduardo
1992 "Icaros: Magic melodies among the mestizo shamans of the Peruvian Amazon." In *Portals of power: Shamanism in South America*, edited by Esther Jean Matteson Langdon and Gerhard Baer, 231-253. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Mezzenzana, Francesca
2018 "Encountering supai: An ecology of spiritual perception in the Ecuadorian Amazon." *Ethos* 46, no. 2: 275-295. https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.12197

Nielson, Jessica L. and Julie D. Megler
2014 "Ayahuasca as a candidate therapy for PTSD." In *The therapeutic use of ayahuasca*, edited by Beatriz C. Labate and Clancy Cavnar, 41-58. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-40426-9_3

Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre
1992 "Occultism and the ethnographic 'I': The exoticizing of magic from Durkheim to 'postmodern' anthropology." *Critique of Anthropology* 12, no. 1: 5-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9201200101

Perruchon, Marie
2003 *I am Tsunki: Gender and shamanism among the Shuar of western Amazonia*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Rebhun, Linda A.
1994 "Swallowing frogs: Anger and illness in northeast Brazil." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 8, no. 4: 360-382. https://doi.org/10.1525/maq.1994.8.4.02a00030

Riboli, Diana and Davide Torri
2013 *Shamanism and violence: Power, repression and suffering in Indigenous religious conflicts*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa
2016 "Epistemologies of the South and the future." *From the European South* 1: 17-29. https://www.fesjournal.eu/numeri/archivi-del-futuro-il-postcoloniale-litalia-e-il-tempo-a-venire/epistemologies-of-the-south-and-the-future/ (01.11.2023)

Stoller, Paul
1997 *Sensuous scholarship.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Taussig, Michael T.
1980 "Folk healing and the structure of conquest in southwest Colombia." *Journal of Latin American Lore* 6, no. 2: 217-277.

Whinfrey-Koepping, Elizabeth
2008 *Food, friends and funerals: On lived religion*. Münster: LIT.

Whitaker, James Andrew
2017 "Guns and sorcery: Raiding, trading, and Kanaima among the Makushi." *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 15, no. 2: 158-172. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol15/iss2/4 (01.11.2023).

2021 “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta” *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, no. 1: 78-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2020.1807726

Whitehead, Neil L.
2002 *Dark shamans: Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Whitehead, Neil L., and Robin Wright
2004 *In darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sorcery in the Gran Chaco: Counter-State Force or Unfinished Crystallization of Power?

Sonia Sarra
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET), Argentina
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4211-7947
soniaelisarra@gmail.com

Florencia Tola
Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET), Argentina
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6777-4575
tolatoba2015@gmail.com

Introduction

In this article, we will delve into the relationship between sorcery and power in two Indigenous peoples of the contemporary Argentinean Chaco: The Qom and the Guarani (also known as Ava-Guarani and, according to historical sources, as Chiriguano).[1] We will seek to unravel the internal logics related to the administration of power that underlie sorcery practices in contexts of marginality, inserted in capitalism and its notions about development. First, we will analyze how sorcery practices attenuate the deepening inequalities that emerge in the process of social differentiation, inherent to the commodification of the economy of these peoples. In fact, both the Qom and the Guarani currently live, for the most part, in urban communities to which they migrated due to economic reasons, in conditions of labor precariousness and involved in ambiguous relations of tension caused by the limited access to sources of work and to economic income. Secondly, we will show how sorcery practices – in an apparently contradictory movement – allow the magnification of certain persons and the accumulation of witch-shamanic, economic and political power in those who hold it. Throughout this article we will reflect on egalitarianism and social differentiation in Indigenous peoples of the South American lowlands without "dissolving them in a symmetrizing bath" or "transforming them into seeds containing a miniature state apparatus" (Fausto 2008, 342, our translation). In the two cases, monetarization, access to work and state subsidies increase the inequalities of power between persons who, although governed by the norms of reciprocity and redistribution, try at the same time to evade the leveling pressures and requests perceived as incessant. This evasiveness generates dissatisfaction, jealousy, envy and also fear. In this context, sorcery emerges and it becomes a privileged locus to rethink the topic of power and asymmetry in societies considered egalitarian.

---

[1] Although the Guarani of this region are often referred to as Ava-Guarani, it should be noted that this is a term for a sub-group with which not all Guarani in north-western Argentina identify. Chiriguano is currently considered a pejorative term. It should be clarified that the term Guarani, besides designating a language (spoken not only by Indigenous peoples), identifies different South American Indigenous peoples belonging to the Tupi-Guarani ethno-linguistic family, such as the Guarani Kaiowá, the Guarani Chiripa, the Guarani Nhandeva, the Mbya Guarani and the Guarani of the Andean foothills (also known as Chiriguanos and Ava-Guarani).

Sorcery in contexts of insertion into capitalism and into the commodity economy brings us into the complexities of the relationship between sorcery and modernity. If British social anthropology initiated sorcery studies in African societies by accounting for the way in which tension in the social structure is expressed through sorcery accusations (Evans-Pritchard 1976), later Africanist studies showed how ideas about sorcery are a way of conceptualizing and critiquing modernity (Steward and Strathern 2004, 5). The relationship between sorcery and modernity is far from being centered on the opposition modernity-rationality versus sorcery-irrationality, since notions about sorcery are underpinned by a logic that needs to be acknowledged, in order to avoid thinking of modernity and sorcery as antithetical and contradictory. As Steward and Strathern synthesised, modernity in Africa as shown by the Comaroffs, is

> [...] far from eclipsing notions of sorcery, becomes itself a vehicle for them, a source of new and potent forms of imaginative nightmares in which electricity, battery acid and other industrial substances and processes become the very material from which nightmares are constructed (Steward and Strathern 2004, 91).

Various studies have also expressed that new Indigenous configurations of modernity and insertion into capitalism (Indigenous churches, neo-shamanism, the monetarisation of relationships, among others) promote the emergence and visibility of individualism. According to Andrew Lattas (1993) and Rena Lederman (1982), in Melanesia sorcery is directed at people who have increased their power through their involvement in missions, in the education system and in government administration. They are more likely to be envied by others and therefore attacked by sorcerers. “Sorcery here reflects,” Lattas expresses, “the inequalities and conflicts which the white man’s institutions bring” (Lattas 1993, 52). “Instead of treating development as antithetical to sorcery, as being the bearer of that modernity which eradicates superstition,” he continues, “it is possible to see development as consolidating the power of sorcery’” (1993, 53).

The works of Edward LiPuma (1998), Eytan Bercovitch (1998) and Jean Comaroff (1985) are examples of contemporary situations in Africa and Melanesia in which the individual dimensions of the person emerge from the interrelationships between individuals and the institutions of capitalism. They suggest that the expansion of the capitalist system and its institutions contributed to the visibility of more individual modes present in Indigenous societies. With modernity, for example, the expression of individuality in Melanesia became more legitimate. The creation of new contexts in which it is expressed is, for LiPuma (1998), one of the most profound changes brought about by Westernisation. According to this author, the rise of sorcery among the Maring responds to the fact that modernity shares the same epistemology as this institution.

"[T]he 'progress' of modernity," he writes, "has coincided with an growth in sorcery [...], a critical reason being that sorcery was one of the primary traditional sites for the expression of the individual aspects of personhood" (LiPuma 1998, 74). For the Maring, as for the Atbalmin of New Guinea (Bercovitch 1998), the sorcerer is an ambivalent figure who represents selfishness: he thinks and acts in terms of his own interests.

"[W]hat the Maring perceive to be the worst traits of the sorcerer – such as his compulsion to possess power, accumulate things, and live in privacy – the West understands as the natural and universal attributes of persons qua persons" (LiPuma 1998, 71).

With the Qom and Guarani cases from the Chaco region, we will try to nourish the Africanist and Melanesianist debates referred to above and rethink the issue of power and asymmetry in South American societies. We will specifically take up the paradox expressed by Peter Geschiere (1995) in his study on the relationship between modernity and sorcery in Cameroon: on the one hand, sorcerers accumulate power and wealth and, on the other, the fear of sorcery attacks levels the social inequalities that emerge more intensely in the capitalist context.

We will try to show that the current configurations of sorcery and shamanism in the Gran Chaco are not merely an effect of the emerge of nation-states, of Western culture and capitalism. It is striking that among the Qom and Guarani, sorcery accusations and shamanic attacks are not directed exclusively and primarily at agents outside the communities, businessmen or non-Indigenous political leaders. On the contrary, it is within the communities themselves that most of the accusations, attacks and counter-attacks take place. Even if capitalism and the other modalities of Westernization are the general context in which the intensification of sorcery takes place, they are not its explanatory factor. If they were, sorcery and shamanism would not be omnipresent in urban neighborhoods as well as in rural communities far from the centers where the goods and services of capitalist economy are in growth.

Capitalist expansion in the Chaco and egalitarianism

For more than a century, the Indigenous people of the Gran Chaco have been immersed in capitalist relations of production which have modified their forms of socio-political and economic organization. These relations have produced the incorporation of Western goods, things, powers, and spirits into the Indigenous shamanism.

The Qom were classified by classical regional ethnography as one of the 'typical' Indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco (organized in nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers), while the Guarani (incipient horticulturalists, known as 'Chiriguano') would belong to the Indigenous peoples of the Chaco possessing Amazonian origin and traits (Braunstein 1983).[2] Today, several of the groups of the Chaco practice agriculture, work as wage labourers and live in rural and urban communities in the Gran Chaco and beyond. The Chaco territory is occupied by cattle ranchers, extractive companies, farmers, Mennonite colonies, non-governmental organisations, churches, to name but a few of the non-Indigenous actors and institutions. Various specialists (Richard 2011; Combès, Villar and Lowrey 2009) underline that the Chaco is a region of exchanges, reciprocal influences and mixtures.

---

[2] This Chaco specialist recognizes that the Zamuco and Chiriguano (including the Guaranized Amazonians groups, such as the Chané) are distinguished from other groups of the Chaco by the fact that they have social units with defined linearity norms. If the Ayoreo and Chamacoco (Zamuco linguistic family) have the idea of belonging to social groups based on a patrilineal norm, the Tupi-Guarani

The Guarani territory extends across the provinces of Jujuy and Salta in northwestern Argentina and also in southeastern Bolivia. The Guarani of Jujuy province[3] are currently organized in urban communities without land and, in order to survive, they work as wage labourers for the Ledesma sugar mega-company in precarious conditions. The locality of Calilegua, where Sonia Sarra carries out her fieldwork, retains the multi-ethnic character marked by the massive migrations of Indigenous people from the Chaco – among them, the Qom – who were recruited as seasonal labourers for the sugar mills in full expansion at the beginning of the 20th century. The Qom are settled in sedentary communities in the provinces of Salta, Chaco, Formosa and Santa Fe. The advance of private property has made it difficult for them to access the forest, and hunting and gathering practices have been affected. Since the 1960s, a large number of Indigenous people began to migrate to the cities, and neighborhoods were created in the vicinity of some of the country's large cities. As a result of a systematic territorial dispossession, since the mid-1900s Qom people have settled in Namqom (Formosa), one of the communities where Florencia Tola carries out her fieldwork.

Egalitarianism in Indigenous societies with a 'hunter-gatherer and horticulturalist' tradition, as in the case of these two Indigenous peoples of the Argentinean Chaco, was interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, from romanticized perspectives, it was considered a 'natural trait,' and on the other, from environmental determinist positions, it was seen as an adaptation to hostile environments. Certain strands of contemporary anthropology viewed egalitarianism as a historical product and others as an ontological choice. As a historical product, it would be the result of power relations recreated and actualized through every day practices. The incorporation of the chacoan Indigenous people into capitalism would have been the factor that allowed for processes of socio-economic differentiation and transformations in reciprocity (Gordillo 2006). According to some authors, in several South American contexts, sorcery is a form of resistance to historical experiences of domination (Gordillo 2006; Taussig 1980; Tola and Salamanca 2002). Shamans would prioritize their individual well-being over that of his group (Miller 1979; 1995; Gordillo 2001), and would adopt a manifestation "more individual and less visible [...], adapted to new historical conditions of class and ethnic

---

Chiriguano and the Chiriguanised groups would have entered the Chaco area already organized in localized patrilineages, i.e. in families defined on the basis of paternal linearity. These groups of Amazonian filiation would differ from the other groups of the Chaco by their rules of filiation.

[3] This extensive territory includes regions of the western Gran Chaco and transitional zones between the Chaco and the Andes.

confrontation" (Gordillo 2001, 11). Gordillo asserts that shamanism should then be analyzed as "a force intertwined, in complex ways, with practices of contention" (2001, 2) and shamans would be "political actors or mediators of historically constituted social contradictions and resistances," in the words of Thomas and Humphrey (1996, 1, quoted in Gordillo 2001, 2). However, as an ontological choice, egalitarianism is the result not only of certain socio-historical conditions, but also of a search that refers to the logic of Indigenous cosmologies that try to avoid the concentration of goods (or, in broader terms, of power) in one person, or in a small group of persons. Although sorcery, in Indigenous terms, 'abounds' in urban contexts, it also proliferates in rural communities. This ethnographic finding leads us to argue that sorcery and shamanism should not be reduced to an act of resistance to increasing exogenous pressures, but could be understood as a form of "managing one's own existence" and a "way of organizing certain experiences of crisis" (Sztutman 2012, 532, our translation); words with which Renato Sztutman defines the Tupi-Guarani prophetic movements. Just as prophetism could be a radicalization of shamanic premises in the face of critical social events (Sztutman 2012, 532), in Indigenous societies immersed in capitalist relations sorcery could be the continuation of relational modalities pre-existing capitalism. The supposed exacerbation of sorcery in these contexts is difficult to quantify from the way we access them, i.e. rumors. From a re-reading of the Clastrean thesis,[4] phenomena such as Amerindian warfare, prophetism and messianism were analyzed as both centrifugal and centripetal movements that, alternately and provisionally, produced dispersion and concentration of power, thus avoiding its definitive crystallization (Sztutman 2012). Following this line, we will try to show that sorcery operates alternately as a counter-state force and as a crystallization – albeit always unfinished and provisional – of centers of power.

General aspects of Qom and Guarani sorcery

In terms of the Qom and Guarani people, there is an opposition between what could be translated as 'shamans' (*pi'oxonaq* and *ipaye* in the respective Indigenous languages) and as 'sorcerers' (*conaxanaxae* and *mbaekua*). While there are Indigenous terms to distinguish sorcery from shamanism, in practice the contrast is not always clear. Among the present-day Guarani of Calilegua, *ipaye* and *mbaekua* are merged into one and the same person (*curandero/a*) and, depending on the context, they are called *ipaye* or *mbaekua*. Shamanic healing practices are not differentiated from the malicious practices of sorcerers, insofar as it is not possible to associate the former with 'good actions,' and the latter with 'bad actions.' In the Qom case, if the *pi'oxonaq* heals and harms in an 'invisible war,' the *conaxanaxae* (exclusively women) engage in actions considered sorcery (harm practices).

---

[4] We refer to the works of Pierre Clastres (2010) and Hélène Clastres (2007), whose analyses of politics and religion have been key to Americanist anthropology. In Pierre Clastres' political anthropology, Amerindian warfare was postulated as the foundation of social life and one of the anti-state mechanisms that prevent centralization. The questions raised by Pierre Clastres were taken up by Hélène Clastres, who focused on Amerindian socio-cosmologies and prophetisms in relation to the political sphere.

If in this second case, only the *pi'oxonaq* can heal, he also is involved in harming practices. Despite the distinctions particular to the Qom and Guarani between shamans and sorcerers, throughout this text we will refer to sorcery-shamanism, thus associating practices and ideas linked to both sorcery and shamanism. This association is due to the fact that the two social institutions refer to procedures and concepts that, although different (especially in the Qom case), include and mobilize human and non-human entities as well as embodied powers that can cause both disruptive and constructive effects. From this perspective, we do not necessarily pay attention to the specific meanings traditionally attributed by the discipline to shamanism, sorcery, and witchcraft.[5]

In general terms, in the Gran Chaco the Indigenous peoples recognize a diversity of non-human persons endowed with a power markedly superior to that of human beings. They are who, by personal will or at the request of human beings, confer on the power to cure illnesses and to attack, through the use of diverse techniques, knowledge and relationships. The shamans engage with these non-humans in terms of relationship that range from fear, compassion, gift, submission and predation. The sorcery-shamanic mechanism composes a network of healers and attackers (often reversible figures), human and non-human, and gives rise to power struggles (not visible to non-shamans) in which constitutive parts of personhood, powers, non-human partners, knowledge and skills are exchanged and contested.

Specifically, among the Qom, shamans are called 'doctors' or *pi'oxonaq*. They are, as their Indigenous term indicates, 'experts in sucking.'[6] After the initial acquisition of shamanic power (occurring in dreams, in the forest, or by handing over from a close relative), they heal the one who was assaulted by another shaman. The very act of healing involves attacking the aggressor, as the object they extract by suction is usually a pathogenic object previously sent by the attacking shaman. The distinction between shaman and sorcerer is therefore arbitrary, since every shaman is a potential sorcerer from the perspective of the healer. The *conaxanaxae* or 'witches' are, instead, women who 'grab'[7] bodily extensions (hair, clothes, name, shadow) or externalizable components of the future victim, in order to fuse them with other elements (toads, frogs, snakes, bones of the dead) causing their inescapable death. Expressions such as "there is no natural death, people envy each other, even between relatives, and kill each other" highlight the validity of shamanism and sorcery and the tensions mobilized by them. In the same way that non-human people give their powers to shamans, the women who will be *conaxanaxae* receive their power from a spirit who, in this case, is a woman considered to be the mother of witches (*nsoxoi*). With reference to a witch and the mother of witches, we record the idea that they "*huo'o se'eso shiyaxaua yapaxaguen*," i.e. "they have this [non-human] person who teaches them to harm." The witches' mother possesses a chant which, when heard by a person, initiates a relationship between the two and the giving of witch power.[8]

---

[5] Classical anthropology differentiated, starting with Evans-Pritchard's study, between witchcraft and sorcery. Despite their difference (the former more linked to innate qualities or evil powers present in a person's body and the latter to that which is carried out with acquired means and knowledge), we agree with Peter Geschiere (1995) that both terms have a highly moralizing and pejorative connotation.

[6] *Pi'oxonaq*: from the verb *pi'oxon-*: 'to suck' or 'to lick,' *-aq*: suffix indicating 'one who is skilled in.'

[7] *Conaxanaxae*: from the verb *-cona-*: 'to grasp,' the suffix *-xanaxai* refers to the one who performs the action of the verb.

Among the Guarani, the mobilization of shamanic forces is carried out by two specialists: *ipaye* and *mbaekua*. While the *ipaye* can be defined as a 'doctor' or 'healer' who, through his good actions, intervenes in the healing of those suffering from an illness, the *mbaekua* is usually defined as a 'witch,' a bearer of a negative force, who reprimands and sends illnesses to those who do not comply with the expected 'Guarani way of being.' However, not infrequently it is the *ipaye* who sends punishments. Moreover, as already mentioned, *ipaye* and *mbaekua* in Calilegua are merged in the same person and are interchangeably referred to as *curanderos*.[9] By means of a cosmic power, or through the intermediation of a *curandero*, a person may receive power. In the first case, a non-human being such as Tüpa (translated as 'God,' but also associated with the owner of the lightning) begins to visit the chosen human person to grant 'secrets' for 'healing' (or, in more general and less moralizing terms, to produce effects). For example, the earth because of its absorptive capacities has the secret to heal wounds; the planet Venus is visible at dawn, and this is why it is linked to the freshness of the morning and the healing of burns. In contrast, the secret of the sun is highly dangerous, as it burns the person to whom it is applied. The secret of water is used in separations or love conflicts. In contrast, the secret of the creeper is used to unite ('entangle') a couple. Both the secret of the sun and the secret of the water can have tragic and deadly consequences for those who use them. In addition to secrets, the *ipaye-mbaekua* possesses spirits within themselves that they accumulate as they heal and fight with other sorcerers. The *curanderos* practice what in Calilegua is called *peyu-peyu* (sorcery).[10] Using various techniques (blowing, pronouncing words, spitting and sucking), the *ipaye-mbaekua* can cure, send illnesses and produce effects (including death) on relatives, members of their community and, in some cases, non-Indigenous people.

Currently, the Qom and Guarani shaman-sorcerers, inserted in capitalism system, in contact with evangelicalism and Catholicism, adopted and re-signified notions and things of non-Indigenous worlds, within the shamanic systems, giving rise to syncretism that can be thought of as the product of a Indigenous logic of openness to the other, and a constitutive need for alterity (in the Lévi-Straussian sense).[11] Christian saints, gauchos, crucifixes, the Bible, God and figures from the folklore *criollo* are included in the shamanic universe (Tola 2001). In addition, manufactured industrial objects and products purchased in shops are put into circulation within shamanic networks. A Qom shaman recounts that, when he was initiated by his uncle, the latter spat a match on a nylon, "then he put the nylon in his hand and pulled out the nylon, and the match and the saliva fell. It went through my hand, fell to the ground and disappeared." From that moment on, the phosphorus is one of the entities that protect him. In language that links shamanism to the technology of war, Tito – a Qom political leader – refers to what a shaman sends to attack as "a missile" that must be "deactivated" by the healing shaman, and then incorporated as a new source of power. A Guarani *ipaye* tells us that she uses industrial medicinal herbs for healing: "medicines, medicinal herbs, I order from Colombia. At Ledesma, in Jujuy, there are some, but they are all *nyloncito* ['nylon bag'], they take a little bit of *yuyo* ['herbs'] and then you boil it and it has no effect... Medicine herbs have to be made in the factory."

---

[8] Others expressed that the origin of witches' power is uncertain, as it may be a practice that is learned during life. Others agree with Pablo Wright (1984, 34) that matrilineal transmission is the way witches acquire power.

[9] For other adaptations of these categories, cf. Hirsch (2000), Villar and Bossert (2004) and Villar (2005), among others

[10] The term *peyu* is translated as 'to blow, to ventilate' (Ayreyu Cuellar 2015, 80). The use of the duplication of lexemes is common in the Guarani language and, in this case, may be referring to the repeated action of blowing, typical of shamanic healing practice.

After this introduction to the general features of Qom and Guarani shamanism-sorcery in capitalist and mercantile contexts, and to the problem we are interested in addressing, in the following sections we will reflect on the two apparently contradictory tendencies we observe in shamanism-sorcery of the Gran Chaco.

The anti-centralizing force of sorcery

In general terms, among the Qom and Guarani, sorcery is usually explained as a consequence of envy. Excesses, both of meanness and generosity, both 'negative' and 'positive,' are frowned upon and generate envy. Graciela, a Guarani woman, told Sonia,

> [...] my mother used to tell me that people would curse you for being pretty. You couldn't have money, or a car, or a bike, they would curse you. Also here not so much, but where my grandmother lives [Bolivia] I saw a lot of sorcerers there, sometimes because she was pretty the witch did sorcery and the girl fell in love and stayed with the witch.]

In a similar term, a Qom leader expresses:

> There are those who are envious, who do you a lot of harm. They harm you, you get sick and there is no cure, you just have to go to a shaman to be cured, and there he will tell you, like a fortune teller: "this man harmed you because he envied you, because you have this, because you are well." Then you are cured, but you have to pay.

Restraint and caution, both in material possessions and in the information one gives about oneself, are largely due to the fear of being the object of sorcery attacks.

---

[11] From his analysis of a corpus of Amerindian mythologies, Lévi-Strauss (1992) sought to demonstrate that the relationship between identity and difference are positioned differently in Amerindian worlds than they are in European thought (Coelho de Souza and Fausto 2004). Pure identity, in Amerindian terms, is unattainable and synonymous with death. From this perspective, processes of 'acculturation' can best be understood as the result of receptive socio-cosmologies eager for otherness, or, in other words, of an attitude of "ouverture à l'autre" (Lévi-Strauss 1992, 16).

Teresa told Florencia that after a trip to a urban Qom neighborhood from her rural community, she began to feel intense pain in her leg until after a few days she could no longer walk. She then consulted a *pi'oxonaq* who told her: "people are envious of you. They ask themselves: 'where is she coming from, where is she going'?" Teresa said that on her trips to the city to buy goods "people control you," that is, they are attentive to her purchases in the city. The shaman told her that it was an old man who was watching her and that she, to avoid tension, looked away from the controlling gaze. This old man was a shaman who, in her daughter's words, "is envying my mother, he is the one who did something to make her sick." That night, the shaman who began to cure her saw "the image of the old man who was envying her and could cause her death." The association between urban contexts and sorcery in Teresa's story also reappears in Guarani ethnography. Of all her siblings, the Guarani healer Roberta was the only one to inherit her father's power. This solitary woman avoids leaving her home for fear of being the victim of sorcery attacks. She says:

> [...] imagine you are a secretary, a doctor or a nurse, you change your clothes every day... because there are those who have, and those who don't. And this bothers the people here in the village, and that bothers people here at Calilegua. There is a lot of sorcery. I don't leave my house... here I am with my grandchildren, with my children, with my sick person, my brother who is sick. I don't cross there, I don't cross there.

The danger lies in the fact that, as she explains, "you don't know where you're going and someone is *curando* you ['doing sorcery'] and giving you some soda, and you don't know what you're really drinking. And from that moment, you are going to get sick." According to our interlocutors, these dangers increase in more populated localities because unknown people who migrated from other cities live there. However, there is also the idea that sorcery among close relatives occurs even in small communities.

While in Roberta's story, the city of Calilegua is associated with greater exposure to envy, in Teresa's story the trips to the city and the goods acquired there are what produce envy. In both cases, the city and the goods found there seem to be presented as the most renowned cause of envy, the irrefutable driving force of sorcery. It is not surprising that due to the process of social differentiation – a product of the new life in the cities – and the immersion into capitalist relations of production, sorcery is consolidated as a social practice that regulates material, symbolic and all kinds of excesses. This was one of the axes of the studies of shamanism in the Gran Chaco, as anticipated in the presentation. Among the Guarani Isoseños, Hirsch and Zarzycki (1995) observed that the person who manages to accumulate a small amount of wealth is often bewitched so that this wealth disappears with the payment of the healing. With regard to Qom groups, Gordillo (2006) mentions sorcery as a form of sanction directed at those who are reluctant to share. In this sense, rather than being mobilized by psychological or ontological causes, several authors have stressed that sorcery in the Chaco constitutes one of the main instruments of social equilibrium (Villar and Bossert 2004). The envy mentioned by our interlocutors can be better understood in sociological terms, as a trigger that activates regulatory mechanisms.

Although there is a causal link, both in anthropological perspectives and in Indigenous discourses, between the advance of capitalism and the proliferation of shamanic-sorcery practices, we are interested in emphasizing that the rupture of reciprocal ties in urban communities is not the only possible explanation for sorcery. Indeed, in the above-mentioned account of Teresa, it was in her rural community that she was the victim of such an attack. In rural Qom communities we recorded accounts of the dissolution of entire communities and families, as a result of sorcery attacks and counter-attacks perpetrated over generations, between members of related families. In fact, in small communities where many of the members are related, we observed that shamanic-sorcery conflicts often occur between close relatives. It is not about strangers or non-Indigenous people, but about brothers-in-law, uncles, uncles-in-law, fathers-in-laws and classificatory cousins who get entangled in 'endless wars,' the product of accusations, rumors, and envy. In other words, envy does not only appear as a result of economic inequality. It is latent and it is not only the sight of what the other person has that awakens envy as a cause of sorcery, but also rumors about love, affection, work and family situations.

According to several Guarani, the most powerful sorcerers are to be found in neighboring country of Bolivia, in some rural, 'intact' and 'pure' communities, where the Indigenous language is maintained and territory is available. While this responds to a construction of an imaginary, associated with the Guarani on the other side of the border (Hirsch 2000), it may indicate that sorcery is not only a response to exogenous factors. We propose that it is a mechanism inherent to these chacoan societies that can be radicalized as a result of the critical marginal situations, and moments of social unrest. According to the Guarani thinker Pïkïtü, "in Bolivia there are many communities that are intact, where the balance between the *ipaye* and the *mbaekua* continues." This Guarani thinker explains that in the past – and today in some regions – there is an *Ipaye* Council and an *Mbaekua* Council that are in charge of balancing and doing justice. In response to Jacinto, the leader and shaman Eusebio, from Orán (Salta), on a visit to Calilegua, explained that just as in "nature itself there is a balance, just as the vipers regulate so that there are not too many toads, so it is in the Guarani Nation." He described how the *mbaekua* often visits Guarani families and "as soon as he arrives at someone's house, he can tell what kind of family they are, what kind of heart they have, whether they are mean or not." In fact, it is expected that "if I go to a brother's house, we should offer everything… but there are someone who, when visitors arrive, say 'go put out the fire, go hide the bread, hide the sugar, ¡we have very little!'" In these cases, the *mbaekua* sends a warning, that is, a disease, to change the mean behavior. "Sometimes, some people take the *mbaekua* for bad, they think he is perverse, but looking at it from another point of view, he is the regulator of everything, he interprets everything, he makes his diagnosis and balances," concludes Eusebio.

The fact that even among sorcerers there are power competitions, "out of hatred and envy," as Rafael told us, is also evidence that the disputes are not always about material causes, but also – and mainly – about the acquisition of shamanic power. In these struggles, the one with the least power loses and may wake up dead of a heart attack, for example, but everyone knows the ‘real’ cause of his death. A Qom shaman told us that he began to lose the power he had because of the actions of a sorcerer who wanted to kill him. At night he tried to sing the chants of his non-human companions, but he could not do so because of the decay the witch woman was causing him. She was his ex-wife who wanted to kill him, and he could only defeat her when he sang the song of the mother of witches and with it he finally drove her away. The Guarani healer Romelia, in a similar sense, told us “if I don’t heal, I die.” This refers, on the one hand, to a vital impulse, but also to the fact that, being involved in struggles that non-Indigenous people do not see, she must keep her “entourage of spirits” that give her power under control. Otherwise, they may rebel against her, and attack her. This ideas are also held by the Qom shamans when they say that they must get paid after healing because, if they do not, the spirits that help them, “their army,” could become angry with them, and make them sick.

If in this section we develop the way in which the Qom and Guarani shaman-sorcerers operate as levelers of social differentiation, we also show that this leveling is not exclusively due to the economic inequalities inherent to insertion into capitalist system. Envy, jealousy, hostility and resentment are present in relations between Indigenous people beyond capitalism and modernity and beyond urban neighborhoods. However, the rumors that are in crescendo, and the controlling glances are no longer in the shadows but become explicit in moments of greater social tension, such as the death of one or several persons, economic crises and the proliferation of diseases. These situations take on a larger scale in urban neighborhoods than in a rural communities, because people live closer together, and therefore control is easier to exercise, and because economic or health crises are exacerbated by overcrowding.

Next, we will focus on the figure of the shaman-sorcerer in order to analyze their ambiguous character – typical of those who are linked to non-human powers – and the apparent contradiction they generate by accumulating power and wealth. We will show that sorcery is a cosmopolitical mechanism (involving humans and non-humans) that produces accumulation of power, and magnification of shaman-sorcerers and Indigenous political leaders.

Sorcery as an unfinished crystallization of power centers

Sorcery and shamanic practices are themselves forms of power acquisition for the person who performs them. Moreover, sorcery activity performed for third parties (including leaders and politicians) is a central element in local political praxis, in which forms of traditional Indigenous leadership and contemporary politics are articulated.

Among the Qom, the *pi’oxonaq* may inherit the powers of a relative before he or she dies, or receive them from non-human beings of the forest called *nattac*. While on several occasions these non-humans enter the shaman’s body, they do not inhabit it. Instead, the first object of power that the shaman receives, called *piguishic*[12] or *bicho* in

---

[12] *Piguishic* derives from the root *-pin* from the verb ‘to be able’ to which is added the suffix *-shic* indicating ‘that which accompanies,’ ‘that which belongs to.’

Spanish ('bug'), already stays inside his body. In addition to this initial object, during the healings, when the shaman extracts the illness from the patient's body, he takes possession of new bugs that were previously sent by another shaman to the victim he cured. Inside the shaman who extracts them and who introduces them into his own body, the *piguishic* are unified into a single entity. When these entities enter the *pi'oxonaq* body, "they are diluted because otherwise they bother. They become like smoke that remains on the skin of the *pi'oxonaq*," says Ino. Shamanic power depends on the *pi'oxonaq's* ability to tame these initially alien entities. The Qom shamanic body, as in the Guarani case, is a provisional and unfinished locus of power, always ready to receive more powers or to lose them in 'invisible wars' with other shamans.

Among the Guarani, the power of the *ipaye-mbaekua* also depends on the acquisition of non-human entities which, in this case, are described as 'energies' or 'spirits.' In Isidro's terms, these are spirits that the shamanic specialist accumulates throughout his life, as he heals, and which live within him. These spirits compose, together with the shaman, an extensive body that is not bounded by the skin: they can enter and leave it, inhabit dreams (of the healer and others), and enter into other bodies in order to heal them. These spirits are distinguished from the secrets that are transferred to specialists by entities somewhat homologous to the *nattac qom*. Guarani secrets and spirits are found inside the *ipaye-mbaekua*, they are constitutive elements of him, and the power of the specialist depends on how many he possesses. While secrets are acquired once and for all, spirits are not: new spirits can be annexed, just as others, already acquired, can be lost.

The *pi'oxonaq* and the *ipaye-mbaekua* would be magnified persons composed of multiple entities that make them powerful, and allow them to regulate social life, reprimand others, do local justice and work for others. Among the ancient Tupi and Qom, shamanism was, most of the time, a complementary activity to warfare. Specifically, among the Tupi, every adult male had to be a bit of a warrior and a bit of a shaman, i.e. to have killed war captives and to have developed communication with the non-human world (Sztutman 2012, 413). If previously the great-warriors were those who had integrated and domesticated a portion of enemies, nowadays the magnification of shamans is made possible by the familiarization of non-human beings (Sztutman 2012, 431), such as the *nattac qom* and the Guarani spirits.

Shamanism-sorcery not only allows the magnification of non-human power-grabbers but, considered a 'work' among the Qom and Guarani, it functions as a centripetal force that attracts material wealth, money, objects, and gifts. The association between shamanism and money is explicit among the Qom shamans for whom, as already mentioned, monetary payment is necessary to avoid attacks from non-humans, to avoid getting sick and losing power. As one Qom shaman told Florencia,

> […] with *nattac*, money comes like water: that's why it's nice to be *pi'oxonaq*. The *nattac* get angry if they don't pay you and leave. When I dreamt, my father arrived and got angry because they didn't pay me, and that's why I got sick, 'The sick person got well and forgot about you', he explained me. When my dad asks the *nattac* for something, he brings him anything.

Among the Guarani, although we recorded that charging is frowned upon, *curanderismo* generates flows of goods, coca leaves and gifts to the *ipaye*. One woman recalls that her father, a renowned healer, used to say: "I don't like to charge, there are others who like to charge for money, but not me." Some patients would put money in his pocket, and he would return it to them, only accepting when they gave him coca leaves as thanks for the healing.

Finally, it remains to explore the role of shamanism-sorcery in the concentration of political power. If in the past, in Chaco societies the link between shamanism and politics was explicit in that those who could exercise political power also had to be knowledgeable in shamanic practices (Braunstein and Meichtry 2008), today we also find an association between both dimensions of social life. Although it is no longer a requirement today that those who exercise political leadership be shamans, shamanism is still linked to politics. Thus, for example, Qom politicians have an 'army of *pi'oxonaq*' for their protection, as Teo told us, and non-Indigenous politicians go to the offices of Guarani healers at election time. When Sonia started working at Calilegua, her host Susana had been a widow for some years. After living with her, she confessed that her husband (*karai*, non-Indigenous) had not died of 'natural' causes (hantavirus, as she had told her). She explained that a well-known healer had given him "rat piss," i.e. a "filth." Although certain rodents may be vectors of hantavirus, she remarked that someone had made a "job" (sorcery attack) for him for political reasons, as at the time he was a councillor at the municipality. "Rat piss" referred to a substance "prepared" by a shamanic specialist and mixed in the councilor's soda. We see how shamanism-sorcery can be used to ensure that a person remains in power or, on the contrary, loses it. In other words, the mobilization of shamanic forces can also contribute to the magnification not only of shamans, but also of third parties: Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous politicians.

In this section we have explored the centripetal forces that, through shamanism-sorcery, attract power, money, wealth, material goods and political power to certain people we describe as "magnified," "men who are made up of other men" (Strathern 1991, 198). The Qom and Guarani shamans, containers of non-human forces, constitute themselves as provisional and unfinished centers of shamanic power. Their power is not given, it must be permanently tamed, it is contested, and it can also be taken away or stolen. In short, shaman-sorcerers are loci of attraction around which power, wealth, human and non-human persons, and material goods circulate.

Conclusions

Throughout this paper we have tried to unravel the internal logics of sorcery-shamanism among the Qom and the contemporary Guarani of the Gran Chaco. Without leaving aside the socio-historical context in which sorcery-shamanic practices are inserted, we have focused on capturing what is proper to the administration of power in Indigenous Chaco societies, and which can be expressed through apparently exogenous forms such as partisan political logics and the commodification of shamanic activity. However, beneath these – in principle alien – forms, we approach the centrifugal and centripetal dynamics by which power is alternately constituted, circulated and negotiated between humans, and between humans and non-humans. In his analysis of the mastery-domination relationship, Carlos Fausto (2008, 342) argued that the ability to think about power in the South American lowlands was clouded by the state model, the focus on coercion and the polarization that emerges in the Western imaginary between the anti-state model, "negatively obsessed with the state", and the "teleological centralisation model", "positively obsessed with the state." According to the author, "a new, ethnographically informed language needs to be constructed to conceptualize asymmetrical relations in the region" (Fausto 2008, 342).

In the Gran Chaco, territorial dispossession due to the advance of capitalism generated the agglomeration of Indigenous people in urban communities in which they live more concentrated. While capitalism may provide the socio-historical context in which sorcery is embedded, it is not necessarily the sole or central cause of its existence. Firstly, it is problematic to claim that there is a proliferation of sorcery-shamanism in cities and neighborhoods compared to rural communities, because of the difficulty of measuring the effects of a practice that is expressed, in ethnographic terms, in rumors, rather than in actions observable to an anthropologist. Secondly, we must not lose sight of the question of scale: how can we quantify shamanic-sorcery actions and effects in diverse contexts and know that such actions and effects are greater in urban neighborhoods than in rural localities where population density is clearly lower?

We try to develop that the abundance of sorcery-shamanism in urban contexts, rather than being considered an effect of the pronounced capitalism in those areas, could be considered a function of the fact that in urban neighborhoods there are more people concentrated, and this proximity facilitates the control of some over others by, among other things, looking into the lives of others. We show, in fact, that the driving force of sorcery is not only the envy aroused by economic inequalities, and the stinginess of material goods. It is also combined with jealousy, disaffection, family tensions, hostilities, and resentments that go beyond sharing or not sharing goods that are scarce in marginal contexts. It is diversity in all its forms that awakens feelings such as those referred to when it is observed that the other – who is often a neighbor or a relative who denied the mutuality of being in Sahlins' (2013) terms – is more successful in hunting, in obtaining a mate, has a greater oratorical capacity, more political success or greater shamanic power.

In this text, we referred to Geschiere's (1995) analysis of sorcery in Cameroon, and found resonances between the paradox he expresses, and our initial problematic: fear of sorcery is a way of avoiding the concentration of power, while sorcery functions as a modality that allows for the concentration of power. In Cameroon, the management of sorcery forces is perceived by local people as a tool used by elites to gain power and wealth, while elites see it as a weapon of the weak to sabotage development projects and the modern state itself. In the cases we have analyzed, we showed that modernity, capitalism, commodification and sorcery-shamanism coexist not as antithetical forces or as explanatory reasons for each other, but as contemporary expressions of the management of power, accumulation and inequities. Sorcery-shamanism stands as a safeguard against capitalist advance, not so much by leveling out emerging inequalities – as demonstrated by Chaco ethnography – but by the possibility of projecting lines of escape against centralization, and by allowing the constitution of centers of power in Indigenous terms. If shamanism-sorcery can be thought of as a counter-hegemonic force, it is not only by virtue of avoiding accumulation, but by propelling a constant movement of forces: it can function as a centrifugal force that avoids excesses and material concentration, and act in parallel as a centripetal force that allows for the monopolization of non-human, political and economic power.

If, in general, Indigenous people's bodies are extensive, porous and multiple, and this generates a web of interconnected persons (Tola 2012; 2019), shamans are the hyperbolic example of extension and porosity. Emblems of multiplicity, they are also the expression of individuality which, in Indigenous terms, is expressed through phrases such as: "the sorcerer does not eat with people, he eats alone," "he has no place, he walks everywhere like a whirlwind that enters your house at night, and gives you disorder in your sleep. He enters your whole body, and your soul fights with him but if you don't defeat him he kills you," "nowadays if you don't have money, if you are relative or not, you die, the diabolical arrow sends you," "now, you need to have money, the sorcerer gets angry with you because you didn't pay him and that's when the evil begins," "today even the young people cure, they have the power of the grandfather, but they don't do good things, they want to have money: 'You have to give me your house, your table, your TV', they say."

As drivers of centrifugal and centripetal forces, sorcerers disperse and concentrate power, by regulating the dense web of relations between humans and non-humans. However, if they coexist in a confined space, the possibility of being watched, controlled and attacked is increased, and generates the idea that there is more sorcery-shamanism in urban communities than in rural ones. Undoubtedly, in urban contexts, the power of the gaze and of control is intensified and we could say that sorcery-shamanism contributes to the variegation of ties. The "relational excess" (Tola 2019, 8) increases, but we doubt that it is caused by the effects of the commodification of relationships. Indeed, is this not the effect of sorcery practices (succession of revenge and counter-revenge) and shamanism *per se*? Is not sorcery-shamanism the alter ego of kinship and, in the Chacoan case, variegated kinship (by redoubling of alliances and by endogamous tendencies, see Tola 2014) is practically inescapable and omnipresent?

As Sztutman (2012) defines, prophetisms and ancient Amerindian wars were as processes of dialectics without synthesis between two dispositions, as an alternation that occurs in the constitution of singular and collective subjects between unfinished movements of escape and crystallization. Perhaps Chacoan sorcery-shamanism is also a continuation of ancient struggles by other means and a dispersive form of the density of the web of relations.

References cited

Ayreyu Cuellar, Herlán
2015 *Ñeemoesäkaa guaraní osondombae. Diccionario guaraní-castellano, castellano guaraní*. Santa Cruz de la Sierra: Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Santa Cruz.

Bercovitch, Eytan
1998 "Dis-embodiment and concealment among the Atbalmin of Papua New Guinea." In *Bodies and persons. Comparative perspective from Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Michael Lambek and Andrew Strathern, 210-231. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Braunstein, José
1983 *Algunos rasgos de la organización social de los indígenas del Gran Chaco*. Trabajos de Etnología, 2. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Facultuad de Filosofía y Letras, Instituto de Ciencias Antropológicas.

Braunstein, José and Norma Meichtry
2008 *Liderazgo, representatividad y control social en el Gran Chaco*. Resistencia: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional del Nordeste EUDENE.

Clastres, Hélène
2007 *La tierra sin mal. El profetismo tupí-Guaraní*. Buenos Aires: Del Sol.

Clastres, Pierre
2010 *La sociedad contra el Estado*. Barcelona: Monte Avila.

Coelho de Souza, Marcela, and Carlos Fausto
2004 "Reconquistando o campo perdido: o que Lévi-Strauss deve aos ameríndios." *Revista de Antropologia São Paulo* 47, no. 1: 89-131. https://revistas.usp.br/ra/article/view/27183/28955 (17.05.2024)

Comaroff, Jean
1985 *Body of power. Spirit of resistence. The culture and history of a South African people.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Combès, Isabelle, Diego Villar, and Kathleen Lowrey
2009 "Comparative studies and the South American Gran Chaco." *Tipití* 7, no. 1: 69-102. https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol7/iss1/3/ (17.05.2024)

Evans-Pritchard, Edward
1976 *Brujería, magia y oráculos entre los azande*, traducido por Antonio Desmonts. Barcelona: Amagrama.

Fausto, Carlos
2008 "Donos demais: maestria e domínio na Amazônia." *MANA* 14, no. 2: 329-366. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93132008000200003

Geschiere, Peter
1995 *Sorcellerie et politique en Afrique. La viande des autres*. Paris: Karthala.

Gordillo, Gastón
2001 "A political economy of shamanic forms of contention in the argentine Chaco." Paper presented in The American Anthropological Association Meeting, San Francisco. Unpublished manuscript.
2006 *El Gran Chaco: antropologías e historias.* Buenos Aires: Prometeo.

Hirsch, Silvia
2000 "Tirando el mal del otro lado de la frontera: brujería e identidad cultural entre los Guaraníes de Argentina y Bolivia." *Revista de Investigaciones Folklóricas* 15: 35-41. https://www.equipo-naya.com.ar/ifa/publicaciones/RIF15.pdf (17.05.2024)

Hirsch, Silvia, and Alex Zarzycki
1995 "Ipayareta, Imbaekuareta y evangelistas: cambios y continuidades en la sociedad izoceña." In *Chiriguano*, edited by Jürgen Riester, 513-540. Santa Cruz: Apoyo Para el Campesino-indígena del Oriente Boliviano (APCOB).

Lattas, Andrew
1993 "Sorcery and colonialism: illness, dreams and death as political languages in west New Britain." *Man* 28: 51-77. https://doi.org/10.2307/2804436

Lederman, Rena
1981 "Sorcery and social change in Mendi." *Social Analysis* 8: 15-27. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23159555 (17.05.2024)

Lévi-Strauss, Claude
1992 *Historia de Lince*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

LiPuma, Edward
1998 "Modernity and forms of personhood in Melanesia." In *Bodies and persons. Comparative perspective from Africa and Melanesia*, edited by Michael Lambek, and Andrew Strathern, 53-79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, Elmer
1979 *Los tobas argentinos, armonía y disonancia en una sociedad.* México, D.F.: Siglo XXI.
1995 *Nurturing doubt. From mennonite missionary to anthropologist in the Argentine Chaco*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Richard, Nicolas
2011 "La querelle des noms. Chaînes et strates ethnonymiques dans le Chaco boreal." *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 97, no. 2: 201-230. https://doi.org/10.4000/jsa.11935

Sahlins, Marshall
2013 *What kinship is ... and is not*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Steward, Pamela, and Andrew Strathern
2004 *Witchcraft, sorcery, rumors and gossip*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strathern, Marylin
1991 "One man and many men." In *Big men and great men: Personifications of power in Melanesia*, edited por Maurice Godelier and Marylin Strathern, 197-214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sztutman, Renato
2012 *O profeta e o principal. Ação política ameríndia e seus personagens*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo (Edusp).

Taussig, Michael
1980 *The Devil and commodity fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Thomas, Nicholas and Caroline Humphrey
1996 "Introduction." In *Shamanism, history, and the state*, edited by Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, 1-12. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.

Tola, Florencia
2001 “Relaciones de poder y apropiación del ‘otro‘ en relatos sobre iniciaciones chamánicas del Chaco argentino.” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 87: 197-210. https://doi.org/10.4000/jsa.1849
2012 *Yo no estoy solo en mi cuerpo. Cuerpos-personas múltiples entre los tobas del Chaco Argentino.* Buenos Aires: Biblos/Culturalia.
2014 “Esposos y amantes consanguíneos entre los Qom del Gran Chaco.” *Journal des Amèricanistes* 100, no. 1: 131-161. https://doi.org/10.4000/jsa.13742
2019 “Sorcery-revenge and anti-sorcery. Individuation and dividuality in the Gran Chaco.” *Social Analysis* 63, no. 2: 81-101. https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2019.630205

Tola, Florencia, and Carlos Salamanca
2002 “La brujería como discurso político entre los tobas del Chaco argentino.” *Desacatos* 9: 96-116. https://doi.org/10.29340/9.1179

Villar, Diego
2005 “La religión chané.” PhD thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. http://repositorio.filo.uba.ar/handle/filodigital/1266 (17.05.2024)

Villar, Diego, and Federico Bossert
2004 “Acusaciones de brujería entre los chané.” Archivo. Departamento de Antropología Cultural 2: 149-149.

Wright, Pablo
1984 “Quelques formes du chamanisme toba.” *Bulletin de la Société Suisse des Américanistes* 48: 29-35. https://www.sag-ssa.ch/index.php/fr-fr/bulletin-ssa-la-revista/bssa-11-20-1956-1962 (17.05.2024)

Afterword: Assault Sorcery and Kanaima in the Light of New Empirical Approaches: Neil Whitehead's Legacy and Beyond

Ernst Halbmayer
Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany

I first learned about *kanaima* during my comparative work on Carib-speaking Amerindians (Halbmayer 2010), which I began in 1999 after completing my Ph.D. among the Carib-speaking Yukpa. The term and related practices appeared in the works of Schomburgk (1847), Koch-Grünberg (1923), Butt Colson (1954; 1989), Gillin (1936), and Thomas (1982). I read overviews of the subject in the works of Im Thurn (1883) and Roth (1915). Given the amount of ethnographic data that I had to deal with in my comparative project, I did not pay systematic attention to the topic of sorcery, which I only briefly discussed at the end (Halbmayer 2010, 161-169). However, the issue of *kanaima* became present and important in unexpected ways when my wife and I moved to Madison, Wisconsin, for the 2000/2001 academic year as part of my postdoctoral fellowship.[1]

I had been looking for specialists on Carib-speaking Amerindians and assumed that Neil Whitehead's ethnohistorical approach would provide a useful additional perspective for my project. I was familiar with his previously published ethnohistorical works (Whitehead 1988; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1998; 1999), as well as the edited volume *War in the Tribal Zone* (Ferguson and Whitehead 1992), but I never had the opportunity to meet Neil personally before arriving in Madison. Therefore, I was surprised to find him deeply engaged, if not obsessed, with *kanaima* and its practices of violent death. At the time, he was teaching on the subject and still writing *Dark Shamans*. During my stay, a Festschrift for Neil's doctoral thesis advisor at Oxford, Peter Rivière, was published (Rival and Whitehead 2001). It included two papers on *kanaima/itoto*: one by Audrey Butt Colson (2001), also from Oxford, and the other by Neil himself (2001). These papers can be seen as a prelude to *Dark Shamans* (Whitehead 2002), which was followed by the edited volume on assault shamanism and sorcery, *In Darkness and Secrecy* (Whitehead and Wright 2004), which raised the topic to a more general and comparative level, leading to his unfinished engagement with violence and cultural order in modern contemporary societies.

This volume revisits the subject of sorcery in Amazonia with a particular focus on *kanaima*. With its unconventional mixture of contributions, which include a blend of original research, translations, and commentaries on previously published work, as well as interviews, the volume provides fresh insights, background information, and new perspectives on sorcery. For the first time, the perspectives of different groups in the circum-Roraima region are brought together to provide a more comprehensive view of *kanaima*. In addition, the volume includes three papers that explore sorcery outside the circum-Roraima region in other areas of lowland South America. These deal with ayahuasca tourism in urban Iquitos (Fotiou, this volume), sorcery accusations among the Peruvian Asháninka (Frisancho and Delgado, this volume), and sorcery practices among marginalized Qom and Guarani in urban settings in contemporary Argentina (Sarra and Tola, this volume).

---

[1] APART Fellowship from the Austrian Academy of Sciences "Structures of World Conception and Manifestations of the World among the Carib-Speaking Indians of South America: A Comparative Study of Principles of Social Organization and Conceptions of the World" (1999-2002).

Most contributions are based on long-term fieldwork in which sorcery was not the primary and initial focus of the research, but became a central theme that could hardly be overlooked. Some papers, such as Whitaker's chapter, have a historical focus. Other chapters are based on rather short but highly participatory fieldwork in art-related and beauty contest contexts in the Patamona community of Paramakatoi (Janik, this volume). These in-depth ethnographic experiences and long-standing engagements with local Amerindian cultures make significant contributions and mark a contrast to Neil Whitehead's rather brief field experiences in Guyana. His selected interviews and narratives were recorded during visits in 1992, 1995 and 1997. In each case, he had to leave the field earlier than planned due to tensions, illness, and threats (Whitehead 2002, 11-12).[2] As a result, his analysis is not so much embedded in a broad, long-term ethnographic field experience as on his expertise as an ethnohistorian analyzing historical and ethnographic data on the subject. Nevertheless, his book is today a milestone for younger scholars, as this volume documents. As Balbina Lambos (this volume) tells us, local Indigenous people consider it to contain "the ancestral knowledge of indigenous cultures" and it is even used by young locals "as a kind of art" to practice *kanaima* and destroy people.

Neil Whitehead's field experience also differs significantly from Butt Colson's earlier ethnographic study of *etoto* (also known as *itoto* and *kanaima*) among the Akawaio, which is presented in her unpublished Ph.D. thesis (1954). Butt Colson, following the British anthropological tradition and in line with her thesis advisor Evans-Pritchard (1937), saw *kanaima* primarily as a belief system closely linked to social structure. In her interpretation, the ritual killings attributed to *kanaima* were, however, not widespread as actual social practices. Whitehead challenged this perspective and argued against the notion that *kanaima* was merely a belief system reflecting social structure. He emphasized that *kanaima* practitioners could kill both consanguineal and affinal relatives and initiate whomever they chose (Whitehead 2001, 240).

---

[2] Rumors are not just important in relation to fear and the production of sorcery and sorcery accusations. They also surrounded Neil and his fieldwork among students and staff in Madison (see Janik's interview with Theresa Whitehead, this volume). One particularly telling story that circulated during the time that I was in Madison was that Neil had left the field in a coffin, which involved faking his own death, to escape *kanaima* attacks.

Nevertheless, Butt Colson had already documented cases of killings involving close relatives and discussed the conditions under which "very close relations are thought to kill each other" (1954, 350). She also noted the absence of a "rigid inheritance of the skills" (Butt Colson 1954, 235) associated with *kanaima* practices. In contrast to Butt Colson's classical focus on social structure, Whitehead's (2002, 41-87) approach de-emphasized and criticized legalistic interpretations of *kanaima* in terms of revenge or retributive justice. Instead, he focused on the cultural and symbolic significance of violence, its auto-representations (Whitehead 2001, 236-237), as well as its role in maintaining cultural order (Whitehead 2007). According to Whitehead, violence is not dysfunctional or marginal, but rather an integral part of cultural systems, both in globalized societies and among Indigenous groups. Consequently, in his view, even *kanaima* killings, while morally ambivalent, are not universally regarded as illegitimate. He writes:

> Whatever the moral or criminal meanings such killings may have for outsiders, they are not unambiguously present, for either victims or practitioners. Kanaimà is also understood as a culturally 'authentic' act, expressing a hyper-traditionality and resistance to colonizing modernity (Appadurai 1996: 139–157), even as Kanaimà simultaneously involves extreme violence to both individual bodies and the extant body-politic. I therefore disagree with Butt Colson (2001) that Kanaimà activity is never regarded as legitimate, even if it is always feared and acknowledged as an antisocial force (Whitehead 2001, 237).

Given these conceptual divergences, it is still remarkable that Butt Colson's doctoral thesis is not listed in the bibliography of Whitehead's *Dark Shamans*, nor is her name mentioned in the book's index. This omission is striking, given the relevance of her work to his own alternative exploration of *kanaima* practices.

It was in 1992, during an archaeological survey conducted for the Walter Roth Museum in Georgetown, that Neil Whitehead inadvertently encountered the phenomenon of *kanaima*. Upon his arrival, he was confronted with the issue by the nurse Matilda Saigo Williams (Whitehead 2002, 13; see Janik's interview with her, this volume). Without awareness of the potential consequences, he touched an ancient pot still actively used in contemporary *kanaima* rituals. The work in question gives rise to a number of ethical concerns. However, it is my contention that the primary ethical issue is not the unconscious touching of the pot itself – the act that, in Whitehead's perception and self-representation, resulted in him being pursued by *kanaima* attacks[3] – but rather the broader implications of his methodology and engagement with the community. From my perspective, the payment of large sums of money to secure interviews with *kanaima* practitioners during his second trip is particularly questionable. And the reliability of such interviews, as well as the potential social consequences of such financial transactions, seem at least debatable. Perhaps unsurprisingly, during his third stay, people suspected him of becoming a *kanaima* himself and refused to work with him on the issue (Whitehead 2002, 32).

---

[3] In contrast, Lewy (this volume) posits that the flesh of white individuals is perceived as repulsive for the *kanaima*, which effectively precludes them from being attacked and renders them unlikely to be perceived as *kanaima* themselves (personal communication).

Interestingly, none of the contributors to this collection provides support to Whitehead's view that *kanaima* might be considered legitimate. Monticelli argues that "*kanaima's* action is never seen as 'legitimate'" (this volume, p. 71, see also Amaral 2024, 206). Whitaker's position is cautious. While *kanaima* may have played a legitimate historical role in warfare, he states that he:

> [...] never heard the Makushi say that contemporary *kanaima* violence is legitimate [...]. In the present, [...] *kanaima* sorcery is viewed by the Makushi as a distinctly antisocial and predatory practice that is motivated primarily by envy, jealousy, and evil-mindedness (this volume, p. 43).[4]

Only Lewy (this volume, p. 53f) suggests that there may be a difference between the English-speaking areas and the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking areas in terms of self-identification as *kanaima*.

Reevaluating assault shamanism and *kanaima*

The papers in this volume engage with Neil Whitehead's work, build on his arguments, and reassess them by offering alternative interpretations grounded in new empirical data from different Indigenous groups and theoretical insights. In the following, I will focus on these contributions and the emerging perspectives that they introduce, starting with contributions that are not directly related to the circum-Roraima region and *kanaima* practices.

Evgenia Fotiou's chapter shows that urban ayahuasca shamanism is itself a battleground for sorcery practices. Juan, a Spanish shaman and provider of international ayahuasca tourism services with whom she worked, is deeply affected by sorcery through personal experiences of attacks, shifts in beliefs, and impacts on his professional life. The resulting emotional stress and related social dynamics lead to the adoption of protective rituals. These experiences illustrate the complex interplay between belief, embodiment, and the social context of shamanic practices. In exploring this relationship between embodiment and sorcery, she emphasizes the embodied nature of sorcery, highlighting how it manifests through somatic experiences during rituals, suggesting that sorcery is not just a belief system but an embodied cultural process. In doing so, she moves beyond classical notions of sorcery and adds to Whitehead's poetic approach, who argued that sorcery as a "fundamental and complex cultural expression [...] must necessarily involve competence in the manipulation of signs and symbols." These poetics, which are "highly specialized albeit rarely textual," do not refer to the "formal properties of signs, symbols, and rituals—semiotics—but how those signs are used performatively through time" (Whitehead 2002, 2). Fotiou highlights the importance of the body in understanding and navigating the complexities of sorcery within shamanic traditions. The interplay between bodily experiences, their subjective understandings, the cultural context, the ritual practices employed, and (not least) the social dynamics that shape beliefs about sorcery are all related to a somatic perspective.

---

[4] All non-English quotes in this article have been translated into English by the author.

Sarra and Tola's chapter emphasizes the fluidity and ambiguity of the roles of shaman and sorcerer among the Qom and the Guarani. The authors highlight the communal aspects of sorcery, suggesting that sorcery is deeply embedded in social relations and collective dynamics. The relationship between sorcery and social organization, which was rejected by Whitehead, is thus reclaimed by Sarra and Tola, although not in the classical sense of an analysis of kinship relations. Instead, they emphasize its consequences for social and political dynamics and the ongoing negotiation of power within Indigenous societies. Sorcery can both challenge and reinforce existing hierarchies. It is thus a centrifugal force that promotes social balance, opposes inequality, and disperses power. It is also a centripetal force that consolidates power within Qom and Guarani societies for local Indigenous leaders and even non-Indigenous politicians. Sorcery can lead to the formation of alliances and networks between individuals, but it can also create divisions based on envy and competition. This interplay illustrates the ongoing negotiations of power within the community, where sorcery can empower individuals, be a form of political expression, be performed for political leaders, and also create conflict.

While situating sorcery within the context of urban marginality, modernity, and capitalism, as well as discussing the now longstanding tradition of analyses that focus on the modernity of witchcraft (Kroesbergen-Kamps 2020), the chapter argues that the rise of sorcery practices is not solely a reaction to modernity (or colonialism) and should not be reduced to an act of resistance to external forces (Sarra and Tola, this volume, p. 195). As sorcery accusations and practices are prevalent in both urban neighborhoods and rural communities, they are deeply embedded in the social fabric of the communities themselves and are an expression of relational continuities. Envy, jealousy, hostility, and resentment transcend capitalism, modernity, and the urban neighborhood (Sarra and Tola, this volume, p. 201). The authors argue that sorcery is not just a personal practice, but that it shapes political relationships and power structures within Indigenous communities. Furthermore, they ask whether sorcery/shamanism can even be seen as the alter ego of kinship.

Frisancho and Delgado examine witchcraft accusations and their moral consequences among the Asháninka from a psychological perspective. They refer to Santos-Granero's work (2002; 2004) on child witchcraft among western Arawakan groups. While Santos-Granero (2004, 274) broke through the "conspiracy of silence" surrounding the continuity of sorcery and sorcery accusations in the region, this chapter delves into the complex moral and psychological dimensions of witchcraft accusations within the Asháninka community through analyses of rich interview texts. Frisancho and Delgado claim universal psychological principles, particularly in the areas of moral reasoning and psychological conflict, while emphasizing the importance of cultural context in shaping these experiences. They advocate for a balanced approach that recognizes both the universality of certain psychological processes and the specificity of Indigenous cultural practices in understanding moral conflicts related to witchcraft.

Thus, these papers (1) introduce the importance of the body and a somatic perspective for understanding sorcery (Fotiou), (2) demonstrate sorcery's social embeddedness and relational continuities which go beyond modernity, capitalism, and urbanity (Sarra and Tola), and (3) debate moral reasoning and psychological conflict in regards to sorcery accusations (Frisancho and Delgando).

The papers dealing with the circum-Roraima groups build upon, confirm, and go in different dimensions beyond the work of Neil Whitehead. In the following section, I will discuss Whitehead's tripartite distinction of Patamona shamanism, especially *kanaima's* relation to plant masters and to original mythical beings, but also the emergence of hierarchical as well as metamorphic shamanism in the region in the light of Amazonian and Isthmo-Colombian relational logics and the impact of colonialisms. Finally, I will highlight the importance of life force and fermentation as an idiom of transformation.

From shamans, *kanaima*, and prophets to plant masters and their slaves

Modern and popular, often esoteric, interpretations of shamanism tend to overlook or erase its potential for harm,[5] emphasizing its healing powers while neglecting the fact that the ability to heal is actually accompanied by the ability to harm and to combat threatening entities. This neglected 'dark side' of shamanism was a key argument made by Whitehead and Wright (2004; Whitehead 2002) over two decades ago. Among the Patamona, Whitehead (2002, 99) identified not just a dark side but three distinct types of shamanism: (1) the *piya* (variously documented as *piyai'san*, *piai'san* or *pia'san*), *payé*, or shaman; (2) the *kanaima* (also known as *etoto* or *itoto* in Akawaio); and (3) the *alleluia* prophets, or "wisdom possessors." He associates each of these with specific primordial mythical entities, such as Makunaima in the case of *kanaima* and Piai'ma in the case of *piya*. In 2010, I wrote that: "The extent to which Whitehead's tabular distinction between *kanaima*, shamans and prophets (*alleluia*) is justified in detail (Whitehead 2002: 99) will have to be evaluated" by specialists on the local Indigenous groups (Halbmayer 2010, 167). So, what can we learn in this respect from the contributions collected in this volume?

Shamans in Amazonia and elsewhere are generally ambivalent figures, since the "boundaries between healing and sorcery are blurred" (Fotiou, this volume, p. 178), and "shamanic healing practices are not differentiated from malicious practices" (Sarra and Tola, this volume, p. 197). It is Cooper who introduces Whitehead's tripartite distinction most explicitly and equally mentions that for many "every *piyai'san* is also a *kanaima*" (this volume, p. 108). In his comment to Whitaker, Cooper (this volume, p. 52) argues that among the Akawaio:

> [...] e'toto is closely associated with *piyai'san* and Alleluia *pukena'*.[6] These three agents are discrete, but there is a great deal of overlap, complementarity, competition and transformation among the identities.

---

[5] For example, see Harner's (2011; 2013) core shamanism. For detailed critical discussion of Eurocentric notions of shamanism in terms of the use of sound (e.g., drumming and singing), see Brabec (2023).

[6] Lewy (2011, 169-170) also provides examples of individuals who were initially perceived as 'bad' or '*kanaimá*' and subsequently became aspirants for the role of *alleluia* leaders.

Cooper (this volume, p. 52) even interprets *alleluia pukenaʼ* as

> […] **spiritual warriors** who work in isolation and in groups to resist raids […] they fast, dream, sing and dance to bring down *akwa* and new *liga-liga* (a celestial source of music) songs [my emphasis].

Thus, while there are continuities between alleluia prophets, shamans and *kanaima*, there is also consensus that *alleluia* prophets are to be distinguished from the *piaʼsan* and stand in opposition to *kanaima*. The practices of *alleluia* prophets are viewed as unequivocally positive and life-affirming, in contrast to the more ambivalent, horizontal shamanic activities (see below) associated with the *piaʼsan* or the murderous assaults of *kanaima*. *Alleluia* prophets often hold social and political prestige and assume a hierarchically superior standing (Monticelli this volume, p. 64). Their collective song-dance rituals are centered on increasing life-force and aim to establish a direct contact with God through vertical soul travel. In this context, God is traditionally associated with the sun, who was the father of the Makunaima siblings.[7] Butt Colson (1989, 54) explained that this life force called *auka* or *aukwa* (among the Pemon) is associated with the sun's (*wei*) radiation: "The entire Universe is flooded by it, even the places that are out of sight. By definition, everything that lives possess it and draws its strength from it." It is through the establishment of direct contact with God that the original prophets managed to provide, bring down, and increase life force. While the prophet is oriented towards the heavenly world, God, and the sun, the shaman is primarily concerned with the masters of plants and animals, the *imawari*, who are anchored in this world, and other entities that cause illness.

The *piaʼsan* – an expression of ambivalent and horizontal shamanism, often condemned by *alleluia* adherents and Seventh-day Adventist preachers (Monticelli, this volume) – has, at least among some Indigenous groups, largely faded from contemporary practice. Nevertheless, this form of shamanism is thought to persist as an underlying current, a "background shamanism," that continues to inform contemporary Christian experiences (Monticelli, this volume, p. 62).

The distinction between the *piaʼsan* and *kanaima*, however, seems to be more fluid and is subject to partial reinterpretation by the authors of this volume. While Cooper, as noted above, states that every *piaʼsan* is a *kanaima*, Lewy makes an insightful differentiation between a shaman-*kanaima* and a non-shaman-*kanaima*. He mentions that not every shaman necessarily acts as a *kanaima* (this volume, p. 99). Lewy's work provides a deeper understanding of the interplay between sound, song genres, and the qualities of *kanaima* in the Pemon culture while also addressing the complexities of conducting research in such a charged environment. He builds on the notion of different timescapes (Halbmayer 2004), as well as the establishment of transactive timescapes (Lewy 2023). Such ritually and musically produced spaces, which are temporally communicative and interactive, enable communication between different entities across various timescapes. The *aiyan* timescape, associated with the interiorities of the plant world, is especially relevant for *kanaima* and there are specific song genres, *amanawui* and *oareba*, as already documented by Koch-Grünberg, to interact with this cosmological layer.[8] The term *aiyan* symbolizes darkness and weakness. It stands in contrast to *auka*, which means light and vitality (Halbmayer 2010, 192f). A shaman-*kanaima* is a recognized shaman (*pia'san*) and possesses the skills and knowledge to engage in *kanaima* practices. He can control his spiritual state and may intentionally separate his soul (*yekaton*) from his body. A non-shaman-*kanaima* may be categorized as a *kanaima* through social attribution, but does not have the shamanic training or abilities due to a lack of control over spiritual practices and body-soul management. A non-shaman-*kanaima* is therefore hardly in control of personal actions (Lewy, this volume).

---

[7] In some accounts of two brothers, one of them is called Makunaima.

A shaman-*kanaima* is considered the *esak* (master or body) of the plants and engages with their spirits intentionally and effectively (Lewy, this volume, page 96; Whitaker et al. 2024). This mastery allows them to utilize the plants for healing and other ritualistic purposes without losing their own identity or control. In contrast, a non-shaman-*kanaima* is often dominated by the plant spirits. The relationship becomes reversed and the plant spirit effectively takes over the *kanaima*'s body and actions. They become the plant's "slaves" (Monticelli, this volume, p. 70) and enter into a relationship of dependency and subjugation in relation to plants masters.

Plants masters are conceived as persons and the plants may chant through the shaman's mouth (Amaral 2024, 213) and *kanaima* is thus a specific human-plant relationship (Lewy, this volume; Whitaker 2016, 325-326). These plant entities (*muran*, *kumi*) serve not only for curing or poisoning, but also act as food charms and as intermediaries to attract animals to be hunted (Monticelli, this volume).[9] Lewy states "Ayuk is the spirit of a plant, which helps the hunters. For this reason, the first prey caught in the forest must be left for him" (this volume, page 90 see also Cooper this volume, p. 113). As Farage (1997) showed, "without game flesh and blood [the plant spirits] will even attack humans" (Lewy, this volume, p. 90; see also Monticelli, this volume). Once the plants are used for hunting people, rather than only game animals, and once they have tasted human blood, these plants will always want to feed on humans (Monticelli, this volume, p. 69 f.; Lewy, this volume, p. 90, see also Amaral 2024, 213). If one uses such *muran* for hunting people and feeds the plants with blood, one becomes or already is a *kanaima* (Cooper, this volume, p. 108) and the anthropophagous plants may, if not fed, even turn against the *kanaima*.

---

[8] Koch-Grünberg reports on the recoding situation in his diary: "In the evening after 8 o'clock, when everyone in the house, especially our numerous children, are quiet, I record women's songs into the phonograph with the active assistance of Neves and Fr Adalberto in my room with two intelligent Makushí women, sister and wife Ildefonso's: 1. k(e)sé̱keyelemú, chanting while rubbing mandiócas, first alone and then with rhythmic rubbing; 2. parīserá, parīžerá; 3. tukúi; 4. oare̱bá; it works excellently, and we immediately reproduce the chants in the veranda in front of a grateful and numerous audience" (5th July 1911, Kraus and Halbmayer 2023, 67-68).

"I am recording 6 songs phonographically with the chief and Pirokaí, including some new ones: one oare̱bá, which is only danced during the day, another one only at night, tukuí, parišerá, muruá and maualí; the chief sings mostly with a strong voice, Pirokaí barely audible. Two songs are immediately reproduced in the large room of my home in front of a very numerous and very appreciative audience; the chief laughs with satisfaction when he hears himself singing. At my request, he brings in the Iarikúna-Pajé; we close all entrances and windows, and in the semi-dark back room the magic takes place; he sings with his powerful, nasal voice. He sings three reels full, three consecutive songs, which he accompanies with a bundle of twigs, clapping loudly; he holds the twigs in his right hand and claps them on the floor in time; in his left hand he holds the cigar and smokes mightily; just like yesterday at the sick cure; I reproduced the songs immediately, of course only 'in front of an invited audience', Pajé, Tuschaua, Pirokaí and myself; they are excellently received, a significant acquisition! The chief shakes with laughter" (20th July 1911, Kraus and Halbmayer 2023, 85f.).

This interesting logic may contribute and add to the vegetal turn in recent Amazonian scholarship. It goes beyond the classical focus on hunting relations with animals but still includes – like the blood sucking cassava plants among the Shuar (Descola 1997) – a predative dimension. It is here that the contributions of this volume assemble profound evidence that shows the specific relations between plants and *kanaima* and the need to feed the plant spirits. In contrast, the relationship between *kanaima* and Makunaima lacks evidence for a significant number of local groups and is ambivalent for others, such as the Makushi.[10]

Horizontal shamanism and Isthmo-Colombian echoes in the Guianas

Monticelli (this volume) and Amaral (2024) draw on the concept of vertical or transversal shamanism (Hugh-Jones 1994; Viveiros de Castro 2014) to interpret *alleluia* preachers and the difference between them and horizontal shamanism.[11] Horizontal shamanism in relation to animal and plant spirits is considered the general 'background shamanism' and represents for Amaral (2024) the original form from which both vertical and what she calls subterranean (*kanaima*) shamanism developed. She argues that the move towards vertical shamanism through Christianization and the emergence of prophets and priests goes hand in hand with a dehumanization of animals,[12] who are no longer considered as the main cause of deaths and the non-animalization of the dead. While horizontal shamanism is:

---

[9] As Monticelli (this volume, p. 70) argues: "The power of *muran* is in the leaf of the vegetable, that of *kumi* in the tuber."

[10] Whitaker was sometimes told of such exchanges by Makushi people in Guyana. He notes that such accounts are shared only by some Makushi and that there are differences in local descriptions about the status of Makunaima (Personal communication with James Andrew Whitaker; see also Whitaker 2021, 3-4, 6).

[11] Viveiros de Castro (2014, 155) argues that horizontal and vertical shamanism has less to do with two types of specialists but involves "two possible trajectories of the same shamanic function: the sacerdotal transformation and the prophetic transformation." I would argue that there may still be different functions (individual/collective), roles (e.g., ecstatic and contemplative) (see Hugh-Jones 1994) and relational schemes (e.g., predation, reciprocity, and hierarchical-symbiosis) to be identified that may distinguish horizontal shamanism from vertical priesthood or prophetism and differentiate the grey zone in between these poles. From such a point of view, it also becomes problematic to subsume *kanaima*, prophet-priests, and shamans under the same label of shamans.

[12] See also Vilaça (2015) and Viveiros de Castro (2014, 155).

> […] more focused on individual demands, and uses tobacco and hallucinogenic substances […] to undertake horizontal fights and negotiate with spirits from the terrestrial realm, while the *pukkenak* is responsible for rites with collective effects, and dreams in order to achieve vertical flights and contact Christian divinities and ancestral spirits (turned into angels) (Amaral 2024, 214-215).

Thus, she argues that a gradual ontological de-humanization of animals and a *post-mortem* spiritual divinization of the dead has taken place. The Ingariko hope for their posthumous and spiritual ascension and physical death is often no longer attributed to predation of animal spirits but to *kanaima*. Thus, what we could call a 'Christian split' between the destiny of the body and the soul occurs in a thanatology attributed to *kanaima* and an eschatology of spiritual *post-mortem* divinization (Amaral 2024).

These transformations come close to a number of ontological axioms prevalent in the Isthmo-Colombian area (Halbmayer 2020b; 2021; Niño Vargas 2020; 2024), which is the region between Amazonia, the Andes, and Mesoamerica. In this region, the human dead do not turn into animals, but much like in north-western Amazonia a "vertical transmission of identities" occurs and "human souls should return to their ancestors' 'houses' and be reborn as the same kind of person" (Fausto 2007, 501). This implies a return of deceased people to their deceased relatives, deified creator figures, or their helpers (Halbmayer 2024). In the Isthmo-Colombian area, classical reciprocal predatory perspectivism is rare and metamorphoses into animals is avoided. However, if it occurs, it is generally irreversible. Animals are not the central theriomorphic others. They are rather sub-human entities and the Amazonian orientation towards them turns into an overall more anthropocentric logic in which relations with deified ancestors and intensified relations with the dead become central.

I have argued that aspects of an 'Isthmo-Colombian package' are present in neighboring regions, such as North-west Amazonia (Halbmayer 2020b), and one can add parts of the Orinoco region and of Guiana. In this latter case, the Warao are probably the most impressive example of Isthmo-Colombian ontological principles (see Wilbert 1993; 1996), which involves a complex anthropocentric worldview that features a relational principle between deified original beings and humans (Wilbert 1993, 87). Niño Vargas and I have called this 'hierarchical symbiosis' (Halbmayer 2020b; 2021; Niño Vargas 2020; Niño Vargas and Beckerman 2024; Martínez Mauri and Halbmayer 2020), which may be reduced to neither predation nor reciprocity. Wilbert (1993, 93) resumes this mutual but hierarchical relation for the Warao in the following words: "The gods need humans to provide them with food, and humans need their gods to protect their lives and their goods." At the same time, among the Warao, we find a functional differentiation between divergent forms of shamanism. This involves more than just morally ambivalent shamans or a differentiation between horizontal shamans and vertical priests. Wilbert distinguishes priest-shamans, light-shamans, and weather-shamans (Wilbert 1996), as well as dark-shamans (Wilbert 1993, 87-88; Wilbert 2004).

As Whitehead takes the term ‘dark shamans’ from Wilbert, his differentiation between *piya*, *kanaima* and *alleluia*, and especially their associations with specific original mythical entities, such as Makunaima in the case of *kanaima* and Piai’ma in case of *piya*, is also developed in direct comparison with the work of Wilbert (see Whitehead 2002, 220-221). Thus, Whitehead (2002, 222) comes to argue that “in the same way that the *hoaratu* (dark shaman in Warao) mediate and balance the predatory forces of the cosmos, so the *kanaimá* ensure the continuing beneficence of the creator of plants and animals.”

Thus, from my perspective, a hierarchical-symbiotic relationship with the gods or deified celestial beings becomes inscribed by Whitehead into Patamona cosmology, which are generally marked more by relations with spiritual owners (e.g. *imawari* located in the landscape and different forms of appropriation and manipulation through supportive spiritual entities) than in providing offerings towards deified celestial beings. Such offerings and exchanges towards deified primordial beings are rare and somewhat marginal among Carib-speaking groups and there is only ambigious evidence that original beings like Makunaima are being nourished by humans through offerings or the killing of humans (as in Mesoamerica) to provide protection or to guarantee the order of the world. Whitehead himself does not provide evidence for his claim that *kanaima* ritual practice is based on an exchange “of the mutilated human victims of kanaimà assault for the beneficence of Makunaima” (Vidal and Whitehead 2004, 61).

Nevertheless, within a context in which different relational logics involving spiritual beings were and are present, it seems relevant to note that, besides the case of the Warao, among the Yekuana there is evidence that shamanic metamorphoses into animals is not the original state of being but rather a form of shamanism that emerged together with *kanaima*. This raises questions regarding which original forms of shamanism (or even priesthood) were present in the region and gives room to the possibility that current forms of shamanism and priesthood were not necessarily derived from the classical Amazonian predatory and metamorphic model but may have been influenced by other logics existing in the region.

Yekuana sky travel and the origin of metamorphic shamanism

The Yekuana, an Indigenous group in the neighborhood of the circum-Roraima, is explicit about the origins of *kanaima*, which supports Whitehead’s and Whitaker’s (this volume) arguments concerning the formation of *kanaima* in the context of colonization (see also Amaral 2024, 208). The Yekuana creation cycle Watunna (Civireux 1980; Guss 1981; Barandiarán 1962) describes how steel goods and weapons entered the region and *kanaima* spread as a result. It also mentions how shamanism, as well as *waitie* leadership became transformed in this process. Barandiarán notes how the main Yekuana shamans Mehuudiwaitye, Mahaanawaitye and Tonoorowaitye became perverted:

> They began to invest, against their own, the shamanic powers they held. But they did not yet have the power to metamorphose into harmful animals. The Yekuana shaman who inaugurated the theriomorphic metamorphosis was called KUDAAYAWA. He transformed himself into jaguar, vampire, snake, Kanaima, etc., and his only objective was to destroy the lives of his own race brothers (Barandiarán 1962, 71).

In this process, life-destroying shamans, theriometamorphosed shamans, and *kanaima* originated. In Watunna, we read the following:

> Now those Kanaima started running all over like wild animals, eating people the way Matiuhana [Kariña] do. The trails were all covered with human bones. Now the Kanaima ran through the Emekuni, the Kanarakuni, the Erewato, the Antawari.[13] The *so'to*[14] didn't have a *huhai*[15] now. They didn't have any Waitie to defend them (Civrieux 1980, 172, parenthesis added).

And it was only with the support of non-transformed yet still powerfull Kalina and Maku shamans that the Yekuana got rid of *kanaima* (Civrieux 1980, 172). According to Barandiarán (1962, 71):

> Previously, the Yekuana shamans, when confronted with any adverse force, did not need any change or transformation. Their own strength and celestial attributes were enough to annihilate the adversaries of life. The change into an animal among the Yekuana shamans is therefore a perversion and the purpose of it is always perverse and destructive of life.

The vertical celestial journeys through different sky-houses[16] are a fundamental element of Yekuana shamanism that was introduced by Medatia, who was the first human shaman after Wanadi (Barandiarán 1962; 1979: 135-136; Civrieux 1985; Halbmayer 2010, 119-120). As David Guss (1987, 56) explains, the Yekuana culture hero Wanadi is an absent God. He is "absent from any physical involvement in the affairs of humans, he is present in the structures he bequeathed them before his departure." Thus, we have vertical sky journeys and vertical shamanism without a continuous relationship of hierarchical symbiosis with Wanadi.

Barandiarán also describes what he calls 'authentic shamanism' as disappearing. The authentic shamans he knew are characterized as:

> [...] venerable elders, of great moral and spiritual prestige, very solitary, concentrative and with a kind of alienation from the concrete, real daily life, and also with a kind of possession or perhaps self-possession of distinctly yogic traits (Barandiarán 1962, 71).

---

[13] For these locations, see the "Mythological Map of the Makiritare" in the appendix of Civrieux (1980).

[14] This is the self-designation of the Yekuana, and means 'human being.'

[15] Shaman. The first *huhai*, Medatia established the line of *huhai* which served as the Yekuana's first chiefs. The *waitie* are the first line of great chiefs after the *huhai* and brought steel tools and guns to the Yekuana.

[16] Till Wanadi's uppermost house. "God, culture hero, and proto-shaman all in one, Wanadi is the unknowable, unseen force ('light') in Heaven, who since his farewell to the Earth has taken no part in the affairs of humans. Created by Shi, the sun, it was Wanadi (through his *damodedes*) who established order as it is known today amongst the *so'to*" (Civrieux 1980, 192-193).

This sounds at least partially priest-like and hardly ecstatic. He goes on in describing one of these shamans with the following words:

> He limits himself only to the extraordinary knowledge he has of all medicinal plants. 'I see,' he told us, 'inside the plants: what they are and how they are. And they tell me what they are for.' On the other hand, his moral prestige is so great that the Yekuana of the upper Caura and Erebato resort to him to settle many of their family disputes or mutual accusations of misappropriation of vital energy (Barandiarán 1962, 71).

Authentic and non-metamorphic, as well as non-ecstatic, shamanism is here associated with plant shamanism but also with sky travels. Metamorphic shamanism, rather than being the historically earlier and original form, seems to have developed at least among the Yekuana under colonial conditions as a form of distorted shamanism together with *kanaima* practices. The question is if sky travels and vertical shamanism were practiced among circum-Roraima Indigenous groups before the emergence of *alleluia* prophets.[17] All in all, Brabec seems correct when arguing "that in much broader terms than had been imagined, indigenous magical powers, both of healing and witchcraft, have emerged or at least have been formed, during the colonial era" (this volume, p. 49). This seems to be the case in the emergence of "perverted" (Barandiarán 1962, 70f.) metamorphic shamanism among the Yekuana, as well as in Acawaipu's (see below) early and already Christianized versions of the great spirit Makunaima.

Colonialism, *kanaima*, and the role of Makunaima

Whitaker's chapter on the relationship between *kanaima*, colonial pressures, and the dynamics of raiding, trading, and slaving among the Makushi largely confirms the findings of Neil Whitehead on this topic.[18] Whitaker suggests that *kanaima* practices may have existed prior to colonial influences and that the specific ways in which they were utilized and understood were shaped by the changing dynamics of warfare and social relations during and after the colonial period. Thus, in his chapter, *kanaima* might not have emerged with the introduction of guns and steel tools, as for example Yekuana myth argues (Halbmayer 2010, 86f), but rather was transformed due to these influences.

Both Whitaker and Cooper refer to Whitehead's suggestion that *kanaima* practice involves the transfer of human substances to Makunaima. Whitaker is cautious when stating:

> *Kanaima* [...] prepare victims' bodies for postmortem extraction and selective consumption in order to transfer human essences to a mythic being named Makunaima (associated with creation) in exchange for continued patronage and provision [...]. Whitehead identifies this exchange as the ritual goal of *kanaima*; however, the exact benefits of this exchange for individual *kanaima* sorcerers remain somewhat unclear both in Whitehead's account and in the accounts of my Makushi interlocutors (this volume, p. 29-30).

---

[17] Amaral (2024) argues against such a possibility and associates vertical shamanism with the emergence of *alleluia* prophets and Christianity.

[18] Already commented by three scholars in this volume, I will only address the aspects most important for my argument here.

He suggests that Makunaima is **probably** associated with dark shamanism (Whitaker, this volume, page 58, my emphasis) and indicates that there is ambiguity in the statements of Makushi interlocutors concerning Whitehead's claim.

In his interpretation of Appun's report on Awacaipu (Appun 1871, 257-258), Whitaker builds on Whitehead's cosmological argument. Awacaipu, who led an early messianic movement into suicide and mass killing is interpreted as a *kanaima* who:

> [...] managed to extract human essence for Makunaima on a mass scale. As already noted, the goal of *kanaima* sorcery is the transfer of human essence to Makunaima. [...] it appears [...] that the *kanaima* was able to realize this massive transfer by manipulating the warriors present into using their clubs against each other (Whitaker, this volume, p. 41).

According to Appun, Awacaipu referred to the 'great spirit, Makunaima' as the origin of his messages and predictions. In my reading, this is already a Christianized and deified version of Makunaima in which the Christian belief of resurrection and *post-mortem* equality is emphasized rather than a mass scale extraction of human essence for Makunaima.[19] Thus, the influence of Christianity has changed the understanding of Makunaima, and the effort of interpreting such historical sources remains, at least in part, necessarily speculative as Brabec (this volume) argues.

One of the historical sources to sustain a connection between Makunaima and *kanaima* is Hancock (1835).[20] Interestingly, Hancock (1835, 44) explains that the name of the great spirit, or God, is Makunaima and he translates this as ruler or master of *kanaima*, but he adds "the Caribees, Arowaks and Indians in general, acknowledge indeed a Supreme Being, but say he never troubles himself with the affairs of men." That corresponds to ideas in the literature about an 'absent God' in the region (Guss 1987). In regard to Makunaima, the Pemon argue that he "is no longer present, but has retired to England (i.e., Guyana)" (Lewy, this volume, p. 55), and Butt Colson (1956, 53) argued already in the 1950's that the Akawaio have for the most part no knowledge about Makunaima. Recently, Amaral (2024, 140) argued "that there are no indications in the discourse of the Ingariko or the literature that either shamanism or the collective rites of the past set out to contact the celestial spirits, the astral bodies or the dead to ask them for akuwa (light) or anything else."

Thus, the original argument by Whitehead that *kanaima* provide mutilated human victims for the beneficence of Makunaima is hard to sustain. In the light of new evidence, it largely gives way to a relationship between anthropophagic plant masters and the subordinated position of *kanaima* and his need to consume the putrefied *maba* juices of his victims to cool down and "to return to his own humanity" (Whitehead 2022, 96). This may be related to a second dimension in Whitehead's argument linked to the relations between the *kanaima* killer and their *kanaima'san*. He writes that:

---

[19] Whitaker (personal communication) agrees that the Awacaipu movement went well beyond traditional forms of sorcery/shamanism and that it shows much evidence of Christian influence. See also Whitaker 2021.

[20] Another important historical source is Hilhouse (1825; see Whitehead 2002, 54f) who first mentioned *kanaima* in the context of rapid nightly assaults (p. 23). However there is no first definition of *kanaima* on page 17 of Hilhouse's text as Whitehead makes us believe. This definition appears only in the glossary (p. 137) added to the second edition of 1978 by the editor Menezes.

> The maba is also pictured as the gift of the killers to their kanaimà'san (kanaimà adept). They make an offering of their prey to the shaman who leads them and directs their attacks. In this exchange, the kanaimà'san sorcerer becomes identified with the ferocity of Kaikuci'ima (Lord Jaguar), who will only be assuaged by tasting this "honey of the dead" (Whitehead 2002, 97).

In his chapter, Daniel G. Cooper builds on several ecological-geographical approaches (decolonizing, historical, spiritual, and political) to understand the interconnectedness of violence, territory, and ecological relationships in the circum-Mount Roraima landscape. Cooper posits that the landscape is not merely a backdrop for human activity but that it is deeply intertwined with the cultural, spiritual, and historical narratives (*pantoni*) of the Ka'pon and Pemon groups. He takes these narratives as a central point of his analysis and argues that violence in this region is not just a social phenomenon but is also deeply rooted in the ecological and spiritual dimensions of the landscape. Cooper shows that there is an ecology of violence inscribed into the landscape through indications and memories of ancient Carib slaving raids, wars, and cannibalism. He suggests that a review of the exhaustive literature "could provide further evidence – probably in the form of a place-rooted *panton* – of the connection between the Makunaima and the *e'toto* (*kanaima*)" (Cooper, this volume, p. 51-52).

In his commentary on Whitaker's chapter, he points out the differences in the Makunaima stories of "two (sometimes five) brothers" with different names in different groups living in "*pia'atai*, a 'time of origin' when all people, animals and spirits spoke the same language" and he writes that "Pia is the first *pia'san* [shaman]" (Cooper, this volume, p. 51). However, Whitehead associates not only *kanaima* with the 'spirit sponsor' Makunaima, but also *piya* with *pia'ima*, arguing that:

> [...] from this fundamental dualism of shamanic practice and the playing out of the contexts and rivalries between Makunaima and Piai'ma arises the mythopoetic model that describes the purposes of kanaimà and its unceasing shamanic warfare with the piya, or devotees of Piai'ma (Whitehead 2002, 99).

My understanding is that Makunaima and Pia may be role models, but for many groups in the region *kanaima* and *piya* (*pia'san*) are not devotees of Makunaima or Piai'ma in the sense of a hierarchical symbiosis that would spiritually nourish these mythical beings. I once reviewed the connection between *pia* and *piai'ma* in the accessible narrations (Halbmayer 2010, 167f). Pia is itself differently translated, and assumes the meaning of 'knowledge'[21] among the Pemon and of 'origin' among the Akawaio and Makushi (Butt Colson 1989, 62; Daly 2015). It is neither fully identical with related terms such as *pia daktai* "beginning and end of the world," which is a specific timescape (Lewy 2023, 175), or *piai'san* (the shaman). Maybe most importantly, Piai'ma is not the brother of Makunaima in the myths of many groups in the region, as Whitehead's account suggests.[22] Piai'ma is generally an independent figure (or class of beings), which is consistent with Koch-Grünberg's (1916) collection of myths and further emphasized by the many Piai'ma tales published by Armellada (1964, 159-160, 179-180, 190-191, 248-249, 251-252, 266-267; 1973, 15-16, 40-41, 48-49, 91-92, 102-103). In no instance did I find myths in which Piai'ma appears as Makunaima's brother; instead, Piai'ma is a being (often a giant monster) who kills Makunaima and is then killed in turn. It is Makunaima's brother (sometimes, but not always, called Pia) who revives him.

---

[21] Personal communication with Matthias Lewy.

Piai'ma appears in narratives and myths among the Pemon and the Makushi (here sometimes called the Bush Dai Dai, Whitaker, personal communication) as a class of giant beings associated with highlands and forests, as opposed to the rato (water beings) among the Pemon and the *imawari* (which is a general term for spirits, often associated with forests and tepuis). The perspective of the Piai'ma on the world is different from that of humans. Their world appears as an inverted world in the sense of perspectivism: rats and mice are the deer of the Piai'ma, mushrooms are their bread or *casabe* (i.e., cassava), etc. This is also reflected linguistically in 'incorrect' cover designations (Armellada 1964a, 193, 250), which are important in the magical spells or *tarén*. Thus, Whitehead's association of *piya* (shaman) and *kanaima* with the mythical brothers (one of which he questionably calls Piai'ma) raises doubts and is at least debatable.

After referring to the indications for a relationship between *kanaima* and Makunaima, Cooper mentions Butt Colson who:

> [...] doesn't make a connection between this figure and Makunaima or the shamanic arts, but rather [...] argues that Itoto is merely a category of accusation and expression of anti-structure [...] it is believed among the Akawaio that hoarding will attract an Itoto attack or an accusation of being an Itoto; therefore, it functions as a magical, invisible, and symbolic way to limit violence and hoarding (Cooper this volume, p. 116).

In relation to this, Cooper argues that recent field work among the Akawaio confirms *kanaima* as a category of accusation.

Vengeance, accusation, and the emergence of new meanings of *kanaima*

Finally, contributions to this volume demonstrate the expansion of *kanaima* into new fields, thereby developing new forms in reaction to the influx of Venezuelan refugees into Brazilian Taurepang communities (Monticelli, this volume), and new articulations in local art contexts in Paramakatoi, which is the Patamona village in which Whitehead also worked (Janik, this volume). The main argument of Monticelli's chapter revolves around the interplay between Taurepáng cosmology, religious practices, and the socio-political dynamics within their communities, particularly within the context of the Venezuelan crisis. In contrast to the Makushi, where *kanaima* seems to be decreasing (Whitaker, this volume), cases of *kanaima* have multiplied among the Taurepang (Monticelli, this volume, p. 62) with the worsening of the crisis. It highlights how the *ekamanin*, who are Indigenous Seventh-day Adventist preachers, utilize a blend of languages and cultural references to convey messages of unity and collective well-being while also addressing the tensions arising from the *kanaima* phenomenon, which is associated with revenge and social conflict. This chapter emphasizes the transformative power of preaching and the role of religious leaders in providing meaning and hope amidst crisis.

---

[22] Whitaker confirms this also for the Makushi (personal communication).

The Venezuelan crisis and refugees have significantly impacted the *kanaima* phenomenon among the Taurepáng communities. The ongoing desperation and internal tensions transformed *kanaima* into a more mercenary practice. With the deepening crisis, some individuals turned to *kanaima* as a means of survival, with some acting as hired killers motivated by the promise of rewards such as food or money. This shift reflects a broader trend in which a scarcity of resources and a breakdown of social structures have exacerbated feelings of anger and revenge within the community. This has led to a rise in interpersonal accusations of *kanaima*. As among the Qom and Guarani, examined by Sarra and Tola, the feeling of envy between neighbors is the leitmotif for the emergence of *kanaima* in the community. This leads to an increase in revenge cycles and makes a network of killers visible (Monticelli, this volume, p. 72 f.). Preachers (*ekamanin*), on the other hand, promote social cohesion by emphasizing care, solidarity, and mutual support among community members.

Thus, while Whitehead (2002, 41-87) criticized the historically dominant legalistic interpretation of *kanaima* (which was based on a logic of revenge) as he developed his focus on ritual and cultural performance, the contributions of this volume show that vengeance (Monticelli, Janik, and Whitaker, this volume) and accusations nevertheless play a vital role (Lewy and Cooper, this volume; see also Amaral 2024, 205-206, 208-209). As Cooper (this volume, p. 110) states, “Accusations of *e'toto* are therefore often a function of ethnicity, dialect, or geography.”

Janik (this volume) explores the poetics of *kanaima* both as a complex and as a more multivalent symbol of meaning than Whitehead’s understanding of *kanaima* as a cultural expression of hyper-traditionality affords. Janik posits that *kanaima* is not just a static representation of tradition but rather a “multivalent cultural repertoire of violence” that is dynamic and deeply embedded in the contemporary lives of the Patamona. He shows how *kanaima* serves as a symbol of meaning-making that is actively engaged with in various forms, including art, narrative, and performance. This reflects the ongoing relevance of *kanaima* in addressing contemporary issues, fears, and social dynamics within the community in Paramakatoi. These contemporary engagements with traditional beliefs about *kanaima* show how these cultural elements are reinterpreted and integrated into current social contexts. By framing *kanaima* in this way, Janik highlights its adaptability and the ways in which it continues to evolve, rather than being confined to a rigid interpretation of tradition. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the Patamona navigate their cultural heritage within a modern context. It suggests that *kanaima*, as a living practice, interacts with both historical and contemporary realities.

During his short fieldwork, Janik engaged in various participatory activities, including a collaboration with local artists in an art program called "Luring the Jaguar," to explore themes related to the jaguar and *kanaima*. Additionally, he conducted informal discussions and a survey with young men in the community regarding their interest in training in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, which they associated with self-defense against *kanaima*. Janik's participatory activities go beyond Whitehead's more observational approach. He shows that artistic depictions and performances of *kanaima* violence in Paramakatoi create a space in which the contemplation of its violence can take place. Training in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu generates a space in which communities can come together through the shared somatic experience of pain, revealing thereby a psychosomatic bond in combating *kanaima*, that may foster community solidarity in the face of fear and violence.

The politics of life force and fermentation

On a more general level, Fiona Bowie (2006, 200-202) identified two key concepts that she claims are fundamental to witchcraft across different cultures and throughout history. The first is a belief in a life force, essence, or energy that resides in people and possibly in animals, objects, and the natural world. Such a life force can be harmed or manipulated by others. Specialists like diviners are called upon to ward off attacks or identify the perpetrator. The second concept is the idea of 'limited good.' In cultures where resources like fortune, health, and happiness are seen as finite, those who suddenly acquire an abundance of these may be suspected of doing so at someone else's expense. As a result, people in such cultures may downplay their successes to blend in with the community.

The second dimension is variously referred to in this volume in terms of inequality, power, hierarchy, equity, hoarding etc. (Frisancho and Delgado, p. 156; Fotiou; Sarra and Tola; Cooper, p. 116; Janik, all this volume). The topic seems to be generally mentioned in cases both within and outside of the circum-Roraima area. In cases of *kanaima*, it is often related to the colonial situation, in relation to its hierarchies, as well as in the non-fulfillment of trade obligations and exchange (Whitaker, this volume) or non-reciprocity in case of hoarding (Cooper, this volume). However, the authors in this volume stress these dimensions of power, hierarchy, and non-reciprocity without referring to the notion of "limited good" with its market-focused economic connotation.

The belief in a life force is prevalent, in terms of *akwa* and *aiyan* and in terms of violent appropriations of life-force, as mentioned in the idiom of nourishment and the ritual processes in *alleluia* of providing life-force. A specific case is the *kanaima* sucking the putrefied juices of his victims, which are reportedly produced by packets of herbs rammed into the victim's rectum, which:

> [...] is said to begin a process of auto-digestion, creating the special aroma of Kanaima enchantment, rotting pineapple (*akaikalak*). [...] If the grave site is discovered, a stick is inserted through the ground directly into the cadaver, then the stick is retracted and the *maba* (honey-like) juices sucked off [...] in the same way as when eating honey from a hive (Whitehead 2002, 15).

As Monticelli (this volume, p. 71) notes, this juice of putrefaction is also called "'dead man's caxiri', that is, the 'dead man's beer.'" It's consumption cools down the excessive heat of the *kanaima*'s body "which leads him to the brink of madness" (Amaral 2024, 212). Some Makushi people refer to *kanaima*s consuming blood instead of *maba* (Whitaker, personal communication). This practice also provides a cooling and thus re-transformation of the *kanaima*. The Pemon may either consume the flesh of the victim's left thigh or intone a *amanawui* and *warepan* song to address the plant spirit (Lewy, this volume, p. 95; 2018) but do not mention *maba*.

However, an underlying notion of fermentation or putrefaction, which denotes bodily and even cosmological transformation and formation, may be of greater relevance than noticed so far. It connects bodily processes, the making of beer, and the formation of the world and life with notions of decay. The sucking by *kanaima* of putrefied juices is a specific expression of it, but fermentation/putrefaction may also have – and generally has – an inverted and more collective and life-producing dimension. Reading through accounts and descriptions of *kanaima* practices again, I became struck by some structural similarities and inversions in my own ethnographic material from the Carib-speaking Yukpa related to the ritual empowerment of the new born to turn them into fearless warriors (Halbmayer 2020a). Thereby, the bodily transformation is expressed in terms of a transformation of ground maize produced for making maize beer. This is based on a structural analogy of the bodies' flesh and the mass of maize *tami*. These activities enact the etymologically related terms *mi* (red maize *mi cariaco*), *tami* (the mass of ground maiz), *tamipi* (a corporal vulnerable state of transformation, which implies several taboos and goes hand in hand with pregnancy and birth, menstruation, the death of close kin, or the killing of enemies and snakes), *owaya tamoriya* (the world in formation or transcreation, at the beginning of time), and *tamuya* (fermented dried maize buns with a reddish mold that is used for making strong beer on special ritual occasions).

The physical-spiritual transformation is expressed in vegetal terms related to flowering or blossoming (*yipiso*). And the feast is called *katcha pisoso*, meaning 'the child's blossoming,' among the Irapa Yukpa. Thus, fermentation among the Yukpa is a flowering process and people are conceived in vegetal terms. Once cooked, the *tamuya* are placed in a specially made basket lined with leaves hung next to the kitchen fire so that the *tamuya* is smoked for about eight to ten days. The maize buns, which start to ferment, turn hot due to the fermentation process,[23] develop a green mold that turns reddish yellow. In becoming dried, smoked, and moldy, they resemble the flesh of the dead between the first and second burial, when their bodies were dried on a platform close to several fires (Halbmayer 2013).

---

[23] A similar process has been described in detail for the preparation of *parakari* manioc beer from fermented manioc bread among the Carib-speaking Makushi (Daly 2015, 196-197; Daly 2019; Henkel 2005), which supposedly "is unique among New World beverages because it involves the use of an amylolytic mold (Rhizopus sp., Mucoraceae, Zygomycota)" (Henkel 2005, 1; see also Daly 2015, 199). Even though I have no information on the specific type of fungus that is cultivated, it is obvious that the Yukpa apply a quite similar procedure for processing cooked *tamuya* maize balls. Also, in the meantime, the comparative literature review on the topic by Barghini (2020; 2022) is accessible.

The Yukpa say that the maize balls are blossoming (*yipiso*). By blowing tobacco smoke into the basket with a deeply inserted stick, the fermentation process is supported along with the production of heat. The blossoming of the maize balls and the heat created in the process are expressions of a transformative process that creates new forms of vitality (see also Halbmayer 2020a, 13). During the preparation of *tamuya*, neither pregnant women nor girls experiencing their first menstruation are allowed to be present and/or to look at the buns. This would have a negative effect on the molding process and the cornballs would "awake cold" (*amancer frio*), as the Yukpa say. Thus, persons in a vulnerable or transforming state (*tamipi*) are not allowed to join.

Within this context, life-force is not sucked out and appropriated to calm the heat of a vulnerable and transforming *kanaima*. Instead, it is produced and nourished by infusions of tobacco smoke blown into the basket to produce heat and new forms of vitality. Among the Yukpa, the resulting maize balls and beer are not individually incorporated. Rather, they serve as the first solid food for the newborn (who is also the first one to eat) and are collectively consumed together with wasp larvae, which are collected in a painful procedure. During the following dances, different forms of violence are enacted. Enemies are symbolically killed and a general state of internal fighting, which is conducted in a state of heightened drunkenness, occurs until someone is injured. A broader comparative understanding of such practices, as well as the cosmologics of fermentation and their relation with violence, enemies, and the manipulation of life-force, could be a promising topic for further research. This includes more distant comparative cases mentioned by Brabec (this volume).

Concluding Comments

Whitehead's Dark Shamans continues to be an important contribution to the analysis of *kanaima* for a generation of younger scholars with new perspectives and long term ethnographic experiences in the region. His historical analysis of *kanaima* within the context of colonialism, changing patterns of war, and the introduction of steel good and fire arms is largely confirmed by more recent scholarship. His critiques of the legalistic and socially embedded view, necessary to develop his own position on the ritual and cultural poetics and cosmological exchanges of violent death, has rejected or at least downplayed interpretations that focus on revenge, sorcery accusations, and the embeddedness of sorcery in social structure. The contributions in this volume, however, show that these dimensions retain their significance, as I have attempted to demonstrate.

His tripartite tabular distinction of Patamona shamanism continues to have heuristic value and has been a subject of debate among regional specialists. On the one hand, the continuities between these categories have been stressed. On the other hand, new differentiations between, for example, shaman-*kanaima* and non-shaman *kanaima* have been established that question whether shamanism is a meaningful overarching category for non-shaman *kanaima* and prophets. The continuity between shamans and *kanaima* lies in the metamorphoses and their relations with plant spirits. While Whitehead already stressed the relation with plant shamanism, new research demonstrates an inverse relation in terms of mastery of the plant spirits and the subjugation and domination of *kanaima* by them. The continuity between shamans and prophets/preachers centers on soul travel. There may be a difference between horizontal shamanic and vertical prophetic sky travels inspired by the adoption of Christian logics, but as I have shown, vertical soul travels may also be found and even constitute the traditional form among the neighboring Yekuana. If and in how far there were vertical forms of shamanism among the circum-Roraima groups is a point of debate. Finally, Whitehead's cosmological connection of *kanaima* and *piya* to Makunaima and Piai'ma seems to be one of the weakest points of his theory, particularly when viewed across the region, and seems to be related to him imposing logics prevalent among the Warao and the Isthmo-Colombian area, which imply a continuing hierarchical symbiotic exchange between humans and deified beings, on the Patamona and other groups of the circum-Roraima area. Although such original beings are widely described as responsible for forming and transforming the world and its entities, they seldom seem to interfere with humans since the original time of formation came to an end. For a future understanding of the Guiana region, it seems important to recognize both differences between Indigenous groups and the existence of distinct socio-cosmological and ontological logics in the region and their potential influences. I doubt that the classical Amazonian model may serve as an undisputed blueprint for the future development of theory and analyses of historical transformations in an area where the existence of different logics is ethnographically confirmed.

References cited

Amaral, Virgínia

2024 *Areruya and Indigenous prophetism in northern Amazonia*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Appadurai, Arjun

1996 *Modernity at large. Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appun, Carl Ferdinand

1871 *Unter den Tropen. Wanderungen durch Venezuela, am Orinoco durch Britisch Guyana und am Amazonenstrome in den Jahren 1849-1868*. Jena: Hermann Gostenoble. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11008373 (29.11.2024)

Armellada, Fray Cesáreo de

1964 *Tauron panton. Cuentos y leyendas de los Indios Pemon*. Caracas: Ministerio de Educacion.

1973 *Tauron panton* II (*Así dice el cuento*). Caracas: Universidad Catolica Andres Bello.

Barandiarán, Daniel de

1962 "Shamanismo yekuana o makiritare." *Antropológica* 11: 61-90.

1979 *Introducción a la cosmovision de los indios ye'kuana-makiritare*. Caracas: Universidad Catolica Andres Bello.

Barghini, Alessandro

2020 “Ethnohistoric review of amylolytic fermentation in Amazonia.” *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Ciências Humanas* 15, no. 2, e20190073. https://doi.org/10.1590/2178-2547-bgoeldi-2019-0073

2022 “New data on amylolytic fermentation in the Amazon.” *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Ciências Humanas* 17, no. 3, e20200116. https://doi.org/10.1590/2178-2547-bgoeldi-2020-0116

Bowie, Fiona

2006 *The anthropology of religion*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Brabec, Bernd

2023 “The shaman’s drum: eurocentric interpretations of non-European sonic worlds.” *VIRUS. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Medizin* 21: 215-224.

Butt, Audrey

1954 “Systems of belief in relation to social structure and organisation.” Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford.

Butt Colson, Audrey

1989 “La naturaleza del ser. Conceptos fundamentales de los kapón y pemón.” In *Las religiones amerindias: 500 años después*, edited by Juan Botasso, 53-90. Quito: Abya-Yala.

2001 “Itoto (Kanaima) as death and anti-structure.” In *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura M. Rival and Neil L. Whitehead, 221-235. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Civrieux, Marc de

1980 *Watunna. An Orinoco creation cycle*, edited and translated by David M. Guss. San Francisco: North Point Press.

1985 “Medatia. A Makiritare shaman’s tale.” In *The language of the birds: tales, texts, and poems of interspecies communication*, edited by David M. Guss, 55-75. San Francisco: North Point Press.

Daly, Lewis

2015 “The symbiosis of people and plants: Ecological engagements among the Makushi Amerindians of Amazonian Guyana.” Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford.

2019 “The nature of sweetness: An Indigenous fermentation complex in Amazonian Guyana.” In *Alcohol and humans: A long and social affair*, edited by Kimberly Hockings and Robin Dumbar, 130-146. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evans-Pritchard, Edward E.

1937 *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Farage, Nádia

1997 “As Flores da fala: práticas retóricas entre os Wapishana.” Ph.D. thesis, Universidade de São Paulo. http://biblioteca.funai.gov.br/media/pdf/teses/mfn-1075.pdf (20.10.2024)

Fausto, Carlos

2007 “Feasting on people: Eating animals and humans in Amazonia.” *Current Anthropology* 48, 4: 497-530.

Ferguson, Brian and Neil Whitehead, eds.

1992 *War in the tribal zone*. Santa Fe: School of American Research.

Gillin, John

1936 *The Barama-River-Caribs of British Guiana*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology, Havard University, 1, no. 2. Cambridge: The Cosmos Press.

Guss, David M.

1981 "Historical incorporation among the Makiritare: From legend to myth." *Journal of Latin American Lore* 7, no. 1: 23-35.

1987 "In the absence of gods: The Yekuana road to the sacred." *Antropológica* 68: 49-58.

Halbmayer, Ernst

2004 "Timescapes and the meaning of landscape: Examples from the Yukpa." In: *Kultur, Raum, Landschaft: Die Bedeutung des Raumes in Zeiten der Globalität*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer and Elke Mader, 136-154. Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel.

2010 *Kosmos und Kommunikation. Weltkonzeptionen in der südamerikanischen Sprachfamilie der Cariben*. Wien: Facultas.

2013 "Securing a life for the dead among the Yukpa: the exhumation ritual as a temporary synchronisation of worlds." *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 99, no. 1, 105-140.

2020a "Dancing newborns, subduing enemies, becoming warriors: The children's dance as source of vitality, strength and resistance among the Yukpa." *Tabula Rasa* 36, 293-320.

2020b "Introduction: Toward an anthropological understanding of the area between the Andes, Mesoamerica, and the Amazon." In *Amerindian socio-cosmologies between the Andes, Amazonia and Mesoamerica: Toward an anthropological understanding of the Isthmo-Colombian area*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer, 3-33. London/New York: Routledge.

2021 "Some reflections on principles of Isthmo-Colombian Amerindian ontologies." *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 41: 9-28.

2024 "Morir y el juicio moral de la vida: cosmología, apoyo y obstáculos en el viaje hacia una nueva existencia entre los chibchas." In *Universos chibchas. Nuevas aproximaciones a la unidad y la diversidad humana del área istmocolombiana*, edited by Juan Camilo Niño Vargas and Stephen Beckerman, 165-198. Bogotá: Uniandes.

Hancock, John

1835 *Observations on the climate, soil, and productions of British Guiana*. London: Richard Taylor.

Harner, Michael

2011 *The way of the shaman*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

2013 *Cave and cosmos. Shamanic encounters with another reality*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Henkel, Terry W.

2005 "Parakari, an indigenous fermented beverage using amylolytic rhizopus in Guyana." *Mycologia* 97, no. 1: 1-11.

Hilhouse, William

1825. *Indian notices*. Printed for the author. (https://archive.org/details/indiannoticesor00hilhgoog/page/n4/mode/2up)

Hugh-Jones, Stephen

1994 "Shamans, prophets, priests and pastors." In *Shamanism, history, and the state*, edited by Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, 32-75. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Im Thurn, Everard F.

1883 *Among the Indians of Guiana*. New York: Dover Publications.

Koch-Grünberg, Theodor

1916 *Vom Roroima zum Orinoko*, vol. 2: *Mythen und Legenden der Taulipang und Arekuna-Indianer*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

1923 V*om Roroima zum Orinoko. Ergebnisse einer Reise in Nordbrasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. 3: *Ethnographie*. Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder.

Kraus, Michael and Ernst Halbmayer, eds.

2023 *Theodor Koch-Grünberg: Die Roraima-Orinoco-Expedition. Ein Forschungstagebuch (1911-1913)*. Wien/Köln: Böhlau.

Kroesbergen-Kamps, Johanneke

2020 "Witchcraft after modernity: Old and new directions in the study of witchcraft in Africa." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, no. 3: 860-873.

Lewy, Matthias

2018 "Los cantos de Kanaima." *ILHA* 20, no. 1: 89-115. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8034.2018 v20n1p89

2023 "How to transform the world(s): Generating transactive timescapes through myths, songs, and magic formulas in the Guianas." In *Creation and creativity in Indigenous Lowland South America: Anthropological perspectives*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer and Anne Goletz, 173-197. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.

Martínez Mauri, Mònica and Ernst Halbmayer

2020 "Ofrendas, intercambios y otros modos de relación en las socio-cosmologías indígenas contemporáneas del área istmo-colombiana." Tabula Rasa 36: 19–44.

Noel Menezes, Mary, ed.

1978 *Indian notices by William Hilhouse*. 2nd edition, with introduction and supplementary notes. Georgetown, Guyana: National Commission for Research Materials on Guyana.

Niño Vargas, Juan Camilo

2020 "An Amerindian humanism: Order and transformation in Chibchan universes." In *Amerindian socio-cosmologies between the Andes, Amazonia and Mesoamerica: Toward an anthropological understanding of the Isthmo-Colombian Area*, edited by Ernst Halbmayer, 37-60. London/New York: Routledge.

Niño Vargas, Juan Camilo and Stephen Beckerman, eds.

2024 "Universo chibcha, universos chibchas: introducción a la unidad y la diversidad del área istmocolombiana." In *Universos chibchas. Nuevas aproximaciones a la unidad y la diversidad humana del área istmocolombiana*, edited by Juan Camilo Niño Vargas and Stephen Beckerman, 1-59. Bogotá: Uniandes.

Rival, Laura M. and Neil L. Whitehead, eds.

2001 *Beyond the visible and the material*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Roth, Walter Edmund

1915 "An inquiry into the animism and folklore of the Guiana Indians." In *Thirtieth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1908-1909, 103-386. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of American Ethnology/Government Print Office. https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/91737 (15.05.2024).

Santos-Granero, Fernando

2002 "St. Christopher in the Amazon: Child sorcery, colonialism, and violence among the Peruvian Arawak." *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 3: 507-543.

2004 “The enemy within: Child sorcery, revolution, and the evils of modernisation in eastern Peru.” In *Darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 272-305. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Schomburgk, Richard

1847 *Reisen in British-Guiana in den Jahren 1840-1844*. Leipzig: Verlagsbuchhandlung von J.J.Weber.

Thomas, David John

1982 *Order without government. The society of the Pemon Indians of Venezuela*. Illinois Studies in Anthropology. Urbana/Chicago/London: University of Illinois Press.

Vidal, Silvia and Neil L. Whitehead

2004 “Dark shamanism and the shamanic state: Sorcery and witchcraft as political process in Guyana and the Venezuelan Amazon.” In *Darkness and secrecy: The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 51-81. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Vilaça, Aparecida

2015 “Do animists become naturalists when converting to Christianity?” *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 33: 3-19.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo B.

2014 *Cannibal metaphysics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Whitaker, James Andrew

2016 “Continuity and perdurance among the Makushi in Guyana”. PhD thesis, Tulane University. https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A74312 (29.11.2024)

2021 “Sorcery and well-being: Bodily transformation at Beckeranta.” *Anthropology & Medicine* 28, 1: 78-93.

Whitaker, James Andrew, Vikram Tamboli, Lewis Daly, and Matthias Lewy

2024 “Plant agency in the Guianas: Attraction, assault, and animacy.” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 44 , no. 4. https://doi.org/10.1177/02780771241277618

Whitehead, Neil L.

1988 *Lords of the tiger-spirit. A history of the Caribs in colonial Venezuela and Guyana 1498-1820*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

1993 “Ethnic transformation and historical discontinuity in native Amazonian and Guayana, 1500-1900.” *L’Homme*: 126-128: 285–305.

1994 “The ancient Amerindian polities of the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the Atlantic Coast.” In *Amazonian Indians from prehistory to the present*, edited by A. Roosevelt, 33-53. University of Arizona Press.

1996 *The Patamona of Paramakatoi and the Yawong Valley: An oral history*. Georgetown: Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology.

1998 “Colonial chieftains of the lower Orinoco and Guayana Coast.” In *Chiefdoms and chieftaincy in the Americas*, edited by Elsa M. Redmond, 150-163. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

1999 “Native peoples confront colonial regimes in northeastern South America (c.1500-1900).” In *The Cambridge history of the Native peoples of the Americas. South America*, edited by Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz, 382-442. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2001 “Kanaimà: Shamanism and ritual death in the Pakaraima Mountains, Guyana.” In *Beyond the visible and the material*, edited by Laura M. Rival and Neil L. Whitehead, 235-247. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

2002 *Dark Shamans. Kanaima and the poetics of violent death*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

2007 "Violence & the cultural order." *Daedalus* 136, no. 1: 40-50.

Whitehead, Neil L., ed.

1995 *Wolves from the sea. Readings in the anthropology of the Native Caribbean*. Caribbean Series. Leiden: KITLV Press.

Whitehead, Neil L. and Robin Wright, eds.

2004 *In darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Wilbert, Johannes

1993 *Mystic endowment. Religious ethnography of the Warao Indians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

1996 *Mindful of famine. Religious climatology of the Warao Indians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.

2004 "The order of dark shamans among the Warao." In *In darkness and secrecy. The anthropology of assault sorcery and witchcraft in Amazonia*, edited by Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright, 21-50. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA
Estudios INDIANA

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Potsdamer Str. 37, D-10785 Berlin
https://www.iai.spk-berlin.de Indiana@iai.spk-berlin.de

La nueva serie de libros **BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA** (antes Estudios INDIANA) presenta investigaciones sobre las sociedades y culturas multiétnicas, indígenas y afro-americanas de América Latina y el Caribe, tanto en el pasado como en el presente.

A nova série de livros **BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA** (anteriormente Estudios INDIANA) apresenta pesquisas sobre sociedades e culturas indígenas e multi-étnicas da América Latina e do Caribe, tanto do passado quanto do presente.

The new book series **BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA** (formerly Estudios INDIANA) presents research on multi-ethnic, indigenous, and Afro-American societies and cultures in Latin America and the Caribbean, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective.

Die neue Buchreihe **BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA** (ehemals Estudios INDIANA) präsentiert Forschungsergebnisse zu indigenen, afro-amerikanischen und multi-ethnischen Gesellschaften und Kulturen Lateinamerikas und der Karibik in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart.

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA 1
Sorcery in Amazonia: A Comparative Exploration of Magical Assault.
James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy,and Tarryl Janik (eds.),
Berlin 2025, 236 pp., ISBN 978-3-7861-2930-1.

> Although shamanism has become a well-developed and expansive topic within the anthropology of Amazonia, the ethnographic literature focusing on sorcery has been sporadic and sparse by comparison. This has particularly been the case since the death of Neil L. Whitehead in 2012. However, as this volume shows, sorcery is often of great importance in the lives and cosmologies of many people in different parts of lowland South America. Across the region, it takes a variety of forms and involves a diverse range of practices. This edited volume comparatively re-examines the topic of sorcery in Amazonia with particular emphases on local ontological frameworks, issues of embodiment, and related uses of sound. It highlights ethical approaches to research concerning sorcery and discusses the ethics within local communities of sorcery practices and accusations.

Estudios INDIANA 14
Los archivos de las (etno)musicologías. Reflexiones sobre sus usos, sentidos e condición virtual.
Miguel A. García (ed.), Berlin 2023, 240 pp., ISBN 978-3-7861-2908-0.

> Los trabajos reunidos en este libro, provenientes de distintas áreas del conocimiento, se interesan por aspectos de la fijación, la representación, el almacenamiento, la clasificación y la circulación de las expresiones sonoras –musicales y no-musicales. El punto de confluencia de todos ellos es las músicas en situación de archivo. Con mayor o menor apego a los casos de estudio, con distintos niveles de empatía hacia la teoría y con diferentes maneras de articular la descripción y la interpretación, los trabajos interpelan reservorios de grabaciones sonoras –musicales y no-musicales–, partituras y saberes asociados a las músicas, para dar respuestas y abrir interrogantes sobre el poder y las políticas del archivo.

INDIANA, BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA y **Estudios INDIANA**
Acceso abierto e inmediato a todos los contenidos: https://doi.org/10.18441/ind
https://publications.iai.spk-berlin.de/content/index.xml

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA
Estudios INDIANA

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Potsdamer Str. 37, D-10785 Berlin
https://www.iai.spk-berlin.de Indiana@iai.spk-berlin.de

ESTUDIOS INDIANA 13
Culturas visuales indígenas y las prácticas estéticas en las Américas desde la antigüedad hasta el presente.
Sanja Savkić (ed.) en colaboración con Hannah Baader, Berlin 2019, 431 pp., ISBN 978-3-7861-2831-1.

Este libro reúne quince ensayos que, a través del análisis de casos específicos, exploran las culturas visuales y las prácticas estéticas amerindias, abarcando un amplio periodo – desde el pasado antiguo hasta el presente.

1) Cosmologías e historias visuales del poder: nombrar y mostrar;
2) Percepciones e intervenciones en los espacios urbanos;
3) (Re)Presentaciones de lo invisible: los estatutos de la imagen; y
4) Los encuentros del Pasado y del presente: las memorias móviles.

Los objetivos de este volumen son impulsar el diálogo interdisciplinario mediante el encuentro de saberes y cuestionamientos sobre las especificidades de la visualidad indígena en las Américas en su dimensión histórica, así como incitar y enriquecer la generación del conocimiento en las disciplinas humanísticas y sociales.

ESTUDIOS INDIANA 12
Lost Languages of the Peruvian North Coast.
Matthias Urban, Berlin 2019, 312 pp., ISBN 978-3-7861-2826-7.

This book is about the original indigenous languages of the Peruvian North Coast, likely associated with the important pre-Columbian societies of the coastal deserts, but poorly documented and now irrevocably lost: Sechura and Tallán in Piura, Mochica in Lambayeque and La Libertad, and further south Quingnam, perhaps spoken as far south as the Central Coast. The book presents the original distribution of these languages in early colonial times, discusses available and lost sources, and traces their demise as speakers switched to Spanish at different points of time after conquest. It explores what can be said on past language contacts and the linguistic areality of the North Coast and Northern Peru as a whole, and asks to what extent linguistic boundaries on the North Coast can be projected into the pre-Columbian past.

ESTUDIOS INDIANA 11
Objetos como testigos del contacto cultural. Perspectivas interculturales de la historia y del presente de las poblaciones indígenas del alto río Negro (Brasil/Colombia).
Michael Kraus, Ernst Halbmayer, Ingrid Kummels (eds.), Berlin 2018, 398 pp., ISBN 978-3-7861-2795-6.

Durante la conferencia internacional "Objetos como testigos del contacto cultural. Perspectivas interculturales de la historia y del presente de las poblaciones indígenas del alto río Negro (Brasil/Colombia)", que se realizó en 2014 en el Ethnologisches Museum de Berlín, se evaluaron críticamente las investigaciones recientes e históricas sobre la región multicultural del alto río Negro. Se reunieron y contrastaron las perspectivas de diferentes actores en base de sus respectivas especializaciones sobre la historia de contacto de la región, sobre la situación actual y sobre el significado de la cultura material en este proceso. Participaron por lo tanto representantes de los kotiria (wanano) y wira poná (desana), miembros de los museos, antropólogos académicos y activistas.

INDIANA, BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA y **Estudios INDIANA**
Acceso abierto e inmediato a todos los contenidos: https://doi.org/10.18441/ind
https://publications.iai.spk-berlin.de/content/index.xml

INDIANA

Estudios Antropológicos sobre América Latina y el Caribe
Estudos Antropológicos sobre América Latina e o Caribe
Anthropological Studies on Latin America and the Caribbean
Anthropologische Studien zu Lateinamerika und der Karibik

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Potsdamer Str. 37, D-10785 Berlin
https://www.iai.spk-berlin.de   Indiana@iai.spk-berlin.de

La revista **INDIANA** – Estudios Antropológicos sobre América Latina y el Caribe es publicada desde 1973 por el Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlín. Es un foro para investigaciones sobre las sociedades y culturas multiétnicas, indígenas y afro-americanas de América Latina y el Caribe, tanto en el pasado como en el presente. Cada volumen está compuesto por diversos artículos y un dossier temático. Se aceptan manuscritos de contribuciones originales para su consideración en español, inglés, portugués y alemán. Cada artículo está sujeto a revisión anónima por pares con la participación de revisores externos.
INDIANA está en índices como Redalyc, Latindex-Catálogo, Scopus, REDIB, HAPI y DOAJ. Se publica dos veces por año, tanto en versión impresa como en versión online con un acceso abierto y gratuito.

The journal **INDIANA** – Anthropological Studies on Latin America and the Caribbean has been published since 1973 by the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin. It is a forum for research on multi-ethnic, indigenous, and Afro-American societies and cultures in Latin America and the Caribbean, both from a historical and a contemporary perspective. Each volume is composed of various articles and of a themed dossier. Manuscripts of original contributions are accepted for consideration in Spanish, English, Portuguese and German. Each article is subject to anonymous peer review with the participation of external reviewers.
INDIANA is indexed in Redalyc, Latindex-Catálogo, Scopus, REDIB, HAPI, and DOAJ – among others. It is published twice a year, both in print and online with free and open access.

ISSN (print): 0341-8642, ISSN (online): 2365-2225

Últimos dossiers / Recent dossiers:

INDIANA 41.1 (2024):
The Representation of Cultural Heritage and the Negotiation of Authenticity in the Americas.

NDIANA 40.2 (2023):
Avances en lingüística andina” (2a parte).

INDIANA 40.1 (2023):
Avances en lingüística andina” (1a parte).

INDIANA 38.1 (2021):
Imágenes, voces y prácticas de la niñez indígena en América Latina: perspectivas antropológicas sobre procesos y experiencias del pasado y del presente.

INDIANA, BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA y **Estudios INDIANA**
Acceso abierto e inmediato a todos los contenidos: https://doi.org/10.18441/ind
https://publications.iai.spk-berlin.de/content/index.xml

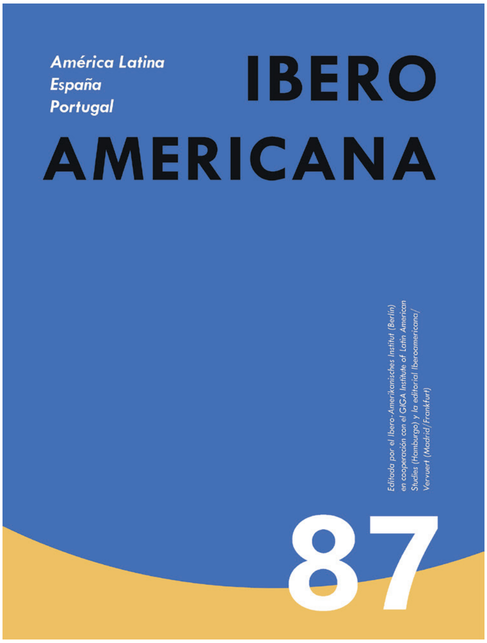
IBEROAMERICANA.
América Latina - España - Portugal

es una revista interdisciplinaria dedicada al análisis de la historia, la literatura, la vida cultural y las dinámicas socio-políticas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal, que busca servir de puente entre las investigaciones realizadas en distintos ámbitos académicos y regionales. Es editada por el Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlín) en cooperación con el GIGA Institute for Latin American Studies (Hamburgo) y la editorial Iberoamericana/Vervuert (Madrid/Frankfurt am Main). Se publica tres veces por año en versión impresa y online.

87/2024

Dossier: Horizontes originarios en el arte contemporáneo americano (coord. por Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales y Renata Ribeiro dos Santos).

El dossier Horizontes originarios en el arte contemporáneo americano gira en torno a la recuperación de elementos de las culturas originarias americanas en la contemporaneidad, desde lo formal y estructural, lo semántico, lo conceptual y lo institucional. Se sustenta en una transversalidad geográfica, temporal e interdisciplinar, y se abordan asuntos como el proceso de constitución del arte precolombino como emblema de americanismo y modernidad; los horizontes del mismo en la mirada de artistas europeos; el arte precolombino en ámbitos institucionales y privados, entre otros.


América Latina
España
Portugal
IBERO
AMERICANA
Editada por el Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (Berlín) en cooperación con el GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies (Hamburgo) y la editorial Iberoamericana/Vervuert (Madrid/Frankfurt)
87

Acceso inmediato a todos los contenidos:
https://doi.org/10.18441/ibam

Suscripciones:
http://www.iberoamericana-vervuert.es

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

IBEROAMERICANA
VERVUERT

GIGA
German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Institute of Latin American Studies

**Ibero-Amerikanisches
Institut**
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

BIBLIOTECA ANTROPOLOGICA AMERICANA 1

Sorcery in Amazonia
A Comparative Exploration of Magical Assault

**James Andrew Whitaker, Matthias Lewy,
and Tarryl Janik (eds.)**

Although shamanism has become a well-developed and expansive topic within the anthropology of Amazonia, the ethnographic literature focusing on sorcery has been sporadic and sparse by comparison. This has particularly been the case since the death of Neil L. Whitehead in 2012. However, as this volume shows, sorcery is often of great importance in the lives and cosmologies of many people in different parts of lowland South America. Across the region, it takes a variety of forms and involves a diverse range of practices. This edited volume comparatively re-examines the topic of sorcery in Amazonia with particular emphases on local ontological frameworks, issues of embodiment, and related uses of sound. It highlights ethical approaches to research concerning sorcery and discusses the ethics within local communities of sorcery practices and accusations.

ISBN 978-3-7861-2930-1