

Tobacco visions: shamanic drawings of the Wauja Indians

Visões do tabaco: desenhos xamânicos dos índios Wauja

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Abstract: This article analyzes shamanic drawings based on research of two ethnographic collections gathered between 1978 and 2004 among the Wauja Indians of the Upper Xingu. The drawings present a visual interpretation of animal-spirits (the *apapaatai*) and their transformations, as seen by Wauja shamans in tobacco-induced trances and dreams. This article argues that drawing on paper allowed the shamans to broadly express their understanding of the many potential bodily forms the *apapaatai* can take, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The lack of a visual canon for visual representation of the *apapaatai* on paper gave the shamans the freedom to produce drawings which reflect an extraordinary diversity of singular perspectives. These singularities, when associated with the narratives of myths and dreams, potentiate the drawings as a kind of visual exegesis of Wauja cosmology. Further analysis considering material culture objects shows that the appropriation of pencil and paper by Wauja shamans channelled their creative energy towards an unexpected expansion in the conceptual boundaries of shamanic translation.

Keywords: Upper Xingu. Shamanism. Drawing. Myth. Material culture.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma análise de desenhos xamânicos baseada na pesquisa de duas coleções etnográficas coletadas entre 1978 e 2004 entre os índios Wauja do alto Xingu. Os desenhos apresentam uma interpretação visual dos espíritos-animais (os *apapaatai*) e de suas transformações, tal como são vistos pelos xamãs Wauja em seus transe e sonhos induzidos pelo consumo de tabaco. O artigo argumenta que a experiência de desenhar em papel permitiu aos xamãs expressarem de modo amplo seus entendimentos sobre as muitas e possíveis formas corporais que os *apapaatai* podem, voluntária ou involuntariamente, assumir. A inexistência de cânones visuais para a representação dos *apapaatai* em papel deixou os xamãs livres para produzirem uma extraordinária diversidade de perspectivas singulares. Tais singularidades, quando associadas às narrativas de mitos de sonhos, potencializam os desenhos como um tipo de exegese visual da cosmologia Wauja. O aprofundamento dessa análise à luz de objetos da cultura material demonstra que a apropriação do lápis e do papel pelos xamãs Wauja canalizou sua energia criativa para uma inusitada expansão das fronteiras conceituais da própria tradução xamânica.

Palavras-chave: Alto Xingu. Xamanismo. Desenho. Mito. Cultura material.

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INTRODUCTION

The tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum* and *Nicotiana rustica*) is the most widely cultivated psychoactive plant in the Americas. Historically, its cultivation extends from the Chesapeake Bay, in the United States, to the Bacia del Plata, in Argentina, covering parts of Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, the Amazonian vastness, as well as the tropical Atlantic coast of South America. Originally from South America, this plant is traditionally consumed in the forms of juice, paste, powder and cigarettes (Echeverri, 2015). As a psychoactive plant, tobacco is seen by many of these peoples, among them the Wauja of the Upper Xingu, as a powerful agent for transforming people (Russel; Rahman, 2015). The notion of transformation, the central theme of this article, is approached from the perspective of visual expression and mythical exegesis. The possibilities of seeing and acting in the world of the spiritual beings, discovering hidden intentions and secret actions of people and performing divinations are among the most powerful reasons that motivate a person to become initiated in tobacco shamanism in the Upper Xingu. But what exactly does the consumption of tobacco smoke show to Xinguano shamans? How do they translate the things and beings they see and hear in their dreams and trances to the uninitiated?

The tobacco is the only psychoactive plant used by indigenous people in shamanic contexts in the Upper Xingu region. It is also the only substance present in all three stages of the complex ritual sequence that involves seeing, bringing and making the *apapaatai*, these dreaded and powerful animal-spirits that convey both illness and healing (Barcelos Neto, 2008). However, it is especially in the first stage, which is basically divinatory and visionary, that tobacco is consumed abundantly and intensely. This article deals only with the first and third stages of the *apapaatai* ritual sequence, and presents an analysis of some aspects of the imagery and artefactual universe related to the consumption of tobacco smoke among the Wauja.

The Wauja inhabit the basin of the headwaters of the Xingu river, in the State of Mato Grosso, Brazil. They live in three villages in the Xingu Indigenous Park. The largest of them, Piyulaga, is located 400 metres away from a lake of the same name, connected by a channel to the right bank of the meandering Batovi river. The second largest village, Ulupuwene, is located near the headwaters of the Batovi river, a few kilometres away from the southwest border of the Xingu Indigenous Park, with the extensive soy and livestock farms of the municipalities of Paranatinga and Gaúcha do Norte, in the State of Mato Grosso. The third and smallest village, Piyulewene, is also the most isolated. It is located on the left bank of the mid-von den Steinen river, one of the headwaters of the Ronuro river. The Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health reported an estimated Wauja population of 542 individuals (SESAI, 2013). Speaking a language of the Arawak family (Maipurán sub-family), they constitute the group of the central Arawak along with the Mehinako, the Yawalapíti, the Pareci and the Enawene Nawe. According to Urban (1992) hypothesis, the original dispersion centre of the Arawak would be the region of the headwaters of the Amazon basin rivers that spring in the Central Andean piedmont, at a chronological depth of at least three thousand years before the present (Urban, 1992). Recent archaeological research on the formation of Xinguano culture indicates that Arawak groups were the first to settle in the Upper Xingu region around the year 1000 (Heckenberger, 2005).

Since at least the mid-eighteenth century, the Wauja, along with eight other ethnic groups – namely, the Kamayurá, the Aweti, the Yawalapíti, the Mehinako, the Kuikuro, the Kalapalo, the Matipu and the Nahukwa – constitute a multiethnic and multilingual regional system in the region of the basin of the headwaters of the Xingu River (Heckenberger, 2001a, 2001b). Xinguano groups are distinguished from each other mainly on the basis of language¹, or through specific practices in the context

¹ One Tupi, one Tupi-Guarani, three Arawak and two Carib languages are spoken in the Upper Xingu (Seki, 1999), technological specialisation (knowledge and actual use of manufacturing techniques in ceramics, musical instruments, basketry, bows and body adornments).

of rituals and chiefdom. Such a profound and varied linguistic differentiation among Xinguano peoples does not, however, prevent effective mechanisms of cohesion and communication between them, which take place above all at supra-linguistic levels, especially in the domains of ritual, intermarriage, exchange of artefacts, body painting and ornamentation, sorcery and shamanism².

Widely consumed by adult men in everyday life and shamanic contexts, as well as in community rituals, tobacco cigarettes serve both as food for the *apapaatai* and as a substance that allows the shamans to 'open their eyes' so that they can know the worlds of these beings in a very detailed manner. Such an extraordinary possibility of knowing these worlds presents itself through dreams and trances, which are said to be, respectively, the effects of the frequent and intensive consumption of tobacco smoke. In the Upper Xingu, unlike other Amazonian regions, tobacco is never consumed in the form of juice, powder or paste.

The experience of trance, much less frequent than that of the dream, occurs only when an individual suffers from a serious health crisis (also called a bodily crisis), which requires quickly identifying the agents and pathogenic processes to enable the restoring of the body. In order for the trance to happen, one needs to 'die a little', that is, to ingest large amounts of tobacco smoke, to suffer the severe physical pain of intoxication until entering a trance state (*metsepuí*), which when complete, can result in an uncomfortable convalescence³. In extreme cases, this intoxication can lead to a cardiac arrest. Very few young or inexperienced shamans take the risk of abruptly and radically entering the worlds of the *apapaatai*. Before resorting to the trance, the shaman follows three less complex and risky procedures: he asks the patient to narrate his dreams; blows tobacco smoke

into the body parts where the patient feels pain in order to soften the substances that cause pain, and then tries to extract them through suctioning in order to identify the pathogens. Depending on how serious the disease is, the cure will only be guaranteed if one or more rituals are performed to feed the *apapaatai* that cause it (Barcelos Neto, 2009).

The Wauja shamans offered me descriptions and interpretations of dreams and trances in the form of several long series of drawings in 1998, 2000 and 2004, which belong to a collection totalling 803 singular artworks. The analysis developed in this article also incorporates some of the works of an extensive set of 604 Wauja drawings collected by Vera Penteadó Coelho in 1978, 1980, 1982 and 1983, now housed in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Given the large number of drawings and the systematic way they were collected, both collections are among the most important ethnographic collections of Amazonian drawings assembled in the last fifty years.

Due to their material characteristics, as well as to the collecting methodology, the Wauja drawings collected by myself and Vera Penteadó Coelho constitute a material of special relevance to the study of the ontology of images, indigenous artistic creativity and teaching strategies to the whites, from the perspective of the Wauja themselves, about their mythology and cosmology. In addition to being the outcome of a cultural encounter between anthropologists and Wauja Indians, these drawings present an effort to produce a stabilised image of dreams and trances as an exercise in visual exegesis of Wauja cosmology. As this article aims to demonstrate, the appropriation of pencil and paper by Wauja shamans revealed to be an extraordinary opportunity to expand the conceptual challenges of shamanic translation (Mack, 2012).

² For descriptions and analyses of different aspects of Xinguano shamanism, see Barcelos Neto (2008, 2009), Carneiro (1977), Dole (1964), Gregor (1977) and Menezes Bastos (1984-1985).

³ The use of tobacco in shamanic divinatory processes is widely observed in the lowlands of South America (Janiger; Dobkin de Rios, 1973; Russel; Rahman, 2015).

The relevance of these two ethnographic collections also corresponds to the expectations of both Indians and whites to disseminate the indigenous visual cultures of lowland South America for academic and non-academic audiences. This article is devoted to analysing a selection of artworks from both collections, which are also approached here as an artistic legacy of the use of psychoactive plants in Amazonian cultures. Therefore this article also seeks to contribute to the advancement of curatorial studies of lowland South American indigenous arts⁴. This legacy has been immensely enriched since the creation of *Ukso-Ayar*, the School of Amazonian Painting (Escuela de Pintura Amazónica) in Pucallpa, Peru, in 1988, by the mestizo artist and *ayahuasquero* shaman Pablo Amaringo, who died in 2009, and whose artworks are scattered throughout various collections around the world, most of them privately owned (Luna; Amaringo, 1991; Charing et al., 2011).

WHAT DO WAUJA SHAMANS SEE?

Through the intense consumption of tobacco smoke, Wauja shamans see the *apapaatai* that cause illnesses in humans. The tobacco visions allow the shamans to identify the precise way the *apapaatai* are embodying their ever-transformative and sometimes strange anthropomorphic appearance, their habitat, their eating habits, their typical type of expressive forms (music, dance, body ornamentation) and their pathogenic capacity, which in most cases is directly associated with the musical instruments the *apapaatai* play as they welcome the shaman and/or the sick in their villages in the aquatic, celestial, subterranean or terrestrial worlds. As a result of this detailed recognition, the shaman can determine the bodily form that the *apapaatai* should acquire when they are made during the healing rituals.

One of the fundamental questions in this process is the openness and unpredictability of the divination system:

The possibility of a hitherto insignificant being revealing itself (to the dreamer, to the sick, to the shaman) as a prosopomorphic agent capable of affecting human affairs is always open; as far as the personhood of beings is concerned, "personal" experience is more decisive than any taxonomic list or cosmological dogma. (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 46, my translation).

Although this possibility is always open, the visual and material representation of what is revealed, so that other people can also see it, follows a very defined and unmistakable artistic style. The *apapaatai* that are named and revealed by shamans can be many and varied, but the body forms they can acquire in the waking world of humans are limited by both the means of visual expression and the material means of their making. Determining the bodily form that these beings acquire in the ritual depends fundamentally on how they were seen in dreams and trances.

The *apapaatai* generally show up with an anthropomorphic or zoo-anthropomorphic aspect (Figures 1 and 2) in the dreams and trances of the shamans. In this case, they are called *yerupoho*, 'ancient people', coming from the time when humans and animals could talk to each other. The *yerupoho* are also called 'bichos' (beasts) in Portuguese. The fact that many of the *yerupoho* were in fact proto-animals was revealed to the Wauja by a series of cosmic events occurring in the mythical past; such events turned some of them into the animals that today inhabit the Upper Xingu. Many of these nonhuman beings are now seen in the dreams and trances of the shamans, carrying their musical instruments (Figure 3) and/or other objects of their own, such as feather and skin adornments, scarifiers, spatulas for flipping over

⁴ The lack of extensive and detailed catalogues with drawings and paintings from Amazonian Indians is one of the main obstacles to the advancement of the historical, anthropological, museological and curatorial studies of their arts. For visualising a larger amount of Wauja artworks, see Barcelos Neto (2001, 2002a, 2008, 2011a, 2011b) and Coelho (1988, 1991, 1991-1992); for artworks from the Mehinako, an Upper Xinguano Arawak group whose visual culture is similar to that of the Wauja, see Fénelon Costa (1988). Theoretical studies in which Wauja drawings are comparatively analysed appear in the contributions of Lagrou (2013), Severi (2011), Taylor (2010), and Taylor and Viveiros de Castro (2006).



Figure 1. *Hokapana owekeho*, spiritual owner of tobacco leaves. Drawing by Ajoukumã Wauja (2000). Pencil crayon on paper, 44 x 32 cm. Aristoteles Barcelos Neto Ethnographic Collection (AJO.2000.014.344). Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2002).



Figure 2. "*Nhãu*" (*Temepiyāu nāu*), anaconda-men. Drawing by Takara Wauja (1980). Acrylic on paper, 70 x 50 cm. Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo, Vera Penteado Coelho Ethnographic Collection (WD80-303). Photo by Ader Gotardo (2014).

manioc flatbread, manioc tuber diggers and tools for hunting and fishing, among others. Some *yehupoho* appear with body paintings, as is the case of the one in Figure 2. These paintings make it possible to identify the animal species into which the *yehupoho* can potentially transform, and also the graphic motifs that should appear on its mask, in case it is necessary to make one for the healing ritual.

The being in Figure 1, *Hokapana owekeho*, is the spiritual owner of tobacco leaves. He carries a giant green leaf with both hands in a gesture of offering it directly to the shaman who made the drawing. The lack of proportionality between the sizes of the body and the leaf indicates a relationship marked by the recognition of the supernatural power of the leaves' owner. This disproportion also indicates the capacity to consume high amounts of the plant, which gives its owner extraordinary visionary-divinatory

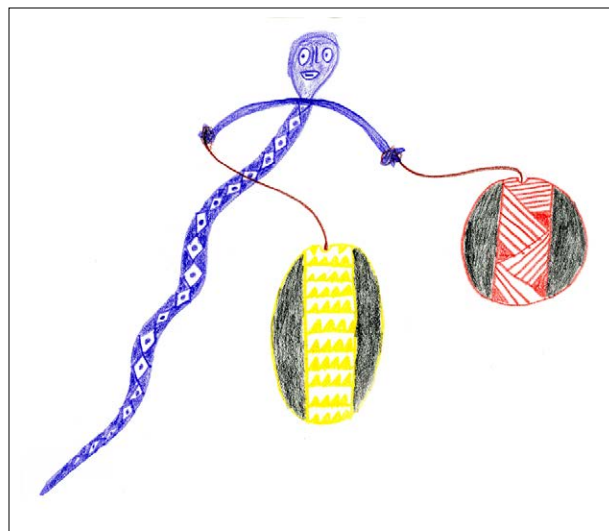


Figure 3. *Uwixumã* (*mutukutāi owekeho*), anaconda owner of the globular flutes. Drawing by Ajoukumã Wauja (2000). Pencil crayon on paper, 44 x 32 cm. Aristoteles Barcelos Neto Ethnographic Collection (AJO.2000.007.337). Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2002).

powers that can be transferred to those who become initiated in tobacco shamanism. Among the 1,407 Wauja drawings that constitute the two ethnographic collections mentioned above, this drawing, made by Ajoukumã in 2000, on his own initiative, is the only one that represents this being. Ajoukumã had an overt preference for drawing beings that were rarely, or never, mentioned by the other Wauja shamans. Many of the *apapaatai* he drew were known only to him; his figurative style was also very personal, marked by a light trace and a moderate colour contrast. Ajoukumã was the youngest shaman to be initiated in the Upper Xingu in the 1990s, when he was only 22. He passed away in 2006 at the age of 33. The set of his artistic work is composed of 113 drawings, of which 62 were made in 1998, and 51 in 2000.

The beings in Figure 2 are *Temepiyãu*, anaconda-men, easily identifiable by any Wauja adult because of the *temepianá* motif (anaconda skin) covering their bodies. Its author, Takara, drew them in two groups, separated by an inner frame. The group in the lower part presents prominent knees and elbows, as well as penises and testicles of abnormal size, which are characteristic of the *yerupoho*. Underneath their feet, the body of an anaconda can be seen only partially. The colours that cover their bodies are replicated on the bodies of the anaconda-men. The group of men at the top of the drawing appears without the lower limbs, their trunks close to the body of the anaconda; the latter, like the other anaconda, is also only partially seen.

The drawing presents two distinct moments in the transformation of these two groups of men into anaconda. The bottom group shows the men before the transformation; the symmetrical correspondence with the *temepianá* graphic motif indicates its becoming-anaconda. The upper group, on the other hand, has already reached a full state of transformation. In the upper right corner there is a dissonant figure, whose body is covered with the *kupato onabe* (fishbone) motif. It is also a transforming *yehupoho*, belonging to the domain of the aquatic snakes. It is important to mention that these transformations are

reversible. The image, therefore, can be interpreted as the transformation of the *yehupoho* into anaconda or, conversely, its reverse.

The third drawing was also made by Ajoukumã in 2000, and shows *Uwixumã*, the snake who owns the globular flutes called *mutukutãi*, which exhibits a zoo-anthropomorphic aspect and an expression of contentment. In her right hand she holds the piranha-flute; in her left hand, the matrixã-flute. Both fish became flutes and were captured by *Uwixumã*, who took them to a festival in the aquatic village of snakes. The graphic motifs, characteristic of these fish, present a globular body and reveals the animal identity of the flutes.

The three drawings share a common central feature, defined by a Wauja investigation into a kind of figuration capable of translating the dream and trance experience. The invention of this figuration through drawing seeks to account for two problems: the modes of action and the bodily form of the *apapaatai*. These images express a capacity that humans possess: that of making bodies (Viveiros de Castro, 1979). Wauja visionary shamans (*yakapá*) affirm that the *apapaatai* have a random invisible presence in the village and nearby areas. Such presence can be particularly intensified when someone is seriously ill, when ritual specialists are given food in the village's plaza and when the sacred musical instruments are played, specially the *kawoká* flutes. Although numerous *apapaatai* are known through mythic narratives, just a small number of them can be actually seen by non-shamans. The shamanic drawing experience expands the possibilities of visualizing the *apapaatai* and consequently impacts on how narratives about them are expressed. I turn now to the symbolic relations between myth, dream and image.

MYTH AND IMAGE

Wauja myths provide a type of navigation chart through which dreams and trances can best be understood by shamans. All the Wauja shamans who offered information for my research had, without exception, an extensive



knowledge of myths. Figurative drawings, materialisations of dreams and trances, function as a kind of visual exegesis of myth. In this sense, figurative drawings are not illustrations, but explanations that make it possible to expand knowledge about myths. Myths are also one of the most well-defined expressions of the notion of bodily transformation, an essential part of the translation work carried out by shamans (Carneiro da Cunha, 1998) and of the broader understanding of human experience.

A Wauja myth tells us that in the dawn of time there was total darkness in the world. The *yerupoho*, most of them with zoo-anthropomorphic characteristics, lived on the surface of the land. Humans (*i.e.*, the ancestors of the Wauja) lived inside termite mounds, facing an extreme shortage of cultural goods: without any agriculture, fire, pots, baskets and musical instruments. Frightened by the threats of predators that wandered around the surface of the land, the Wauja spent most of their time in the lugubrious interior of the termite mounds, where the little food they got was insufficiently 'baked' under their armpits. Those were times of great hunger and darkness.

The *yerupoho* had an exceptionally better existence and lived a social life similar to that of today humans, with rules of kinship and residence, as well as knowledge of various items of material culture, especially ceramics and wooden flutes (Piedade, 2004). They fed on some fruits and manioc, which were unavailable to the Wauja. In their fields there were species of manioc which only grew to a very low height.

Most *yerupoho* have secondary animal anatomical characteristics (tails, wings, fins, spurs, eyes, nose, ears, hands, feet and mouth), a small stature, and some of them do not have all the limbs (absence of arms and/or legs) or sensory organs (mainly the absence of ears and nose; although some have giant ears and noses). Nowadays, their bodies can present themselves in different shades of yellow, grey, brown, purple, orange, red, green and blue.

At that time humans and 'animals' (or proto-animals) talked among themselves, but this did not necessarily assure that the relationships between them would be peaceful. Cannibalism and specific traps for hunting humans – in short, predation – were widespread. Bothered by the situation in which humans lived, Kamo (Sun) and Kejo (Moon), the cultural heroes of the Xinguano people, announced that they would make the sun star appear permanently in the sky with the aim of making it possible for humans to live on the surface, and to reduce some of the privileges of the *yerupoho*. Frightened by imminent cosmic change, most of the *yerupoho* frantically started to create costumes, masks and protective paintings against the harmful actions and irreversible transformations that the solar star could bring upon them. The *yerupoho* created a series of diversified attire which in fact were not merely protective clothing; when wearing these garments, the *yerupoho* assumed a new identity, that of the clothes, and became *apapaatai*. Others turned into artefacts (aerophones, roakers, manioc diggers, baskets or ceramic pots) or into monstrous beings wearing supernatural clothes.

The category of 'garment' (*naï*) is fundamental to the understanding of the notion of transformation. It also exists in other Xinguano groups. This is described among the Mehinako by Thomas Gregor:

The *apapāiye*⁵ may appear in as frightening and monstrous form as the *apapāiyei aintyá*, but this is an external appearance. Their skins are garments (*naï*) that can open, as one informant explained it, 'like a duffle bag'. Behind the frightening masks and beneath the ghastly costumes are the real spirits, very much like the Mehinaku in appearance but ageless and physically perfect. These spirits are nonetheless dangerous, for they can 'take' (*etuka*) a man's soul. (Gregor, 1977, p. 312).

Wauja shamans would only disagree with the Mehinako about the physical perfection of these spirits who wear garments.

⁵ The Mehinako term for *apapaatai*.



When the *yerupoho*, already dressed in their clothes, saw the first rays of light appearing on the horizon, most of them threw themselves into the water, led by a trio of *apapaatai*-flutes called *Kawoká*. Before making their way to the aquatic, intra-terrestrial and celestial worlds, the *yerupoho* broke all the pots that they had, leaving only potsherds scattered throughout defensive ditches and at the black earth sites where, according to the Wauja, the old villages of the *yerupoho* were located before the appearance of the sun. Thus, with the aid of Kamo and Kejo, as soon as the Wauja started to inhabit the surface, they could begin a series of robberies of cultural goods belonging to the *yerupoho*.

With the appearance of the sun, two fundamental types of transformation, corresponding precisely to the two categories of *apapaatai*, were brought upon the *yerupoho*. The *yerupoho* who managed to make their garments and get dressed before the appearance of the sun became either animals themselves or their monstrous supernatural doubles. The *yerupoho* who failed to make and get dressed with protective clothing were hit

“[...] in a definitive and drastic manner with the appearance of the sun: they [became *iyajo apapaatai*, that is, hyper-*apapaatai*], extremely dangerous beings that devour or simply kill weaker beings, including humans” (Barcelos Neto, 2002b, p. 4).

The *iyajo apapaatai* have a permanent body shape, which is fixed through the transforming action of the sun. Gigantism, associated with predation, is one of its main characteristics. *Kamalu Hai*, the snake who owns the ceramic pots (Figure 4) is one of the *iyajo apapaatai* coming from the mythical times that left important marks in the Xinguano world. Although *Kamalu Hai* is currently living very far away from the Wauja, the consequences of his deeds continue to appear in the dreams of several shamans. All five visionary shamans I worked with made *Kamalu Hai* drawings. In Vera Coelho's collection, there is a drawing of *Kamalu Hai* made in 1980 by chief Malakuyawa, one of the most powerful Upper Xinguano shamans of his time. Reproduced below is the central part of the myth that tells the deeds of the snake who owns pottery and clay.

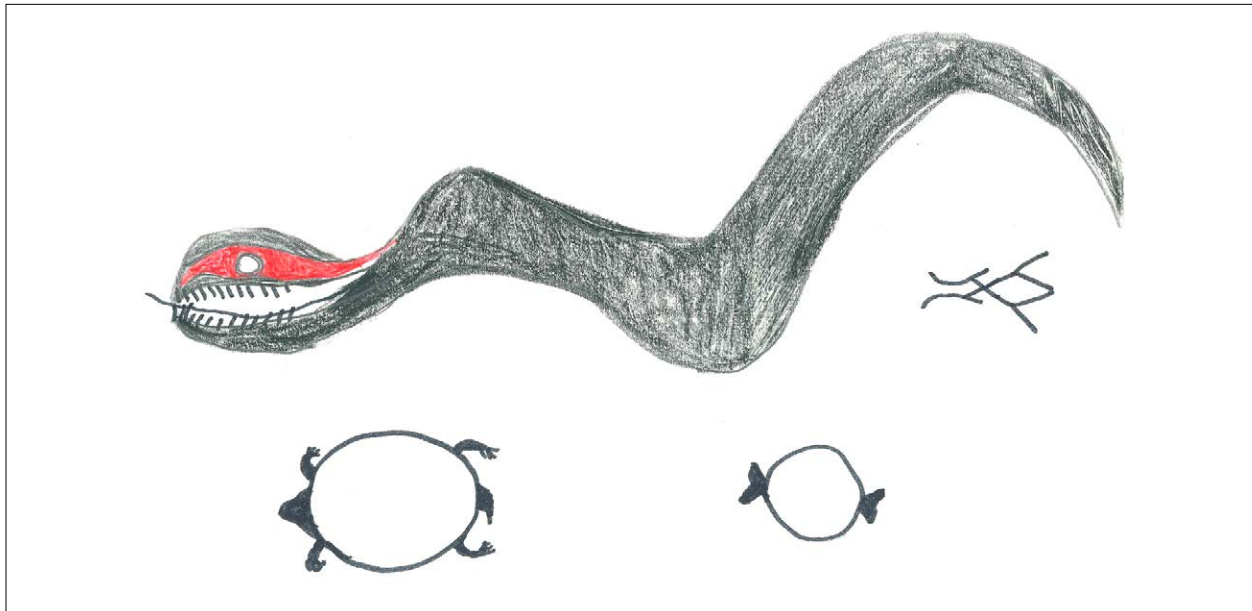


Figure 4. *Kamalu Hai*, the giant snake and her ceramic pots. Drawing by Itsutaku Wauja (1998). Pencil crayon on paper, 31,5 x 21,5 cm. Aristoteles Barcelos Neto Ethnographic Collection (ITS.1998.002.383). Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2002).

The myth of *Kamalu Hai*⁶:

I'll tell the story of *Kamalu Hai*, it's the big snake, another type of snake-canoe that we, the Wauja, call *Itsakumalu* (monstrous canoe). Sometimes *Itsakumalu* shows up here in the lake. *Kamalu Hai* is a type of monster. This is her dung⁷, which we use to make all kinds of pots, from small to large. The *yerupoho* have broken the really old pots, and the potsherds are left on this land. They broke everything. Now we only imitate the old ones.

There is now clay where *Kamalu Hai* left her dung. That's why we're going to pick it up and make it. It was *Kamalu Hai* who showed us the pots, because she came towards the Wauja village.

The pots came up the (Batovi) river singing:

— *Kamalu Hai* (in a very high pitched tone), sang the small pot on the tip of the tail.

— *Kamalu Hai* (in a very low pitched tone), answered the large pot on the head.

The other pots were seated, only four pots that sang, this one sings and that one responds, one of them sings and the other responds. This is a bat-pot, this is a turtle-pot, this is a monkey-pot, this is a *munutai*-pot, a *makula*-pot, a *witsopo*-pot, a *maiaipo*-pot, a *majatapo*-pot, this is a *kamalupo weke*-pot, this one, too, it is a *nukai* pot⁸. The snake-canoe was very heavy.

Then people were listening when they (the pots) are coming. There they found the Wauja man who saw *Kamalu Hai* coming with all the pots. The well-filled snake-canoe took the path that leads here. Then she wanted to sink, but she did not fit into that small river. She left her dung there, she made clay out of dung. That's why we make pots. The Kamayurá don't do them. The Kuikuro, the Kalapalo, the Aweti, the Trumai and the Mehinako also don't know how to do them. Only the Wauja know. They order pots from us.

Kamalu Hai left a child there, his name is *Kamalupi* (another type of snake-canoe). He is still there, people say. But is rarely seen as he live in deep water. A long time ago a Wauja woman saw *Kamalupi* in the *Wakunuma*. He has very big eyes

both in the head and the tail. That's why that woman died, because of the giant snake she saw.

Kamalu Hai left her dung there and then went away down the river to Morená, where she did the same thing. Then she went down the river to the sea, sank and stayed in the sea, which was where it fit. That's why the Americans found pots in the ocean⁹.

Figure 4 shows a drawing of *Kamalu Hai* as she was seen by Itsautaku in his dreams. In the image she is passing through the Morená, soon after going down the Batovi river. *Kamalu Hai* was drawn in her most frightening form, with her open mouth showing two long rows of sharp teeth, and a red spot on the head. Itsautaku explains that when *Kamalu Hai* made her way towards the sea, sailing downstream along the Xingu river, several pots fell or were left by her along the way. Among them, there were zoomorphic and anthropomorphic pots; the former were transformed into *apapaatai* with the full appearance of an animal, and the latter became something that only Itsautaku had been able to see up until then.

In the lower left side of Figure 4, there is a turtle-pot; on the lower right side, there is a canoe-pot (*itsakana*); and just below the tail of the snake is an apparently indistinct figure, with the limbs and the trunk moving in the opposite direction to *Kamalu Hai*. According to Itsautaku, the latter is a pot that is becoming a person. As the gigantic *Kamalu Hai* carried all kinds of pots on her back, she also carried an unusual kind of pot, known to the Wauja as *yerupohokana*, which has anthropomorphic characteristics imitating the body of the *yerupoho*. I did not clearly understand what Itsautaku intended to show when he made this drawing. I asked him to do one more drawing so that I could better understand his dream with *Kamalu Hai*. After a few days, Itsautaku made the

⁶ Narrated by Aruta, a Wauja shaman-singer, and translated by Yanahim, a Wauja nursing technician.

⁷ Aruta shows a spherical piece of wet black clay.

⁸ *Munutai*, *makula*, *witsopo*, *maiaipo*, *majatapo*, *kamalupo weke* and *nukai* are some of the various types of ceramic artefacts produced by the Wauja; for a detailed study on the classification of these artefacts see Barcelos Neto (2006).

⁹ He is referring to news he had heard about marine archaeological surveys.

drawing entitled *Nukāi Kumā* (monster cooking pot, Figure 5), which shows two menacing anthropomorphic figures with the mouth open, showing the teeth, and their blackened body with arms arched out and a round trunk. These beings are *yerupohokana* pots that travelled on the back of *Kamalu Hai* and, after being abandoned by her, became cannibal monsters. They now wander through the forest in search of people to eat. Itsautaku drew them as used and dirty pots, covered with soot, hence their dark grey bodies.

Itsautaku's dream directly connects with the myth of *Kamalu Hai* and expands it, adding to it the events that have followed, and that have not been incorporated into the more frequent narratives of this myth yet. Another interesting aspect of the drawing is that it makes it possible to understand the body shape of one of the pots as both artefactual and anthropomorphic and that, in the latter case, it ceases to be a domestic or ritual utensil and becomes a predator. This regime of transformations is what is fundamentally seen by the most experienced shamans, those who have spent a long life consuming tobacco

smoke. Being ceramists for at least a thousand years (Heckenberger, 2005), the Arawak of the Upper Xingu show a special interest to incorporate ceramics, with its technological and material meanings, into their shamanic cosmology. With that in mind, in the next section I will turn to the materiality of the *apapaatai*, whether in the form of ceramic artefacts or masks.

FROM DREAM TO MATERIALITY: THE MAKING OF THE *APAPAATAI*

According to Wauja shamans, dreams are the repository of all things that have existed, that exist, that will still begin to exist or that will return to existence. Having an active life dream-wise makes it possible to understand situations that are often distressing, controversial and seemingly difficult to solve. For the Wauja shamans, smoking on a daily basis is the fundamental condition for dreaming frequently and with clarity, that is, for 'opening their eyes and seeing on the other side'. The 'other side' is where the *apapaatai*, the masters of transformations, live. The use of tobacco makes it possible for the Upper Xinguano shamans to see the transformations of



Figure 5. *Kamalupo kumā*, anthropomorphic cannibal pots. Drawing by Itsautaku Wauja (1998). Pencil crayon on paper, 44 x 32 cm. Aristoteles Barcelos Neto Ethnographic Collection (ITS.1998.058.439). Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2002).

people into animals and vice versa. For Amazonian shamans in general, the act of knowing is intrinsically associated with the act of transforming (Lagrou, 2007). Those who are indifferent to transformations are unaware of the worlds, be it the world of the awake human persons, or those where the souls of humans travel in dreams, trances or as a result of their abduction by the *apapaatai*.

In the early 1950s, the Wauja faced a terrible measles epidemic that killed approximately 50% of the population, who then lived in the village of Tsariwapoho in the mid-Batovi River. The effects of this epidemic were devastating. The survivors left the village, leaving behind corpses to be buried (Ireland, 1988). All the important ritual objects were destroyed or abandoned, since the Wauja knew that they would not be able to sustain the rituals of which they were part. Between 1952 and 1991, the ritual system comprising the *apapaatai* festival was preserved in a minimal form of existence.

In 1991, a Wauja shaman managed to bring back the trio of jaguar-flutes (*Kawoká Yanumaka-nāu*). But it was only in 1997 that the great ritual called *Apapaatai Iyāu*, in which a trio of flutists leads a legion of masked beings, was performed again. The Wauja repeated this ritual in 2000 (Barcelos Neto, 2004) and in 2005 (Beuvier, 2006). The great anaconda-drum (*Pulupulu*) that existed in Tsariwapoho (Lima, 1950) was never recovered in Piuylaga. The Kamayurá managed to awaken it in the Ipavu village in 1998 (Barcelos Neto, 2011b).

Wauja shamans tell that these *apapaatai*, embodied in the form of ritual objects, were 'sleeping' between 1952 and 1991. However, they kept appearing in their dreams and sometimes managed to steal the souls of the Wauja. Several references to these ritual objects appear in the 646 drawings collected by Vera Penteadó Coelho between 1978 and 1983. Figure 6 shows a drawing of a



Figure 6. "Atirruá" (*Atujuwá*), giant mask of the whirlwind spirit. Drawing by Apyká (Kamo) Wauja (1980). Acrylic on paper, 70 x 50 cm. Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo, Vera Penteadó Coelho Ethnographic Collection (WD80-53). Photo by Ader Gotardo (2014).

male and female *Atujuwá apapaatai* made in 1980 by Apyká (Kamo) Wauja; this masquerade spirit only reappeared as an artefactual body among the Wauja in 1991 and it was made as a jaguar on that occasion. Since it was impossible to give shape to all these *apapaatai*, drawing was the only resource for making them at that time, even if it did not provide a sense of completeness, as in the case of artefacts. As the amount of *apapaatai* is much higher than the types of ritual objects, specific animal-spiritual identities can only be conferred to the latter through the variation and combination of iconographic motifs painted on the surface of objects (Barcelos Neto, 2011a).

For anthropologists and educators involved in the development of didactic materials for indigenous schooling, the appropriation of pencil and paper by the Xinguanos has frequently have a strong sense of memorialisation. This practice, started by shamans, gradually became a fully incorporated technology of memory in the Upper Xingu. The Wauja, for example, took a special interest in illustrating the rituals that had disappeared before the 1950s: the ball game that was performed in a tomb-shaped field appears among the sets of drawings from the 1978-1983 and 1998-2004 collections.

The exercise of drawing on paper has also become an extension of the system of divination in tobacco shamanism, which is intrinsically related to the complex ritual system of seeing, bringing and making *apapaatai* that confers physical and material existence to the spirits of animals. Determining what is (or what might be) an object or an animal, or rather, about what artefactual body should acquire a certain animal spirit, depends on a long process of visualisation related to tobacco consumption. This process seeks to locate the shaman in a specific perspective position through the help of a shamanistic tutelary spirit. These interspecific relationships, however, have certain limits. Viveiros de Castro (2015) emphasises that:

Perspectivism is rarely applicable to all animals (as well as encompassing other beings); it appears

more frequently to be salient for species such as the great predators or carnivores, like the jaguar, the anaconda, vulture or the harpy eagle, as well as for typical human prey, such as the peccary, monkeys, fish, deer and the tapir. (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 45, my translation).

The jaguar, the anaconda and fish, especially the predatory ones, such as dogfish, piranha and pirarara, are among the animals whose spirits are most often present in the dreams and trances of the shamans and the sick. The extraordinary pathogenic abilities of these animal spirits make it possible for human subjects to see the world and to be in it in the same way as the *apapaatai* are. Only shamans can give way to the process that reverses the transformation of humans into nonhumans. When humans are sick, they see the *apapaatai* as anthropomorphic beings, 'just like people'. When these *apapaatai* are produced as ritual characters, several of them can receive garments (Figure 7) corresponding to contingent bodies, or powerful bodies.

The image in Figure 7 shows a male anaconda wearing a spirit-garment (or mask, in technical terminology) known as *Atujuwá*, which is a giant outfit that makes it possible for those who wear it to fly. The anaconda dressed as *Atujuwá* appears as a celestial being, whose powers are often magnified in relation to the terrestrial and aquatic snakes. In Figure 6, *Atujuwá* is dressed as a fish; on the left, we see the female; on the right, the male. *Atujuwá* and the other spirit-garments that fly make it possible for the celestial world to also be populated by aquatic and terrestrial beings. The *temepianá* motif (anaconda skin) that surrounds the outer edge of the mask of (Figure 7) is an unquestionable marker of its ophidian identity. The figurative drawing of two anacondas arranged in front of each other, close to the geometric graphic motif, is first and foremost a hyperbole, a visual device that magnifies the presence of the celestial anacondas among the Wauja and the other *apapaatai* who participated in this ritual in February 2005 (Apapaatai, 2007). The anaconda, by the way, was the owner of that festival, leading the other *apapaatai* who were there. It is interesting to bring together the Wauja case and two other cases from Western Amazonia:





Figure 7. *Atujuwá walamá enoja*, male anaconda wearing the giant mask of the whirlwind spirit. Piyulaga Village, March 2005. Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2005).

For the Yaminawa, who pay little attention to the ritual construction of the body, what matters is what is processed by the sense of sight: it is *ayahuasca* or a powerful eye drop that allows one to see anacondas as people, or to see people as anacondas. For the Kaxinawá it is rather a body art which acts through painting, dieting, or modelling. The difference often pointed out between peoples who make an intense use of hallucinogens and those who do not use them, and who objectify their visions in the way their village is arranged or in body paintings, can be understood in the context of this perspectival back-and-forth movement, and indeed, one of the strengths of perspectivism is the possibility of establishing a correlation between the universe of visions and that of ritual or visual performance. (Calavia Sáez, 2012, p. 14, my translation).

As they express their interest in a version of perspectivism that emphasises a wide range of non-human bodies, the Wauja considerably and imaginatively expand

possibilities of bodily transformations in the correlation pointed out by Calavia Sáez (2012). Figure 8 shows the outer bottom of a *kamalupo* pot, or 'giant pot,' as the Wauja translate it. It is an anaconda-pot, whose geometrical graphic motif covers the central part of the surface of its external circular background with two parallel rows of the *temepianá* motif. The making of this giant pot as a virtual anaconda can be understood from the perspective of the intricate transformative relations that involve the characters in Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. Their anthropomorphic manifestation are the *yerupoho temepiyão*, anaconda men (Figure 2). The serpent with arms who owns the fish-flutes (Figure 3) is another possibility of body. The faeces of *Kamalu Hai* (Figure 4) are the raw material that constitute the body of the anaconda-pot. The same principle that explains the transformation of the old *yerupohokana* carried

by *Kamalu Hai* into cannibal monsters (Figure 5) may explain an eventual transformation of *kamalupo* (Figure 8) into an anaconda snake, for example, during a solar or lunar eclipse. Both the giant mask (Figure 7) and the giant pot are anacondas that, because of the different bodies that they have, exist in a domesticated (pot-like) or potentially predatory (mask-like) way. The body of the giant pot has two important details that reveal yet another interpretative dimension of the correlation between image and body.

The outer side of the pot is entirely covered by the *mitsewene* (piranha tooth) geometric motifs, which are formed by a series of triangles with an inverted base and *weri-weri* (fish skin). The latter motif consists of a series of black points arranged in three dotted lines. In the upper part of the pot, close to the central motif, two compositions are opposite and symmetrical to each other, with the *kulupiene* motif, which alludes to fish as a generic population.

The graphic composition that marks the two animal identities of this pot – anaconda and fish – follows a visual principle known as abstract chimera (Lagrou, 2013). In his analysis of a set of Amazonian images similar to the giant Wauja pot, Severi (2011) notes that these iconographic systems are interested in making composite bodies out of parts of bodies of various other animals.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have tried to show that Wauja art, stimulated by the consumption of tobacco smoke and the exegetic work on myths, exhibits a thematic emphasis on relations of predation, a preference for the line as an expressive form for the creation of animal-spirit identities, a reflection on the cosmological problems of the instability of bodies and the exchange of perspectives with animal-spirits, and above all an aesthetic interest in the representation



Figure 8. External surface of an upside down kamalupo, large sized ceramic pot. Piyulaga Village, June 2000. Photo by A. Barcelos Neto (2000).

of transformations, especially those of animals and their spiritual powers. This visual art is an unquestionable legacy produced both by the profound relationship that artistic imagination and creation have with psychoactive plants in native Amazonia and by the dialogue between Wauja shamans and anthropologists.

Collecting large number of drawings on paper in a systematic way has been an ethnographic method rarely employed by anthropologists working in Amazonia. The reasons for this are various. One of them is certainly the little interest many Amazonian people have on expressing the complexities of their cosmological ideas through this alien visual medium. However, this was not the case for the Wauja, who have enthusiastically engaged with the novelty of paper and colour pencil and have explored this technic extensively. Despite their genuine interest for this medium, the Wauja have not incorporated it as an art practice. No Wauja, shaman or not, have dared to invest time and resources to become a visual artist in the emerging Amazonian contemporary art scene (Matos; Belaunde, 2014; Belaunde, 2016). Unlike the Huni Kuin, Baniwa, Huitoto, Ashaninka and Shipibo-Konibo, for example, the Wauja shamans have never shown any interest in participating in the aforementioned scene; however, they are aware that these drawings exist, to a certain extent, in an intersection zone between their own visual art system and the western expectation of figurative representations of their cosmological ideas.

The historical significance of the ethnographic collections of 1,407 drawings produced by the Wauja between 1978 and 2004 is yet to be understood. They will possibly have, together with other similar collections, a defining impact on the conceptualization of a history of Amazonian Indigenous art. By the way, a history that awaits to be written. However, independently of their strictly art historical value, ethnographic collections have been gradually encompassed by Indigenous political movements focused on the direct or indirect safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Andrello, 2013;

Martini, 2012). In recent years, some Upper Xingu groups, specially the Kuikuro and Kamayurá, have cultivated a special interest in the safeguarding of their cultural and artistic heritage through the creation of documentation centres and the investigation of ethnographic archives (Kamayurá, 2018). Unfortunately the knowledge of the Wauja drawings collections practically exists now only in the memory of the elders. Devolving these collections to younger generations of Wauja will not just guarantee their right to participate in the safeguarding of their cultural heritage, but it will also allow the unfolding of new meanings of tobacco visions.

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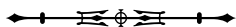
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