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VISIT TO THE EMPEROR'S HOUSE: ON THE COOPERATION BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND SOURCE COMMUNITIES

In 2003 the journal *Museums and Source Communities* was the first publication to give an overall view of the newly developing research situation in ethnographic museums, focusing on the cooperation with descendants of groups from whom the objects in the collections came (Peers and Brown 2003). This approach is of course not an invention of the 21st century: Franz Boas, founder of American cultural anthropology, worked together with indigenous advisors (Fienup-Riordan 2010: 1) already in the early part of the 20th century on the adaptation and presentation of collections. This had only little influence on the power structure between representatives of source communities and curators of museums. In 1989 still, the Museum of the American Indian in New York refused a Yup'ik access to the collections of his ancestors, stating that the scientific references were lacking (ibid.). Strangely enough, in the same year US Congress passed a resolution to construct a new building for the museum in Washington that was opened in 2004 as the National Museum of the American Indian. The architecture and exhibitions were evolved and implemented in close cooperation with representatives of source communities, and are an impressive testimony with regard to the change of thinking in relations between museums and source communities.¹

Museums of ethnology are no longer regarded as archives of the material culture of lost civilizations or those which are becoming extinct, but function as custodians of a common cultural heritage, whereby both the personnel in the museums as well as representatives of the source communities have specialist knowledge. This knowledge was acquired in differing contexts but is of equal value in the cooperation. It cannot be a question here of whether someone is right or not but shows that differing perspectives in a joint context can lead to a deeper understanding of things.

Cooperation with source communities has nowadays become established in many ethnological museums and yet at the same time it is still in its infancy.² In 2005 Claudia Augustat took the first initiative in the South American Collection of the Museum

¹ Examples for the cooperation with source communities and for indigenous museums can be found in Van Bussel und Steinmann 1999.

² Van Broekhoven, Buijs and Hovens (2010) offer a good survey of the complexity of cooperation with source communities.

Ill. 148: **Cécile Bründlmayer, Obadías Batista García, Ranulfo de Oliveira, Wolfgang Kapfhammer and Claudia Augustat discussing snuff utensils from the Natterer Collection.** Vienna, March 2012. Photo: Claudia Augustat



Ill. 149: **Makuxi looking at the photo documentation of the Viennese collections. Rupununi-Savanne, Guyana. 2005.** Photo: Claudia Augustat

of Ethnology in Vienna. On a study tour to Guyana she visited several communities of the Makuxi; she had with her photos documenting the Makuxi collections from the 19th century which she showed in the villages she visited and discussed with interested members of the Makuxi community (Ill. 149). The Makuxi live in the savannah regions along the border area between Brazil and Guyana. On the Guyanan side there are about 9,500 persons and almost 30,000 on the Brazilian side, thus making the Makuxi one of the largest indigenous groups in the South American lowland. In particular from the 18th century their civilization was subject to massive influences by the colonial and later national societies, which led them to give up many cultural practices. In the mid-1940s this and the decreasing population figures due to epidemics led to a severe crisis which also affected the way they dealt with natural resources. In order to secure their physical survival, the Makuxi impinged in a previously unknown and destructive manner on the ecological system that nourished them. Nevertheless, the social structure, language and festivities continued to provide identity. Renewed

growth in the population figures by means of state-organized medical programs also led to a strengthening of the role of traditional leading personalities: they again gained in influence and were able to practice social controls which had a positive impact on the use of natural resources (Forte 1996: 18). Knowledge of the sustainable use of their environment is for the Makuxi in Guyana nowadays one of the most important identity-establishing aspects of their civilization. It links them with their history, knowledge about which helps them to interpret changes in their material culture. In general the Makuxi who were asked, showed great interest in the documentary photos of the collection. However, mixed with the admiration and enthusiasm for the artistic skills of their ancestors, was a feeling of cultural loss and sorrow. Due to the massive changes that their culture has experienced in the last 200 years, many of the objects shown are no longer part of their material culture, and knowledge about it is scanty or has been completely lost. Their comments say more about the Makuxi of the present than about their ancestors in the past. Here one can only speculate whether a rational, positive explanation for the disappearance of objects from the material culture should compensate the feeling of loss that is generally linked with the observation of historic objects. A further step in the cooperation with the source communities was the visit in 2009 by a delegation of the Kanoê, Makurap, Tuparí and Aruá from Rondônia to Vienna (cf. Augustat, Kanoê and Kapfhammer, 2011). The cooperation with the anthropologist Wolfgang Kapfhammer, from Munich, who has worked since 1998 with the Sateré-Mawé in Brazil, gave Claudia Augustat the idea of including representatives of this group in the preparations for the exhibition *Beyond Brazil*. Of prime interest in the visit by Obadias Batista Garcia and Ranulfo de Oliveira, both Sateré-Mawé Indians of the *area indígena* Andirá-Marau on the Lower Amazon³ was the desire to confront them with examples of their culture in the Natterer collection. The aim was to gain more information about objects whose significance in the cultural context remained largely unknown to collectors in the past. The result of our dialogue, reported in the following, did, however, go far beyond such business-like agreements. Inspired by the testimonies of their own culture, which have certainly not yet fallen silent, the two colleagues took us with them on a journey through the cosmological core zones of the world philosophy of the Sateré-Mawé.

³ The Sateré-Mawé are Tupí-speaking slash-and-burn farmers in the rain forest south of the city of Parintins in the *area indígena* Andirá-Marau. They are known as the originators of the cultivation of guaraná (*Paullinia cupana*), a plant containing caffeine, from whose fruits a stimulating drink is made. Wolfgang Kapfhammer is grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for the generous support of research (HA5957/6-2) among the Sateré-Mawé as well as the CNPq, Brazil, for granting permission to carry out research (010581/2009-0) (cf. Kapfhammer 2004; 2007; 2009; Wright, Kapfhammer and Braune Wiik, in preparation for publication online).



Ill. 150: **Ranulfo de Oliveira und Obadias Batista Garcia in front of the "Emperor's House"**. Vienna, 2012. Photo: Wolfgang Kapfhammer

Nusoken

Links between apparently completely disparate civilizations are often found where they are least expected (Ill. 150). The imperial and royal splendor of the first district of Vienna aroused a special response among the Sateré-Mawé colleagues due to the fact that the Museum of Ethnology is housed in the former imperial building of the Neue Burg. Another factor was the story according to which Natterer undertook his journey at that time in the entourage of Archduchess Leopoldine, who set off for Brazil in order to marry the later emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro, and this gave the working visit unexpected and added significance. The *Imperador* is after all a person whom the Sateré-Mawé remember as a merging of the two Dom Pedros, nowadays still one of the most important figures in the mythology of the Sateré-Mawé. According to the narrative the first human beings lived in rocky place of origin called *nusoken*, in what was certainly an ambivalent "Paradise", which became increasingly uncomfortable because the sun shone there incessantly. The retreat from "Paradise" was headed by the *Imperador* who wanted to take the Indians with him "outside". However, distracted by palm trees bearing luxuriant fruit, the Indians missed the departure of the *Imperador's* ship. He left them behind in their forest environment, promising to remember them always by providing them with material goods.

This myth explains two things: on the one hand it explains the unequal distribution of material goods because it is the *Imperador* who takes the sought-after goods of the Whites and their "means of production" out to the cities of the Whites, and on the other hand the Indians, assisted by their shamans, are allowed to hunt and exploit other forest resources, which are guarded over by an animal mother (*miat ehary*) in *nusoken* rather like stone prototypes.

Nevertheless the relationship to the "emperor" is ambivalent. As a power relationship it stands for materially rewarding links with the "Avatars" of the *Imperador* in the form of state Indian authorities or local politicians. The price for such relationships which always seek salvation outside the sphere they inhabit, is however, increasing alienation from their own forest environment. The temptations of the urban world of the Whites erode the material and affective ties to their own resources and capacities, and the constant shortage of resources leads to conflict and disagreements. Indeed the main theme of the explanations made by the Indian colleagues revolved around the critical development of indigenous strategies in dealing with life.

Waraná

The tendency towards conflict and separation is one of the fundamental dilemmas in the cohabitation of Amazonian societies. This is all the more so because in attempting to assert themselves as independent, indigenous peoples towards the surrounding world, it would be necessary to put up a concerted appearance. The myth of the origins of guaraná, one of the central elements of the Sateré-Mawé civilization, can consequently also be interpreted as a model for social harmony in a society tending towards disintegration (Ill. 151). It forms the conclusion of a cycle that reports on events that have made their mark on today's world. The ugly but pleasantly smelling snake, of all things, succeeds in making the *Uniwawasap'i*, desired by all other animals, pregnant. Her pregnancy spoils the *Uniwawasap'i's* ability to serve her brothers as a knowledgeable healer, and the jealous relatives kill the child. *Uniwawasap'i* removes the eyes from the body and plants them; the first guaraná bush grows from the right eye. The grieving mother buries her child, not without prophesying to him by the grave a great future as a leading figure, which will succeed in organizing peaceful and productive cohabitation. Finally the first human couple arises from the grave: the first Mawé as "sons of the guaraná" (*waraná mempyt'in*).

Ever since then the ritual consumption of guaraná has served inner collection and is intended to evoke those "good words" (*sehay wakuat*), which, in a society without hierarchical institutions, are alone able to provide motivation for joint action. A bar of guaraná preserved in the Natterer collection testifies not only to the centuries-old tradition of the Sateré-Mawé of trading trans-regionally in guaraná as a product, but also to what can truly be described as the "guaraná culture" in the philosophy of the Sateré-Mawé.

By understanding the myth as a parable, Obadias Batista Garcia develops a complex ethical theory from the ritual use of guaraná which he requisitions as a guideline for every kind of political action: "In our civilization guaraná has great importance. For us it is a bible, a law, a constitution for our people. Guaraná is as if it were a chieftain, a great leader, just like the guaraná-mother prophesied at our origin. Guaraná guides the people, shows our people the way. This has been the tradition of the Sateré-Mawé



Ill. 151: **Dona Mariquinha (†), one of the greatest narrators of myths of the Sateré-Mawé, grating guaraná. Vida Feliz, Rio Andirá. 1999.** Photo: Wolfgang Kapfhammer

people for centuries. For guaraná is for us a word that means as much as 'the beginning of all knowledge'. For us all knowledge, the wisdom of the Sateré begins with guaraná. This is the significance of guaraná, in our language *waraná* [...] We use guaraná in every regard, on every opportunity: hunting, working, fishing, for every possible activity in the day-to-day life of the Sateré-Mawé. First of all we take guaraná. Rather like how in Christian life God is in first place. You first have to pray to God so that good things can happen. Nowadays I understand guaraná as a kind of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. [...] The only thing is that it is related in our way, according to our culture. In the culture of the Sateré-Mawé there is no paper, no writing. Nobody was able to read western letters. And so our forefathers told the story of the origin of the world, of humanity, of the laws of the world, in their way, and in so doing they took guaraná, which is the word of the beginning of all knowledge and all wisdom. This is how I understand the forefathers today. Guaraná. The formation of the Sateré was informal, it was related from father to son as a story.

However, many years later the Sateré began to read and to write, which appeared on the *puratig*. It was related that Guaraná was older. Or let's call it an informal doctrine (*política*), handed down from father to son. The *puratig* was the same doctrine (*política*),



Ill. 152: **The *puratig* of the Sateré-Mawé communities on the Rio Marau, chieftain Evaristo Miquilis, Nova Esperança, with Obadias Batista Garcia, who initiated the guaraná project.** Photo: Obadias Batista Garcia

but written down formally. And that was what people oriented themselves towards. *Waraná* is a certain kind of politics, the *puratig* is the same, merely that one is informal, the other is already formalized.

Uniawasap'i is also a doctrine (*politica*) and may appear like a woman but is not a woman, instead it is the power. [...] Why a woman? Because women are desired by everyone. Among animals this is no different than among human beings; the women are always desired by the men. That is why it says *Uniawasap'i*, the woman and yet not a woman but a certain kind of politics. In this world it is obsessed with power, in other words also in the world of the Sateré. The woman – *Uniawasap'i* – is power [...]

The woman was now made pregnant by the snake. In this history of mankind there was always the snake, our enemy. Always. He managed to make *Uniawasap'i* pregnant with this child. All the animals desired the woman *Uniawasap'i*. In those days the trees spoke, the animals spoke and they still do today, it is just that human beings do not understand their language any more. They all spoke to one another and understood one another. Well, they all liked *Uniawasap'i*. This means that they were all striving for power but not everyone can achieve it. She surrendered and had this child. The smell that the snake used was not perfume in the literal sense but the power of conviction. This is the power of argumentation, the power to conquer; here this has the form of a “perfume”, because one wears perfume, it smells nice and everyone considers the perfume to be good, and with this perfume the snake was able to win over the woman. This must be a lesson for a good chieftain and a good leader...

Then there were the uncles (of the child), the enemies, actually the enemies of mankind. There is always someone like that, like Satan. He used to be the angel of light, but from envy and the thirst for power a conflict occurred in heaven and he was banished; even though they were related they became enemies. [...] And the uncles wanted to kill the child and they did so. The same way that Jesus was killed from envy, and like Abel was killed by his brother from envy. That is the worst crime in this world, to be envious of one's nearest. Jesus was killed out of hatred by members of his own people, and in the same way the child was killed from envy. And it arose from death like Jesus was resurrected. [...] And at the moment of this resurrection the child's mother prophesied: ‘Look, you will be great, you have overcome death!’ In the same way that Jesus once overcame death and opened up the possibility of saving oneself. In the same way the child was killed, it rose again from death and its mother predicted that it would be the guaraná, the origin of all knowledge, that it would be a great leader, a great chieftain and would be respected. Yet under one condition: treat this power carefully! Do not use this power in order to harm your nearest. For to be a leader means to be *wará*. *Waraná* always has to be at the beginning. If not, it may well be that you are a great leader but not for the well-being of your people, but in order to destroy, and to create problems for your people, to sow discord among the chieftains. This can happen if there is no *wará*. This is what *waraná* means for us: *waraná* is law, a bible; *waraná* provides guidelines. It is like a constitution for us.” (OBG)

To a certain extent the “guaraná culture” is a utopia because the structural prerequisites and the historical challenges of a society of forest Indians are opposed to their realization. “It is the same with the *puratig* (see below). What is true of the *wará* is also true there: no matter whether it is conflict, war, or whether it is goodness, you can choose your path freely. But there it is written down what was informally contained in the *wará*. But that is the same. Throughout all the years it was handed down from father to son. Today, after 400 years of contact, the Sateré-Mawé have still not deviated from this path. We still believe in it, even though there has been extensive contact with the world of the Whites,



Ill. 153: **The New Testament in the language of the Sateré-Mawé with an illustration of the *puratig*.** Photo: KHM

with capitalism. It is not that I would condemn everything from the world of the Whites, but I do indeed condemn the majority of the Whites.

Similarly, a political direction exists among the Sateré which is not found within the *wará*, because even among the Sateré-Mawé there are a lot of conflicts. ‘Sateré’ is written in quotation marks here because on the one hand it designates the people as a whole, and on the other it is only one of the many clans that exist. There are assai-palm, *waraná* – I for instance belong to the clan *waraná* – tinamu, agouti, there are many clans. At that time there were conflicts among them because of jealousy, power struggles. Why? They moved completely outside the law of *wará*, of the *puratig*. They only wanted to enforce their own interests and there was a big conflict. They were still involved in these disputes when the colonizers came, and the Indians were weak and divided because of these inner struggles. That is why our people were on the retreat. Nowadays we are politically weak.” (OBG).

Puratig

Closely related to the ritual consumption of guaraná is the cult object *puratig*, actually a ceremonial club not dissimilar to those objects which are to be found in 19th-century collections. However, the Sateré-Mawé understand this object, which is nowadays preserved by a family in the Castanhal community on the Rio Andirá, not as a weapon but as a *patente*, a kind of document; the decorative carving is understood as “writing” (Ill. 152). A great chieftain had to be able to read this writing. The words spoken were considered to be absolutely binding and peace-bringing. This ritual was accompanied by the consumption of a particularly powerful guaraná.

“Well, to begin with guaraná is a great leader for us and is highly respected. Guaraná means the origin of all speech, just as his mother had predicted when her son was killed. When the uncles had killed him, she removed his eyes. When she planted them, she predicted what would happen. And that is precisely what has occurred nowadays in our culture: guaraná is respected like a great leading figure. However, it is accompanied by *puratig*. Always when the writing on the *puratig* was read out, the children were not allowed into the house to listen. While the *puratig* was read out, guaraná was grated on the *patawi*. It was grated very slowly by a woman. Only a small amount but nevertheless thick and strong. Then it was distributed to those present. They didn't take guaraná because they were thirsty, everyone took from the *sap'o* (the guaraná drink) and then the gourd was again placed on the *patawi*. The person who was able to read the *puratig* was highly respected. However, the children were not allowed to listen because they thought that a child who saw the *puratig* would go mad. That was what the ancients decided in those days. In our culture the *puratig* is also the Bible.

At that time we Indians lived in the forest. It was very different from today. How my father brought me up was different from today. In those days no children could read. Not even the adults could read and write. However, one day, in 1960, a missionary appeared from the United States. He showed us how we could write our language. Before that no one could read, not even the *puratig*. But the *puratig* is actually the Bible. When the *puratig* was read out loud, everyone was quiet and attentive. They listened to find out about the wisdom of the *puratig*. But no one could read our language. At that time the missionary began to write our language. A word like *y'y*, ‘water’, or ‘pay’, *paca*. Which letter, which letter? No one knew. But he wrote it down on paper and taught the adults. That is how they began to learn to read and they liked it. When they had learned to read, they also became acquainted with the word of God. When he had finished the Bible, all the children could already read. However, to begin with they were not allowed to see the *puratig* or be present when it was read out. Nowadays they too know the word of God. Today the children are no longer forbidden from coming in and learning. [...]

As said before, guaraná became a great leader in our culture. But why on earth did they not let anyone listen when the *puratig* was

being read out? Nowadays no one can read it any more! That was not our fault but that of our own fathers and grandfathers. Our grandfathers did not allow us to listen. If they had let us listen, no one would have forgotten how to read the *puratig*. We would still have the knowledge about the *puratig* just as we still have the knowledge about guaraná. Even today we still use *pa-tawi*, gourd and grating stone. The genuine *puratig* still exists nowadays in the community of Castanhal. But they don't let anyone see it, it is hidden in a room. That is why on the Andirá no one can read it any more. However, we do have the Bible." (RdO) According to the portrayal by Ranulfo de Oliveira the creative oral tradition of societies without written documents is not destroyed by the introduction of writing but rather it compensates the crisis in the traditional memory culture. In the iconography of the evangelical church communities of the Sateré-Mawé the *puratig* has indeed completely replaced the Christian cross (Ill. 153).

Wauamat

The ritual of initiation *wauamat* is a mythological and ritual complex, which perhaps provides a more realistic picture of an internally differentiated Amazonian clan society, in fact it should actually construct it. In Portuguese it is called *dança da tucandeira* and in the first place impresses by the massive pain ordeal which the young initiates have to undergo, when they have to put their hands in braided "gloves" full of poisonous ants (Ill. 154). This painful "impregnation" of body and spirit prepares them to withstand illness and makes the boy a successful hunter and good husband, in brief: a *peessoa bem integra* (OBG), a "complete", "integral" person. Incidentally, Natterer was also aware of the function of the ritual and he collected several of these *tucandeira* gloves.

Natterer writes, "Only a few days ago I received from a friend, Capitão Diogo de Barros Cardozo von Mauhé, a *missão* on the Rio Mauhé (appears to be Rio Itrupadi of the Arrowsmiths) a bow and arrows from the Mauhé nation and 2 double sleeves braided from palm straw, which they fill between the lining with *tucanguiras*, a kind of poisonous, stinging ant. They then put the arm inside and dance around so as to show their strength in overcoming the pain of the many stings. In particular this is allegedly a condition for marriage, and anyone who submits to the pain has to withdraw shamefully and does not get a wife." (Letter to Karl von Schreibers, 29 June 1836.) The songs accompanying the dance and pain ordeal refer to the mythical origin of the festivity, when the armadillo brought up the ants from the underground realm of the snake woman. Another genre of song refers to conflicts and violent events of the past and celebrates them. Thus it installs the candidate in the right position in the social network but also intensifies the fractures contained within it: "Over the course of time the number of people grew. Conflicts broke out among the relatives: 'I am only a relative of the people of my own clan, as the son of my father [...] this is my clan, that is a *waraná*,



Ill. 154: *Tucandeira* dance in Nova America community. Rio Andirá. 1998. Photo: Wolfgang Kapfhammer

my relative, this one here too!' As time went on, one community became two or three and after all the time and all the many people great conflicts broke out. Food became scarce because there were so many people. And again they were in conflict and at war with one another. They had the custom of the *wauamat* in general, for only one people, regardless of whether they were *waraná*, *wassa'i*, *inambú* or any other clan, because to begin with there was only one nation. When they started to kill each other, they began to make verses about it at the festivity. Some clans used to listen from the distance. And when the others sang songs about their clans, they paid a shaman who set out to kill the singer. This is what happened at these conflicts in the beginning." (OBG)

Furthermore, the songs of conflict of the *wauamat* transport reminiscences of historic events: they sing about war trading from the time of the Cabanagem revolt as well as conflicts with FUNAI civil servants in more recent times. These songs can also be understood as stories expressing resistance, a resistance that the Sateré-Mawé have put up since the Whites (*wahi kyt'i*) have turned up like the pearls in a necklace (*wahi*), as expressed in the poetic language of these songs.

Paini

The most spectacular pieces of the Sateré-Mawé in the Natterer collection are certainly the wood-carved snuff tablets of shamans (*paini*). The artistic medium of the art of wood-carving has completely disappeared nowadays; however, this is not true of the messages conveyed by this medium. Corresponding to the dichotomous pattern of original (moral) perfection and the consequent decline, the two Indian colleagues distinguish between good shamans and those who abused their power. On the one

hand the shamans were able, by means of their good relations with the animal mother (*miat ehary*), to ensure that the desired game was available for hunting, and on the other they were in their function as masters over death-bringing powers and forces decisive actors in the network of social conflicts. The ability to manipulate the substance *satek* (fatal poison), is expressed no least in the snake sculptures on the snuff tablets. These utensils served as repositories for a hallucinogenic snuff powder (*aipe*); intoxicated by drugs the shamans were able to invoke and incorporate their auxiliary spirits.

As experts on concealed realities they were also able to decipher the poetically encoded songs of the *wauamat*. "The shaman understood everything and was able to interpret these songs. In old times, when a festivity was organized, the *paini* went there but did not show himself. From a hiding place he listened to the songs of the others. One was singing there at the festivity and then it happened that at first they went to war, killing and massacring, and then, full of joy about their victory, they organized a festivity at which they sang songs about what they had done. The one who had lost then sat in his hiding place and heard what they were singing, and many of them, because they were shamans, used these utensils lying here on the table in front of us, and killed the singer. He carried out his work as a shaman so that he did not have to go directly to someone to kill him; it was more a case of him cutting his throat only through his work. The singer began to cough, and that was it, he coughed and coughed until he died. This went on to such an extent until they prohibited the *Tucandeira* dance!" (OBG)

In more recent times critical developments made the traditional mechanisms of conflict and conflict regulation escalate to an endless spiral of violence and reciprocal violence. Since the 1960s the evangelical conversion movement has been not least a kind of anti-witchcraft movement which discredited the shamans: "As Obadias has already said, in former times there were many shamans. My maternal grandfather was also a shaman. He told us everything about the work of shamans. If someone became ill, then in time the shaman would find out the cause. Nevertheless, he did not find out which illness it was but accused someone else. But in fact it was only deception; sometimes there are shamans who tell the truth but often they do not. My grandfather related that when the shamans intended to carry out witchcraft, they hid a leaf or something similar here in their hand or under their tongue, merely to lead the ailing person to believe something [...] He told us that himself! Me, his grandson. At that time he had already converted to the Protestant faith. He explained to us all the machinations of a shaman [...] I no longer trust the shamans because we know that they mostly only deceive people. Many have died because of something like this. There are still some shamans but those like before no longer exist. Formerly they were respected, like doctors. But nowadays on the Rio Andirá there are hardly any more." (RdO)

Pi'ig e hap

The challenge of controlling potentially deadly powers and forces has not necessarily disappeared with shamanism and tried and tested strategies for solutions continue to exist. As the Indian colleagues explained to us on the basis of the objects discussed, the adoption of decorative motifs from one medium, the wood of the old snuff tablets, by another – the basketwork (*pi'ig e hap*) used for processing manioc – did not occur by chance. They said that both things, the work of shamanism as well as the preparation of poisonous bitter manioc, the basic food of the Amazonian forest Indians, was ultimately a kind of control over "poisonous" substances (*satek*).

Wauamat II

The symbolism of the *wauamat* festivity contains the principle idea of being exposed to ambivalent "poisonous" substances. The fact that recently the *wauamat* has undergone a kind of revitalization may be explained by the fascination of aesthetic realization, in the will to bear cultural self assertion not only (externally) on the lips but also to realize meaningfully indigenous life (inwardly). From this point of view the *wauamat* festivity can also be seen as a kind of ontological resistance, as a strategy of bracing oneself for the forces which break down the individual identity. These forces are symbolized by the seductive arts of the snake woman *Uniamoire'i*, from whose vagina the ants came which were ultimately stolen by the armadillo. That is why an increasing number of young Sateré-Mawé expose themselves to this extremely painful ritual application, thus following a need for deep emotion as a strategy of resistance against misery and lack of perspective of life on the reservation.



Ill. 155: Assembly for a seminar in the Nova Esperança community, Rio Marau, during which a "Council of Seniors" (*nāg nia*) was founded. April 2012. (Source: www.nusoken.com)

Puratig II

As a political activist Obadias Batista Garcia always embeds his explanations in the context of political oppression precisely by indigenous local politicians, to which his fraction is exposed. In order to counteract what he describes as the decline in traditional, consensus-seeking mechanisms, his group is relying increasingly on instrumentalizing anew the mechanisms conveyed by the old *puratig* ritual for creating social harmony. Immediately after the two colleagues had visited Vienna, a meeting took place on the Rio Marau at which the group of the *nãg nia*, the “old ones” was founded. This intends to give the category of the old “wise men”, those with knowledge about culture, the authority and persuasive power of chieftains, again greater social standing and recognition (*Ill. 155*).

Global waraná

Guaraná is no longer merely at the centre of the material and spiritual culture of the Sateré-Mawé, but as the main product of a Fair Trade company, the *Consórcio dos Produtores Sateré-Mawé* has given rise to a movement of cultural revitalization: “Nowadays we are trying by means of guaraná to give these values new life. There are about 140 villages where about 12,000 Sateré-Mawé live; outside the *area indígena* it is probably about 3000 in the cities of Manaus, Parintins and Barreirinha. Many have moved away from the área because the system supports migration. The educational system is oriented towards integration, the people move away [...] Moreover the Sateré-Mawé are increasingly involved in party politics: there is an Indian mayor, Indian councilors, Indian election managers. Ultimately that has led to great disagreement. A mentality of dependence prevails because the government subsidizes people by means of pensions, maternity allowance, *bolsa família* etc. The government introduces these ‘social projects’ only to ensure that they are re-elected. It’s no different for the Sateré. The result is that the área indígena, the forest, the bio-diversity, all the wealth that can be found there is no longer appreciated. They consider it much better to be subsidized by the government than to take care of their own territory and all its biological diversity with all its wealth. Thus the Sateré-Mawé people are gradually losing their culture.

I myself have actually been fighting for them for twenty years. I started that project because I was aware of the social, economic and cultural effects that my people are exposed to. This also includes the lack of agreement between leading personalities who are no longer aware of our history, the politics of the *wará*, of the *waraná*, the politics of the *puratig*. They have no regard for all that and prefer Western policies. They remain divided among one another. I try to prevent the culture of the guaraná from being forgotten. It is not by chance that the guaraná project is called *Projeto Guaraná. Etno-desenvolvimento do povo Sateré-Mawé da Terra Indígena Andirá-Marau*; the name was created because it is based on the ethics of *wará*.

When the child of *Uniwasp’i* was dead and she buried it, the mother prophesied this: ‘My son, perhaps you believe you are the poor victim but the contrary is true! You will be great, you will be recognized worldwide, you will lead your people and declare them to be mature!’

She buried the child saying these words. That is why we are here today in Austria so as to talk about *waraná*, far away from there but it is nothing other than guaraná that has brought us here. Thus the guaraná project emerged from this. In 1993 we began to work and we thereby followed a policy oriented towards the people and one that respects the culture. When we sell guaraná we are not just selling guaraná in itself by also the culture of the guaraná. It is about our culture, about the knowledge of the Sateré. It is not only a matter of putting the hand into the ants, of learning how to make manioc tubes and sieves, all the craftwork, no. The culture of the Sateré-Mawé consists of leading a good and proper life. This knowledge not only benefits the Sateré but the entire world. The aim is to respect the environment, to respect questions of the ecological balance, to work in such a way that one can provide for oneself, to create wages and work, to offer an alternative form of education in the villages, to produce without being destructive. The kind of production that I prefer nowadays should also still be possible for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. That is what I call sustainability! These are the policies, the education that I would like to promote with the guaraná project. [...] The guaraná project is not simply a kind of trade; it is more a matter of establishing a strategy, a policy occurring in the context of the policy of *wará*. [...] It is a matter of adopting this again; it should be respected so that the prophecy can come true. It is still a long way but there is no other!” (OBG)

Nowadays the project is an enterprise with a turnover of about 800,000 Real per year. Besides the contracts with the European distributors of Fair Trade products, the association with the “slow food” movement, which is very present in the media, is having an impact, and moreover the Sateré-Mawé are the first indigenous group in Brazil (and indeed only the third group in Brazil) which is allowed to use the highly sought-after seal *denominação de origem controlada* (designation of controlled origin).

Nusoken.com

The reward for the guaraná project is not least the redeeming of the promise that the emperor (*Imperador*) made to the Indians left behind in the forest. In an e-mail dated 18 April 2012 Obadias wrote to us about the meeting on the Rio Marau: “The story in the booklet⁴ was an important point (during the meeting) because it had a lot to do with the *Imperador*, who took the Whites (*kãikãiasig*) with him. Nowadays he is repaying the Sateré-Mawé by the fact that the Whites buy our guaraná. It was also a strong

⁴ With reference to the Sateré a brief description of the Natterer collection and of the objects of the Sateré-Mawé it contains, which we compiled together during the visit.

argument for the founding of the group of the *Nãg nia* (the wise men). For the first time one of our meetings was opened with the story of the origin of the *waraná*, which contains the origin of all knowledge. Everyone was very impressed and they all wanted every meeting in future to begin in that way, because this story is of great importance for the young generation; there is no other way for development. Therefore we founded the group of the *Nãg nia*. We can now work with these people”. (OBG) As mentioned the emperor took money and goods from *nusoken* to the outside world of the Whites; on the other hand the means of the forest Indians for coping with life remained with the Sateré-Mawé. The mythological recognition that these principles are anchored in the place of origin *nusoken* provided not least the inspiration for using this meaning-bearing word with as trademark and web domain of the consortium. Thus it is expressed that the “products of the Sateré have a value which has been added at a place superior than that of the market.”⁵ Breaches and continuity, loss of culture and efforts in revitalization characterize the life of the indigenous population of Brazil today. It is undoubtedly of prime importance to ensure physical survival. The English ethnologist Peter Gow once wrote (1991) that the Indians do not spare a thought for the preservation of their culture as long as they do not know how and if their children will survive. The recognition of land rights was an important step by the Brazilian government in guaranteeing the survival of indigenous groups.

Yet what will come after the victory in the political struggle? Processes of revitalization also extend to other spheres of culture in

⁵ E-mail from Mauricio Fraboni, ACOPIAMA, to Obadias Batista Garcia and Wolfgang Kapfhammer dated 24 January 2012. The ACOPIAMA works on coordination between the indigenous consortium and the international Fair Trade market.

that they again try to give life a meaning beyond that of purely physical survival. The museums with their ethnographic collections can here serve as a source so as to follow the tracks of one’s own history.

However, the cooperation with Obadias Batista Garcia and Ranulfo de Oliveira shows that still much more is possible: it is intended to create a fruitful dialogue for both sides that looks towards the future. “When I arrived here in Vienna, to be honest I was not quite sure what our work here would involve. I had no idea about the work of anthropologists, naturalists, the work of people who take care of old things. For me it simply meant a kind of exhibition of something like trophies. That is what the concept museum meant for me. But with you I have learned that this is not the case. It is a matter of understanding today’s world. But for that we have to understand the past. We have to understand the problems of the past so as to be able to deal with today’s problems. So as then to be able to build up the world of tomorrow. This is what I have learned here. A culture does not allow itself to be locked up, to hide itself because the world is not a thing that can be taken to a different place or that can be stolen. Culture is knowledge, that is how I would define it. Culture is not lost at the moment when you sell your craftwork. Culture is lost when the knowledge of a nation is lost; it is the knowledge that is lost, it is not stolen. This is the value of this museum, of these archives, everything that is collected here. Through this we can learn a lot. For me this is also a kind of education: becoming acquainted with the world of the past in order to understand the present so that one can build up the future.” (OBG)

MAKUXI, SATERÉ-MAWÉ

Club. Makuxi, Guyana. 1830. Wood, cotton, stone, L. 36 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 2.058

Block war clubs were typical Makuxi weapons for duels in the 19th century. Today the Makuxi no longer recognize them as a part of their material culture. They have been forgotten as a symbol for intertribal conflicts in favor of a Pan-American identity. In the striving to assert their demands with the national state, a peaceful co-existence among all indigenous groups living in Guyana is postulated for the past. The negation of the clubs is the most impressive example of the Makuxi reconstructing their history in order to place these in the service of the present. (CA)



Headdress. Makuxi, Guyana. 1830. Feathers, plant fibers, L. 90 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 2.059

Such artistically produced feather headdresses also now belong to the past. On the part of the Makuxi it is argued that it is better for reasons of species protection to abstain from the killing of birds for the production of feather objects. In this way the loss is interpreted in light of a positive background and integrated into the conception the Makuxi have of themselves as human beings who use their habitat sustainably. This stands in contradiction with the fact that birds are still part of the Makuxi diet and several are attributed with beneficial health effects. Herons however, for instance, whose feathers were also used for this headwear, were never consumed. (CA)



Apron. Makuxi, Guyana. 1830. Glass beads, cotton, W. 30 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 2.083

The shaman's wife in the Surama community remembers the time when all women still wore these aprons. She connects this, however, with the memory of sexual violations and the intertribal robbing of women. Did women like taking on the western style of dress because they felt more protected by this? Encountering people, who experienced the Indians as 'naked' surely especially influenced the women's relationships with their bodies. The body socialized by aprons, decorative objects and body painting experienced a sexualizing from the outside world, which ultimately also effected the self-image. (CA)

Headdress. Makuxi, Guyana. 1830. Peccary teeth, cotton, parts of bird skin with remains of bones, glass beads, metal, L. 76 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 2.066

The teeth of the peccary, a type of wild boar, were used for this headwear. Here, too, the Makuxi comply with an ecological interpretation: too many peccaries would have to be killed to produce headwear such as this. All the same, herds of peccaries, which sometimes appear close by the villages are detained and killed. The discrepancy between words and actions shows that the Makuxi relationship with forest animals has changed: they still have clear knowledge of animal behavior at their command and carry on the hunt without endangering animal populations. The spiritual relationship with the animals, also expressed in the use of their teeth, feathers and bones, is by contrast for the most part a thing of the past. (CA)



Household equipment. Makuxi, Guyana. 1830. Plant fibers, strips of palm leaves, wood, palm tree bark, cotton, pigment, palm ribs, strips of leaves, L. max. 58 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 2.091, 2.092, 2.106, 2.109, 2.111, 2.112, 2.674

The household equipment from Johann Natterer's collection are most familiar with the Makuxi, as many of these things still find their use today. In this way the patterns used in basket weaving could be identified by name, among them the pattern on the manioc sieve, labeled as 'Diamond Fish'. (CA)



Household equipment. Makuxi, Guyana. 2005. Plant fibers, plant strips, string, wood, bast, natural rubber, L. max. 263 cm. Augustat Coll., Inv. Nos. 184.192, 184.195, 184.198, 184.199, 184.200

In the Makuxi material culture a continuity is still to be found in the area of household equipment. Baskets, fire fans and other equipment for the processing of the manioc are still used today for individual households. The large water container crafted from natural rubber is noteworthy. (CA)



Hammock. Makuxi, Guyana. 2005. Cotton, L. 263 cm. Augustat Coll., Inv. No. 184.186

Hammocks made of cotton are produced today above all for sales, since the production is very costly. The cotton is harvested and processed to thread with a hand spindle. Finally the hammock is woven with the help of a loom. Alongside her many other chores, a woman produces two hammocks per year. It is also not simple to find a buyer. At the price of \$200 per piece it is too expensive for tourists who are unaware of the costly hand production compared to the much more cheaply industrially produced hammocks. (CA)

Shamans' rattle. Makuxi, Guyana. 2005 and 1830. Calabash, seeds, cotton, feathers, wood, rubber, stones, L. max. 55 cm. Augustat Coll., Inv. No. 184.201; Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 2.096

The most important task of the shamans is healing the sick. Disease is frequently the result of a robbery of the soul carried out by spiritual beings. These beings lie in waiting for people in the forest, in the mountains, at waterfalls and in deep water. It is only the shamans who are able to see the robbers and are in command of effective weapons against them. They can liberate the souls and lead them back into the body of their owners. The curative process is accompanied by singing and the rhythmic sounds of the shamans' rattle. The significance of the shamans was greatly diminished with the introduction of diseases in the colonial time and the access to western medicine. Due to the revaluation of indigenous knowledge, increasing numbers of young men can however again be found, who take it upon themselves to go through the tedious and difficult initiation of the shamans. (CA)



Animal figures. George Tancredi and Rufina da Silva, Makuxi, Guyana. 2005. Natural rubber, dye, L. max. 23.2 cm. Augustat Coll., Inv. Nos. 184.205, 184.206, 187.265, 187.266, 187.267, 187.268

George Tancredi lives in the community of Nappi in the Rupununi-Savannah, the center for the production of sculptures made of natural rubber. Along with the models of cottages, which stage the traditional aspects in the life of the Makuxi, it is above all animals George Tancredi and his pupil Rufina da Silva depict. In doing so they not only deal with animals serving as food such as fish, but also animals such as harpies which count as spiritual beings. Works by George Tancredi can be seen at the National Art Gallery in Georgetown. (CA)



Set of snuff utensils. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830. Guaraná, paricá seeds, nut shells, wood, quills, feathers, L. max. 58 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 1.369, 1.371, 1.374, 1.375, 1.379, 1.382, 1.384

A complete set of utensils is presented here, which were necessary to the Sateré-Mawé shamans for sniffing the hallucinogenic paricá powder (pestle and mortar for pulverizing the paricá seeds, a board in the shape of a snake as a tray for the powder, a sniffing tube made of harpy quills, a net bag). Among the Sateré-Mawé two varieties of shamanism are recognizable: for one, the shaman as the ambivalent manipulator of life and death, who understands how to deal with the deathly poison of the Great Snake *moi ok*. It is also he who diagnoses lapses and mistakes in nutrition in cases of illnesses or reveals the cause of the disease as the curse from an envious contemporary. On the other hand, the shaman is a benevolent and unselfish provider of game, who employs his good relationships with the 'animal mother' for the well-being of his clientele. (WK)



Snuff tablets. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830. Wood, pigment, L. max. 26.5 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 1.376, 1.377

The carved snuff tablets depict a culmination in the art of the Sateré-Mawé, an art which however completely disappeared in the 20th century. Frequently the handle is shaped like a snake. The Great Snake *moi ok* governs over the rainy season, the time of the increased danger of disease, which demands the appropriately intensive effort of shamanic power. On the other board, the décor of blooms, butterflies and coupling dragon flies compliments those of the snake shaped tablet. The play of the insects implies the hot and sunny dry period, when people leave behind their continued hostilities within the village community and 'blossom' in the small family community at their gardens in the forest. The snuff tablets' iconography demonstrates the strong contextual embedding of the ritual consumption of drugs within the yearly cycle. (WK)



Guaraná-ensemble. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830 and 2012. Calabash, rattan, fish tongues, guaraná, plastic. Natterer Coll., Inv. No. 1.367; Private Coll.

Due to its caffeine content guaraná has a stimulating effect. The cultivation of this is the particular cultural achievement of the Sateré-Mawé. Harvesting the fruits and production of the sticks are men's work. The drink is prepared by women grating the sticks on a wet stone or fish tongue over a gourd filled with water. During this ritual session in the house of the chief, the gourd rind rests with the drink on a stand with imagery of the world axis. Already in the 17th century trades were transacted to a large extent in Amazonia. Today guaraná is one of the most important agribusiness products of Amazonia. (WK)



Ritual equipment. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830. Wood, bones of a stag, feathers, hair of the great anteaters, bamboo, string, pigment, L. max. 33 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 1.363, 1.372, 1.373, 1.381

Auxiliary spirits from a variety of cosmic domains support the Sateré-Mawé shamans. The ritual tools shown here and the flute served in summoning spe-

cific spirit persons. From the animal materials used here, conclusions about the spirit persons arise: the feather ornaments for instance alludes to the toucan, which likes to eat the fruits of the acai palm. In doing so it also swallows the pits and then spits them back up. The spirit-individual also possesses this same technique as does a shaman when healing the sick. He sucks the malady from the patient's body and then spits it back out again for all to see. (WK)



Gloves for the ant ordeal. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830 and 2012. Palm leaf, plant fibers, dye, L. max. 60 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 1.366; Private ownership John D. Marshall

The ritual of the Amazonian Indians condense manifold threads of meaning and bring them to the point: the boys of the Sateré-Mawé are introduced into the clan-society of the adult men through the experience of pain, jarring

both to the body as well as the spirit. In addition they are prepared for the life of a warrior, hunter, husband and immunized against disease and hardships. They are 'inoculated' with the poison of the *tucandeira* ants, whose bites are suffered by the boys at a dance celebration. The ants are located in the plaited 'gloves', whose aesthetic formation alludes to the mythic origins of the celebration: the armadillo once fetched the ants from the underworld of the seductive snake woman. (WK)



Sieves and manioc-squeezers. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 21st century. Palm ribs, plant fibers, wood, dye. Private ownership Wolfgang Kapfhammer, John D. Marshall

The preparation of bitter manioc, a staple food of the Amazon Forest Indians, containing hydrocyanic acid is – as is the work of the shaman – ultimately a type of control of poisonous substances. Even in the original myth of the manioc, a longer period of experimentation with a deadly impact was necessary until success was achieved at processing the new plant into the refreshing manioc beer. Not only the stories told bear witness to the capability of coping with life, rather also the work performed in everyday life: the woven utensils supply necessary technology for sustenance and establish a social life in that the work of the man makes possible the woman's work. Sieves and manioc-squeezers (*tipitís*, seen here as models) are employed in different stages of the complicated procedure of processing the manioc in order to eliminate the deadly poison from the foodstuff. (WK)



Gloves for the ant ordeal. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 1830. Palm leaf, plant fibers, dye, L. 135 cm. Natterer Coll., Inv. Nos. 1.365, 1.364

The ant ordeal symbolizes the sexual encounter with the snake woman: the physical pain makes the social dilemma of a marriage between potential enemies palpable. The two round specimens of gloves from the Natterer collection form a masculine and feminine pair, which, visible only to the experts, distinguish themselves from others in the weaving technique. (WK)



Gloves for the ant ordeal. Sateré-Mawé, Lower Amazonas, Brazil. 21st century. Strips of palm leaves, palm leaf ribs, plant fibers, inner bark, dye, L. max. 52 cm. Coll. from the University of Marburg

The woven objects, put on the boys at the initiation, distinguish themselves in their form, pattern and the intended painful effect. Each boy may select the glove himself. The more varied models used, the more beautiful the celebration is. There is a basic difference between a round and flat type, whereas the Indian designations allude to symbols in nature and often have to do with a successful hunt. A feather ornament is placed on most glove models: below a wreath of white harpy down, above that are long, swaying macaw feathers, each concluded by a roundly cut feather disc again from the harpy. This feather ornament alludes to the mythical significance of the harpy: after a retaliation campaign against the turtle, the murderer of his father, the harpy arranges the first *tucandeira* celebration. (WK)