



*A Blend of Blood and Tobacco:  
Shamans and Jaguars among the  
Parakanã of Eastern Amazonia*  
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Shamanism is Siberia's most successful exported product. Humble immigrants who traversed the Bering Strait, tens of thousands of years ago, originally diffused it throughout the Americas, and it is now found all over the world in multiple guises. Typing the word "shamanism" in an Internet search mechanism will uncover a universe of neoshamanic products: vision quest classes, ayahuasca tourism, healing consultancy, shamanistic aerobics, promises of illumination, and spiritual holism. Every Internet site offers some definition of shamanism, generally in the spirit of Mircea Eliade: that is, the ancient technique of ecstasy, the base of all religious phenomena, not itself a religion. All sites draw heavily on the ideas of trance and the soul's journey in order to propose a loving linkage with all beings in the world, a holistic transpecific and multidimensional network.

The notion of auxiliary spirits also appears in some Internet sites. According to one: "Shamanic work is done with the aid of a helping ally of some sorts that the shaman has befriended. They work together as a cooperative team, with the ally being an intermediary between different levels of reality and the shaman, an engineer of altering states of consciousness." Among these allies, animal and plant spirits abound, with a hegemony of felines and narcotics. A praised partner is the jaguar, whose wisdom includes the capacity of understanding the patterns of chaos, of facilitating soul work and empowering the self, of shifting shapes and psychic sights. A cherished vegetal is the ayahuasca, which "focuses and aligns the patient with the archaic essence of spirituality," all the way down to the cellular level.<sup>1</sup>

To a specialist in Amazonian shamanism, the most noticeable fact about

④ this myriad of neoshamanic sites and rites is not its profusion but rather the absence of blood and tobacco. Although hallucinogens are extremely important for shamanic practice in some parts of Amazonia, their consumption is not as widespread as that of tobacco. *Nicotiana rustica*, the most common species cultivated in the tropical forest, is “the principal and nearly universal intoxicant used” in the region (Wilbert 1987:4). Consumed either alone or in combination with other drugs, tobacco is the hallmark of shamanic activity.

The other neglected substance is blood. I do not refer here to the use of human or animal blood in shamanistic ceremonies, which, as far as I know, is absent in Amazonia, nor do I refer to the link between shamanism and cannibalism or, more generally, predation. We know that one of the shaman's functions is to favor hunting and warfare expeditions. We also know that shamans are held capable of magically killing their adversaries and that many Amazonian people do not clearly differentiate the shaman from the witch. These facts are manifestations of a deeper schema, which structures the relationship with all others in the cosmos and connects shamanism to other social practices like warfare and hunting. Elsewhere, I have explored at length this structural correlation, and will only note its demonstration here (see Fausto 1999a, 1999b, 2001a). I will focus, rather, on jaguar symbolism, which may reveal new aspects of this correlation.

The association between the shaman and the jaguar, whose capacity for killing measures only with that of humans, has been known since the first centuries of colonization. Consider that “the [Guarani] magicians, or more properly imposters, who arrogate to themselves full power of warding and inflicting disease and death, of predicting future events, of raising floods and tempests, of transforming themselves into tigers, and performing I know not what other prenatal feats, they religiously venerate” (Dobrizhoffer 1970 [1784]: vol. 1, 63). For the missionaries, the shamans’ ability to transform themselves into the feline stood as evidence of their intimate rapport with the devil, the Great Transformer.<sup>2</sup> The priests were also looking for a transformation, but an internal one, which should happen once and for all: conversion. They abhorred native masks and facial painting, manifesting the deep-rooted Catholic suspicion toward the masquerade.<sup>3</sup> In Amazonia, on the contrary, these are central elements of a transformational world (Rivière 1994), in which the key transforming substance is tobacco, and jaguar-becoming is the most common metamorphosis. As Reichel-Dolmatoff writes, “shamans and jaguars are thought to be almost identical, or at least equivalent, in their power, each in his own sphere of action, but occasionally able to exchange their roles” (1975:44). Another author affirms that “if one concept cutting across geographic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries among South American Indians can be singled out, it

is that of qualitative identity between jaguars and shamans and accordingly their interchangeability of form" (Furst 1968:154; Wilbert 1987:193).

We also know that the jaguar haunts another important semantic domain and social practice in Amazonia: warfare and cannibalism (literal or symbolic). This is also a well-known fact since the sixteenth century. Consider now that "this same Konyan Bebe had then a great vessel full of human flesh in front of him and was eating a leg which he held to my mouth, asking me to taste it. I replied that even beast[s] which were without understanding did not eat their own species, and should a man devour his fellow creatures? But he took a bite saying, *Jau wara see: 'I am a tiger; it tastes well,'* and with that I left him" (Staden 1928 [1557]:110). In this event, narrated by the German seafarer Hans Staden, a Tupinambá chief identifies itself with a jaguar while savoring a human leg. Perhaps he does it only to tease his unwilling guest (and future food). But there is something else about this odd dialogue—a revealing misunderstanding: Staden thinks of cannibalism as eating the same, whereas Cunhambebe equates it to eating like the jaguar and occupying the position of a predator, not of a prey.<sup>4</sup> Modern ethnographies contain many examples of the identification of warriors with jaguars, and of killing with (symbolic) cannibalism. One may thus ask: What is the common thread that links warfare and shamanism to the jaguar? And what is it to eat like the jaguar? \*

To address these questions, I will resort to my own data on the Parakanã, a Tupi-speaking people of southeastern Amazonia. Their population totals some eight hundred individuals dispersed in seven villages along the Xingu and Tocantins river basins. They were drawn into state administration in the 1970s and 1980s, but theretofore they practiced warfare and strongly relied on the hunting of big terrestrial mammals. The emphasis on these two activities increased during the twentieth century, especially among the western Parakanã—a fact that may have reinforced the predatory aspect of their shamanism (Fausto 2001a). I do not mean to imply, however, that predation is absent in the shamanism of other Amazonian peoples where warfare is less central a practice or one that went into disuse longer ago.<sup>5</sup> Much to the contrary, I claim that there is an intrinsic link between warfare and shamanism.

### *A Stench of Blood*

Strictly speaking, there are no shamans among the Parakanã, only dreamers. No one attributes this role to himself, and no one is publicly recognized as being a shaman.<sup>6</sup> The difference between a dreamer (*opoahiweté-wa'é*) and a shaman (*moropyteara*) concerns the ability to heal: only the last is held capable of extracting the pathogenic agents that cause diseases, known

shamans are capable  
of both harming + healing

as *karowara*. Few dreamers admit to having seen one in their dreams, because it is equal to admitting the possibility of being a witch. The stigma is stronger than the prestige, thus discouraging the institutionalization of the shaman's role. This is perhaps one of the effects of the emphasis on predation among the Parakanã: to make the shaman an unfeasible figure.

But what exactly is *karowara*? Why is seeing it equal to being a witch? The Parakanã are not very loquacious on these questions. But we can explore the concept in a comparative way, because it is a very common one among Tupi/Guarani-speaking peoples. Ordinarily *karowara* is associated with cannibal spirits, who cause diseases by eating, from the inside, the flesh of humans. Among the Wayãpi, for instance, it is a synonym for the *anhanga* (the Tupi/Guarani cannibal monster) and one of the shamans' offensive weapons (Gallois 1988). Among the Asurini do Xingu, *Karowara* are anthropomorphic spirits with whom the shaman interacts and who may penetrate a human body and eat it up (Müller 1990).

The best comparative data about the *karowara* are provided by the Asurini do Tocantins, a people very close in language and culture to the Parakanã, who do have shamans in the strict sense of the term. The definitive experience of a novice shaman is the dreaming about the jaguar, from whom he has to extract the *karowara*. Before doing that, however, he is submitted to a test: he has to eat the jaguar's food, which is raw meat full of blood. If he fails, he wakes up vomiting; if he succeeds, he is ready to suck a *karowara* from the jaguar, which he will retain in his mouth as the source of his curing power (Andrade 1992:132–37). During his professional life, he will repeat this act many times, but instead of keeping the *karowara* he extracts from his patients he will spit and inter them.

Before dreaming about the jaguar, the novices are ritually trained by an established shaman. He prepares the teeth of some animals and insufflates them. The teeth start to move by themselves, becoming a *karowara*. The shaman inserts the *karowara* into a long cigar, which the novices smoke during a ritual known as *opetymo* (“eating tobacco”).<sup>7</sup> They absorb the *karowara* and have to learn to control it and not be controlled by it—a hard task for a beginner. This is why menstruating women are advised not to attend the ritual: the novice may lose control of himself and, smelling the scent of fresh blood, attack the women (Andrade 1992:128).

In sum, to be a shaman among the Asurini do Tocantins implies eating like the jaguar, and by our (and Cunhambebe's) definition, to be a cannibal. We also begin to see that eating like the jaguar implies a form of cuisine or, better, its absence: cannibalism is equivalent to homophagy and hematophagy, eating raw meat and blood.

Some Parakanã facts support the association between blood and shamanic power that we find among the Asurini do Tocantins. As with the

latter, they do not think of the *karowara* as spirits. In fact, they rarely postulate the existence of spirits. *Karowara* are pathogenic objects controlled by shamans, with no autonomous volition but rather only a compulsion to eat human flesh.<sup>8</sup> Although very few people admit to dreaming about the “master of the *karowara*” (*karowarijara*), the Parakanã hold that to acquire a curing power a shaman must suck the *karowara* from this entity, which is variously described as a bat, a capybara, or an anthropomorphic creature. The presence in this series of the capybara, a large vegetarian rodent, may cause wonder, but it is easy to explain. The Parakanã, as do the majority of the Tupi/Guarani, consider the capybara to have the stench of blood. The smell is classified as *pyji'oa* (“odor of blood”) whose verbal form is *pyji'o*. All things that *pyji'o* are connected in some way to shamanism, particularly to witchcraft. That is why one should never eat capybara, or even bring a dead one to the village. Nevertheless, there is an animal that has been consumed, despite its smell of blood: the Parakanã cooked selected parts of the giant otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*) and gave them to young men to make them dream. The giant otter is called *jawataranga*, which I gloss as “the worn jaguar.”<sup>9</sup> This otter is a very aggressive predator; it is for the fishes what the jaguar is for the mammals.

healing powers  
Come from the  
Consumption of  
blood

The more significant evidence of the association between blood and shamanic power lies elsewhere. Among the Parakanã, the main way for a man to develop his capacity for dreaming is to follow the road of the jaguar; that is, to be a predator (not only of animals, but above all of humans). Killing is conceived as a form of symbolic hematophagy because it is said that it “makes the killer’s mouth smell of blood” (*majaropyji'o*). This stench never disappears: the killer can only resort to the tobacco to “perfume his mouth” (*majaropipi'e*) and counterbalance the taste of blood.<sup>10</sup> However, as we will see, it is precisely this combination of blood and tobacco that potentializes the dreaming, that makes someone have shamanic power.]

### *The Faithful Enemy*

Dreaming is a form of interaction with all the entities of the cosmos in their condition as persons—that is, as subjects endowed with intentional agency and perspective. What qualifies an entity to be dreamt about is to have a different perspective from that of the dreamer’s. In other words, all oneiric interlocutors are “others” (*amote*), or more precisely, “enemies” (*akwawa*).<sup>11</sup> But in the dream these enemies do not act as enemies but as allies or, better, as a very particular kind of ally: they are termed “pets” (*te’omawa*) and “magic prey” (*temiahwa*). They are faithful enemies, prey turned into adopted pets that are under the control of the dreamer.

As I have shown elsewhere, this conversion of fierce others into famil-

ians by means of an idiom of adoption is a central feature of both shamanism and warfare in Amazonia (Fausto 1999a, 2001c). In warfare, there is a widespread notion that the killer establishes a privileged relationship with the victim's spirit, which gives him a surplus of agency and creativity. This surplus manifests itself as a capacity to name or rename people, to produce new songs for the rituals, to favor the hunting or even to fertilize the women and produce new children. Shamans also have a special creativity that stems from the relationship with their auxiliary spirits, the majority of which are animal spirits—that is, as kinds of “magic prey,” as the Parakanã would term them. The shaman’s and warrior’s power and job are very similar, although shamanism focuses mainly on the relationship with non-human others, whereas warfare concentrates on that with human others.

The interesting fact about the Parakanã is that they have conflated these two operations. A dreamer interacts with all entities of the cosmos, be they humans, animals, plants, stars, natural objects, or artifacts. There is, however, a hierarchy: not all people dreamt about the more powerful others, among whom are human enemies (sometimes described as monstrous), the jaguar, and thunder. The most ordinary dreamt enemies are animals, which the Parakanã call *ma’ejiroa*, a collective noun that designates both a set of objects (“stuff”), and the animals in their condition of prey (“game”).<sup>12</sup> Objects and prey can be classed within the same category because they are not credited with much agency. They are at the ground level of a hierarchy whose organizing principle is the capacity for predation. Humans and the jaguar (or jaguarlike beings) occupy the ceiling.

Among the Parakanã, the most powerful dreaming experience is called “bringing in the enemy” (*akwawa-rero’awa*), which is associated with the healing of diseases. Because the dreamers are held incapable of extracting the *karowara* (the pathogenic object), they bring their familiar enemies to perform the cure. This type of dream is composed of two parts: First, the dreamer’s double (*a’owa*) meets an enemy people and brings them to the village. Second, he awakes, and interacts with them, as the Parakanã say, “in his real skin” (*ipireté*), that is, in wakeful state. One who has such potent familiars will have a very long and productive life.<sup>13</sup> Whenever ill, he will be cured by them, and will also learn many enemies’ names and receive many enemies’ songs to give to his kin. He will be at the center of ritual life and kinship, a center from which flows symbolic goods captured in the outside to produce persons and relationships in the inside.

*to do their  
"dirty work" ?*

The jaguar occupies a very productive place in this system. The human enemies about whom the Parakanã dream partake of some of the feline’s attributes, particularly its alimentary ethics. Consider an example from one well-known dreamer, Koria. He dreamt about the *karajá*, the most terrifying oneiric enemies and the most helpful pets.<sup>14</sup> The *karajá* took Koria to

their village when he was ill. Their main shaman, “the one who knows how to make people stand up” (*oporopo’omohowa’ē*), came to him, shaking his victim’s bones as if it was a maraca. He made an incision on Koria’s belly. Then, according to Koria,

he sucked my blood that was flowing out, ate it up. He cut me again. Ate it up. He pulled out his little cutter. Again, he stuck it in and pulled it out. Then, he sucked for the last time.

—Come on, stand up!

I stood up.

—That is why you come to our encounter, in order for us to cure you, he said.

He left me. He vomited my exblood. Then he said to his sister:

—Bring me water to wash my mouth.

She brought it in a long pot. He drank and let it drop, dropping perhaps completely the stench of my blood (*jerowypyji’oa*).

The curing act is clearly described as a form of hematophagy, although the *karajá* shaman washes his mouth and vomits afterward. When Koria describes the *karajá* alimentary habits, we come to know that they eat a red-tinted flour that makes one fly, as manioc beer does. We may relate this to a Tapirapé dreaming narrative, in which the shaman’s auxiliary spirits effectively drink blood as beer: “He [the shaman] refused to drink it, because he understood that the *kauí* was human blood. Ikanancowi saw the spirit drinking from the *kauí* pot and immediately after vomiting blood; he saw another one drinking from another pot and excreting blood” (Wagley 1976:242). Among the enemies that the Parakanã dreamer familiarizes, we count also the *jawarrijá*, a monster who sucks people’s heart and blood. We could adduce other examples here of auxiliary spirits who are characterized by hematophagy, as is the case of *Titipiur* among the Achuar (Descola 1993:356–57), but it would divert us from our central personage, the jaguar.

The jaguar is, of course, one of the Amazonian shaman’s most praised auxiliaries and the source of a very powerful shamanism. Among the Parakanã, dreams about jaguars are always associated with metamorphosis, and sometimes are directly connected to a jaguar killing.<sup>15</sup> Some dreamers are capable of “bringing in” a real jaguar during their oneiric experience and, subsequently, of transforming themselves into one. The metamorphosis is termed *jyromonem*, which literally means “to put a continent on,” that is, “to dress.” The dreamer brings the jaguar and enters its skin,<sup>16</sup> and, endowed with all its abilities, he goes to the forest to hunt and eat. He may also employ his newly acquired “natural” tools to cure himself or to kill an antagonist, normally a kin. Here is one song that explores this ambiguity of jaguar-becoming:

Ije pota te we'yla  
Amoja'a he'ynia-rehe weha  
Wepinimohoa-po  
Wepinimohoa-po  
He he  
He he

Will I make my aunt  
For her family cry  
With my spotted (skin)  
With my spotted (skin)?  
He he  
He he

Isolating experience

transformation  
radicalization

The song is Iatora's or, better, Iatora's as jaguar, because, as we will see below, the metamorphosis may imply not only an alteration of form but also of point of view. For now, however, let us explore other jaguar facets of Parakanā shamanism. We need to examine them further, particularly in the ritual context, because neither the alimentary ethics of the dreamt enemies, nor the allomorphosis of the dreamer permit us to fully understand the centrality of the jaguar in Parakanā cosmology.

### *Killing Jaguars*

Songs are one of the dreamt enemies' main gifts. For the Parakanā, to dream is equal to receiving songs from the enemy dreamt about. If you say that you have dreamt but do not remember the songs, you are either a very poor dreamer or a liar. The most unspecific term for "song" is *je'engara*, which is formed by the verb "to speak" (*je'eng*) and the agentive nominalizer "*ara*." A song is a special kind of speech, characterized by a surplus of agency. Birds, for instance, do not ordinarily "sing" (*je'engan*) but rather "speak" (*je'eng*), although of course they can sing in dreams, where they appear as persons to the dreamer.

Most of the time, however, the Parakanā employ another word for song: "jaguar" (*jawara*). A common epithet for the dreamer is "master of the jaguars" (*jawajara*). Recall that the enemies familiarized by the dreamer are his "pets" (*te'omawa*) and that the reciprocal of "pet" is "master" (-*jara*). The dreamer is thus both a master of the jaguar songs and of the dreamt enemies. But what is the relation between the songs and the enemy who gives them? Here I argue that the songs are a partible part of the enemies familiarized in dreams.<sup>17</sup> In offering a song, the enemy gives a part of himself, a jaguar-part so to speak. Now, what is a jaguar-part? As I understand it, it stands for the

capacity to hold a particular perspective on a relationship; that is, of occupying the position of subject in a relation (see Vilaça 1992:51). The songs therefore are packs of agency, *quanta* of intentionality, that can be transferred from the enemy to the dreamer. Of course, they are not an abstract pack of agency, which circulates as if it was some kind of generic energy. Each song has an owner and a history that starts with the dreaming event and ends with its ritual execution.

The Parakanã conceive the act of singing during the ritual as a “killing” (*ijokatawa*) and designate it literally “to kill” (*joka*). Because masters never slay their pets in Amazonia, a dreamer cannot sing-kill their own songs during the ritual. They have to give it to a third party, who will be the executioner. During the festival, he will sing the jaguar song and bodily represent the dreamt enemy. He thus condenses in his person both perspectives: his own and the enemy’s (who may be, remember, any entity of the cosmos). What allows this ritual conflation is the song, that part of the dreamt enemy which is transferred from him to the dreamer, and from the dreamer to the ritual executioner.

holds two perspectives

Killing a song produces two effects: first, the executioner matures and develops his dreaming abilities, much in the same way as does a warrior after killing an enemy (although in an attenuated form). The jaguar-part permits then the socialization of the enemy’s intentionality, which is already part of the dreamer’s. The jaguar song multiplies the effects of a homicide, in much the same way as the trophies manipulated in some warfare rituals.<sup>18</sup> The second effect is that the jaguar song dies and, for this reason, cannot be sung again in the ritual but rather only intoned in ordinary situations. It cannot be killed twice. The song preserves the memory of the ritual killing, but after the fact it is void of intentionality. It has been surrendered to the executioner, who will become himself a dreamer (or a more expert one) and will put the ritual machine in motion again to produce new dreamers and capture new songs.

### *A Scent of Tobacco*

The Parakanã ritual during which the songs are “killed” is known as *opetymo*, the tobacco festival. It is also known as *pajé*, which means “shamanic power.” It is no wonder that participation in the ritual “makes one dream” (*mo-poahim*); *opetymo* is an initiation into the science of dreams, as much as a warfare ritual.<sup>19</sup> We have seen that among the Asurini do Tocantins this same ritual is explicitly conceived as a way of transmitting the shamans’ curing power to the novices. This transference is replicated by the dream about the jaguar, from whom the novice extracts the *karowara* after

eating its food. We also saw that there is a close link between acquiring shamanic power and cannibalism. The question I would like to propose now is what does the tobacco have to do with it?

To answer this question, let me start with a commentary about blood symbolism among the Parakanã. How is it conceived when it is out of the body; that is, when it becomes “someone’s exblood” (*rowykwera*)? Its most prominent feature is its odor, which is highly contaminating. Someone’s exblood affects other people without any physical contact, causing the swelling of the spleen, an intense fatigue, and anal hemorrhage. It is usually men who are affected, either by the victim’s blood or by menstrual (and postpartum) blood.<sup>20</sup> That is why menstruating and new-mothering women cannot cook, nor can they sleep with their husband. The victim’s blood is even more endangering. During posthomicidal seclusion the killer must drink very bitter infusions made from the inner bark of two species of *Aspidosperma* in order to “extinguish the spleen” (*tomano ipere oja*), and to avoid other deleterious consequences.<sup>21</sup> These infusions are universal blood neutralizers, and preadolescent girls may take them to retard menarche and avoid having children too young.

Although also used by men during posthomicidal seclusion, tobacco has a very different function that has nothing to do with the spleen. The killer smokes it to “perfume the mouth” (*majaropi’e*), counterbalancing the savor-odor of blood (*pyji’o*). In this olfactory-gustative register the tobacco and the blood have opposed characteristics. Nevertheless, they must be combined to potentialize the dreaming capacity. On the day after having dreamt about the jaguar, the Asurini novice cannot eat food, only smoke tobacco. The same is true of the killer after the homicidal act. \*

For the Parakanã, as for many other Amazonian peoples (Lévi-Strauss 1966), tobacco is consistently disjointed from honey, which is associated with love, sexual relations, and heaviness; that is, with a state of “earthly” satisfaction that prevents interaction with dreamt enemies. Honey and sweet porridge are at the center of another Parakanã ritual, the flute festival, which inverts every single aspect of the *opetymo*.<sup>22</sup> It is a ritual turned toward the inside, to the relations between the men and the women. In the past, it was also performed for a woman recently captured in a war expedition. By acting out the role of wife and lover, she was introduced into the game of sex and marriage. As the Parakanã say, she was “to put her heart into the flutes” (*toji’omonem takwara-popé*) and stay long with them, menstruating, procreating, and loving.

Blood and tobacco, on the contrary, are outward substances. They cause the necessary bodily and psychic dispositions to meet others, but in two different ways: tobacco makes one light and amplifies one’s capacities to see and dream; blood makes one full of powerful intentionality and enhances

one's predatory dispositions.<sup>23</sup> In the Parakanã case, I would like to suggest that the tobacco is a sort of white perfumed blood. In the past, whenever they run out of tobacco (a very common occurrence during periods of nomadism), they employed the leaves of a liana to fill the cigars used in the *opetymo*, which are ordinarily made of enrolled *tauari* bark filled with tobacco.<sup>24</sup> This liana is called "blood-liana-alike" (*ipowyrona*), and contains a great quantity of white sap. It is very similar to another liana, which is its prototype: a "blood liana" (*ipowy'a*) that contains a red, bloodlike sap. The red sap is used to fix the charcoal-rich black dye with which the Parakanã paint their lanceolate arrow points, especially those used in warfare. They believe that the mixture of red sap and charcoal causes a lethal hemorrhage. In sum, the Parakanã smoke the leaves of the white-sap-rich liana to dream, and use the red-sap liana to kill their enemies and large terrestrial mammals.

The complementary opposition between red and white liana resonates with that of blood and tobacco during the *opetymo*. The Parakanã while ritually killing the jaguar song, smoke the cigar. Intoxicated with it, the executioner may fall and dream. The Asurini do Tocantins insert a cannibal principle (the *karowara*) into the cigar. Absorbing it the executioner may run crazily, looking for blood.

Although I cannot generalize from the Parakanã and Asurini cases alone, I would like to suggest that in Amazonia the symbolism of blood and the symbolism of tobacco converge in both being "outward substances." As food for future thought, let me allude to some instances that hint at this suggestion. First, there are examples of a direct association between tobacco and the jaguar. The Akawaio of Guiana call a variety of the tobacco plant "tiger tobacco," comparing the mottling of the leaves with the fur of the jaguar. According to Wilbert, "tiger tobacco is of a very special potency, and its effects on the human body relate it to shamanic combativeness and to the shaman-jaguar transformation complex" (1987:151). The link between the jaguar and the tobacco also appears in mythology. The Toba-Pilaga of the Chaco, for instance, recount a myth in which a woman-jaguar is incinerated after having eaten many of her kin. From her ashes, the first tobacco plant sprouts (Métraux 1946:60–62; Lévi-Strauss 1964:107–8).

Second, there are some interesting references to blood in the myths about the origin of the tobacco that are compiled by Lévi-Strauss in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964:108–13). The Terena myth begins with a woman who poisons her husband by spilling menstrual blood on his food. Informed of her malice, the man gives her honey mixed with the embryos of a snake he had killed. In revenge, she tries to devour him. While chasing him, she falls in a pit that he had dug to trap game. The husband fills up the pit and surveys it; nearby he finds the tobacco plant. The plot revolves around the relation-

ship between predator and prey, with husband and wife alternating these positions. The man who begins as an eater of menstrual blood ends up as a smoker of tobacco leaves.

In a Bororo myth, we find a parallel reference to embryos and the snake. The plot starts with the men coming back from hunting. The women go to their encounter to fetch the game. One of them carries an anaconda, whose blood drips and penetrates into the woman. She gets pregnant. The “son of the snake blood” goes in and out of the mother’s belly at his will. Frightened, the mother asks her brothers to kill the unborn baby, which goes out and is killed. The men incinerate the corpse, and from the ashes tobacco and other cultivated plants appear. In this myth, the prey’s blood impregnates the killer’s wife but the son is not human and has special capacities. Once more the plot starts with blood contamination and finishes with the origin of tobacco.

In another Bororo myth, some men, while preparing newly caught fish for the grill, find tobacco in the belly of one of their prey. They smoke it. The aroma attracts the master of the tobacco, who appears in the form of a bat—that is, of a bloodsucker. He admonishes the men not to swallow the smoke but to exhale it instead. But his request is in vain. For their disregard, the master of the tobacco transforms them into otters. The myth begins with men eating properly cooked food but finishes with their metamorphosis into eaters of raw fish, as a punishment for them having eaten the smoke of tobacco. The spirit who transforms them is both a hematophagous being and the master of the tobacco.

Third, and finally, let me approach blood and tobacco from an axis that organizes this last myth: of transformation. We do not need to dwell on the well-known fact that tobacco is the transforming substance par excellence in Amazonia. But what about the transforming quality of blood? Menstrual blood has a central role here. It is a sign of fertility, it marks that a transformation is going on in a woman’s body and implies the possibility of her transforming future people inside it. It is not surprising, therefore, that warfare rites and male initiations thrive on the analogy with the reproductive and transforming power of menstrual blood, and sometimes establishes an explicit connection between the shedding of the victim’s blood and menstruation.<sup>25</sup>

Among the Parakanã this analogy has a mythical foundation. Originally, it was the men who menstruate. One day the armadillo shot the moon. The men told the women not to leave the house, but they came out to the plaza and the moon’s blood dripped on them. Thereafter they menstruate, and men do not. The men, however, now can shed their victims’ blood and can become a dreamer. As dreamers, they can name infants, give songs to adolescents, favor the hunting, and even capture future-infants (*konomiroma*),

who they deposit inside the women. The difference between men's and women's creative capacities is that the former have to be acquired, whereas the latter develop naturally.<sup>26</sup>

This fact founds the politics of gender of Parakanã shamanism: women are not suppose to dream, and only exceptionally smoke tobacco. A justification I heard for this disencouragement is that women are too prone to catch *karowara* in their dreams and to use them against people. Fertile women already have a stench of blood, and engaging in shamanism would mean a dangerous hyperconjunction. Significantly, the dreaming activity of post-menopausal women is well accepted.

Mature men, on the contrary, must dream. When a man refuses to go to war and is ashamed of dancing in the *opetymo*, people say he is a child. Taking part in the killing of enemies and songs is essential for maturing. Those who have shame (*jeroji*) cannot familiarize enemies through the dreaming and be fertile in the giving of names and songs to their kin. The stench of blood connotes this fertility and creativity, the capacity for producing transformation. This is the case because Amazonian peoples conceive of homicide as ontological predation; i.e., as a form of devouring some vital constituent of the victim's person and acquiring a surplus of intentionality.<sup>27</sup> The smell of blood that impregnates the killer without any physical contact is a central signifier for thinking about this acquisition. That is why posthomicide taboos focus so much on blood and its stench.<sup>28</sup> As a substantive quality, blood odor expresses an abstract notion in a sensible code; namely, that to kill is to establish a special rapport with the victim, a rapport that implies fertility.<sup>29</sup>

In light of this we can now answer a question posed earlier: What is to eat like the jaguar? It is to consume the victim's activity, of which blood is a strong signifier, without its neutralization by fire. Everyday food, on the contrary, requires the removal of all traces of blood through cooking. Cooking is a technique for eating meat without the danger of being in touch with the subjectivity of the animal eaten.<sup>30</sup> After all, no one can be a jaguar all the time, and not everyone can be a jaguar sometime. This must be a ritualized and controlled activity because being a jaguar is an ambivalent necessity.

### *Whose Eyes Are Mine?*

The Parakanã attribute intentionality to various entities of the cosmos. Some persons, mostly adult men, are capable of interacting with these entities through the dreaming, where they establish with them a special relationship of adoption. As we have seen, the dreamer is the master, the dreamt enemy is the pet. The former seems to control the latter, imposing on the enemy his own perspective. This is fair enough: the enemy familiarized in

dreams does not act as an adversary, because he surrenders a part of himself to the dreamer and asks for nothing in exchange. Nevertheless, the actual relationship is much more ambivalent than that, as is the figure of the shaman in most Amazonian indigenous societies. It is not difficult to understand why.

All dream narratives that I have registered concerning the “bringing in of the enemy” contain the following theme: the pets may act as captors and keep their master as a pet, which means adopting and turning him into one of them. In other words, they reverse the sense of familiarization. This is a very common motif in Amazonia, particularly in regard to the notion of “soul loss,” a morbid state caused by the undesirable exteriorization of a vital constituent of the person.

In the Parakanã case, the possibility of reversing the relationship between master and pet points to the fact that the dreamer’s enterprise is a dangerous one that may result in him surrendering his perspective to benefit the other’s. The danger, however, is not only his own because it involves his kinfolk. He may see them with the eyes of the enemies; that is, he may see his kin as if they were others. In some oneiric narratives, the theme is stated explicitly: the dreamt enemy wants to change the dreamer’s point of view. Consider the following dialogue extracted from a dream narrative of a man who had been shot in his leg. The wounded dreamer encounters his enemies:

I was among them. They asked me:  
—Was it your kin who shot you?  
—No. The enemy killed me, I answered.  
—Tell us where your kinfolk are, so that we can kill them all.  
—Ok. Let’s go, I said without conscience.

I translate here the Parakanã’s expression *awai’yma* as “without conscience,” but it literally means “not (being a) person.”<sup>31</sup> When the dreamer surrenders his perspective he becomes other, and thus a danger to his kin. The same is true of killers. In the past, when returning from a warfare expedition, the warriors had to abandon their bow and enter into seclusion. Their folks, particularly the women, would remember them that they are kin, not others: “Do not have anger toward us,” they would say. All measures were taken to avoid a complete alteration of the killers’ point of view.

However, to be a killer or a shaman in Amazonia unavoidably implies the cumulating of more than one perspective, and a certain capacity of alternating between them or employing both at the same time. Not all perspectives are equal. Because agency is variously distributed among the entities of the cosmos, and the capacity for predation is a hallmark of powerful agency, the shaman, as the warrior, is commonly associated with predators like the

jaguar. To become a puissant shaman one must entertain a special relationship with ferocious beings, eaters of raw meat and blood. This relationship implies a sharing of perspectives. The shaman's ambivalence stems from his serving, in person, as a point of articulation between his perspective and that of his ferocious familiar spirits.

The most obvious manifestation of this fact is the shaman-jaguar metamorphosis, where the former actually become the latter, as Wilbert clearly shows for the Campa complex: "Campa jaguar shamans can adopt a jaguar form upon embarking on their far-flung journey in search of food. Human food does not nourish them when they are in jaguar form. Rather, were-jaguars of this kind eat people, which appear to them as peccary. They travel long distances so as to avoid eating their friends and kin. Especially during the months of March through June were-jaguars are on the prowl of children or in shamanic terms young 'peccary,' and again, as jaguars, shamans are unable to distinguish their own human children from others. Thus, when in the form of jaguars, shamans *are* jaguars: they see like them and they think like them" (1987:194). In the same vein, Vilaça writes about the Wari' shaman: "The negative facet of shamanic agency concerns his capacity to turn into an enemy at any moment, attacking his own people, and possibly causing death. Such action is unintentional, almost a 'technical failure': the shaman's vision becomes deficient and he starts to see his kin as enemies or animal prey. The effect is as if his different bodies merge in such a way that he, as Wari', adopts the animal's point of view" (1999:250).

The alteration of perspective, the intimate rapport with dangerous spirits, the capacity of magically killing people, the cannibal connotation of the initiation and the healing practice, and the going-jaguar—all these facts contribute to making the Amazonian shaman a redoubtable figure.

### *Conclusion*

Amazonian shamanism is not a loving animism, as its middle-class urban vulgate want us to believe. It is better understood as a predatory animism: subjectivity is attributed to human and nonhuman entities, with whom some people are capable of interacting verbally and establishing relationships of adoption or alliance, which permit them to act upon the world in order to cure, to fertilize, and to kill. As I suggest elsewhere (Fausto 1999a), however, the capacity of familiarizing other subjectivities, of having them as allies, depends on predation in warfare and hunting.

Whereas neoshamanism is turned on the remodeling of individual subjectivities, indigenous shamanism is concerned with producing new persons and social relationships from the stock of human and nonhuman subjectivities existing in the cosmos. The question is, then, how can one acquire

a surplus of intentionality and agency, and avoid being deployed of his or her own? If there is no ontological difference between predator and prey, how can one maintain oneself in the position of predator and not of prey? Amerindian warfare and shamanism seem to revolve around this question.

Understandably enough, the predatory act is the lost fact in modern, urban, middle-class shamanism, which purged the phenomenon from all its ambiguous attributes. It is thus no wonder why the jaguar, although a recurrent figure, is depicted as an endangered species and not as a dangerous predator. Neoshamanism subjects others' thoughts to Western thinking and moral standards: there must be good and bad, both a light and a dark side, and a clear-cut frontier in order to demarcate a basic contrast of ethic. There is no such dichotomy in South American shamanism, which thrives on ambivalence.

One of the difficulties of the sixteenth-century missionaries in translating Christian texts to indigenous languages was to find a suitable equivalent for God, because there was no such thing as an indigenous supreme divinity to be translated into a unique (although trine) God. Further, to make things worse, once the missionaries had chosen one among various possibilities, they had to rid him of his ambiguous attributes. If God were a jaguar, their task would have been much easier.

What does it mean not to base a cosmology on a clear-cut opposition between good and bad? What kind of society does so? These are questions that have haunted Western thinking since the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the answers have always been a mere repetition of the very dichotomy that causes the questioning. Choose your side: the noble or the fierce savage? Hobbes himself actually preferred the latter, whereas Rousseau would have favored the former. Nowadays some people make a living by selling one or the other image, while others just comfort their hearts in defending one of them. The choice is less motivated by facts than by the approach one has to one's own society. Again, no novelty here. The "state of nature" had the same function for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers: it was a way to distinguish between the original and the artificial in human nature so as to judge European society at the time.

In any case we must recognize one fact: the very culture that bases its ethics in a universal distinction between good and bad has developed (among many other things) an insurmountable capacity for violence and destruction. Indigenous cultures that prospered in ambivalence, on the contrary, were not so successful. A famous Jesuit missionary once said, maybe in a burst of despair, that the best form of preaching for people like the Tupinambá was with the sword and the spear. He was only partially right. The Europeans conquered South America with the word and the sword, a mix-

ture that proved to be much more efficient than the fine blend of blood and tobacco that characterizes Amazonian shamanism.

### Notes

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- 1 I took the liberty of extracting the passages cited in this paragraph from the sites “Shamanism: Working with Animals” ([www.animalspirits.com](http://www.animalspirits.com)), “Amazon Spirit Quest” ([www.biopark.org](http://www.biopark.org)), and from Dr. Thomas Pinkson’s page, maintained by the 7th Direction ([www.7thdirection.com](http://www.7thdirection.com)).
- 2 The Jesuits oscillated between considering the shamans’ powers a mere imposture or an effective demoniacal force. Father Dobrizhoffer, for instance, seems to prefer the first alternative, whereas Ruiz de Montoya was inclined to accept the second. The former quotes a dialogue he had with the Abipones about the metamorphosis into jaguars: “‘You daily kill tigers in the plain,’ I said, ‘without dread, why then should you weakly fear a false imaginary tiger in the town?’ ‘You Fathers don’t understand these matters,’ they reply, with a smile. ‘We never fear, but kill tigers in the plain, because we see them. Artificial tigers we do fear, because they can neither be seen nor killed by us’” (1970 [1784]: vol. 2, 77–78).
- 3 Recounting his encounter with a Guarani group yet unconquered, Dobrizhoffer writes: “His [the cacique’s] son, a handsome boy of ten years old, had all his face painted with small black stars. ‘You think’, said I, ‘to adorn your face with these stars, but you have disfigured it most wretchedly. Come, behold yourself in this mirror.’ Having looked at his face a little while, he hastened to some water to wash it, and he, who with his naked limbs, had just before come to me a perfect Pyracmon, when he had wiped off the soot, seemed transformed into a Daphnis” (1970 [1784]: vol. 1, 78). On the church’s attitudes toward the masquerade in the Middle Ages, see Schmitt 2001.
- 4 Viveiros de Castro suggests that Cunhambebe’s statement may be understood as “a jaguar-becoming, where ‘jaguar’ is a quality of the *act*, not of the *subject*. . . . Even if the object of becoming is imaginary, the becoming is real, and the ferocious alterity is a quality of the verb, not its predicate” (1992:271). On Staden’s account, see Forsyth 1985 and Whitehead 2000.
- 5 I have analyzed the historical transformations of Guarani shamanism in order to show that there has been an almost complete dissociation between the shaman and the jaguar, and the replacement of predation by the concept of “love” (*mborayhu*). I have called this process “dejaguarification” (Fausto 2001b). There are interesting parallels between the Guarani case and other examples of historical transformation of shaman-

istic systems in Amazonia. I am thinking especially of the Yanesha (Santos Granero 1991), and the upper Río Negro peoples (Hugh-Jones 1994; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975; Wright 1992).

- 6 When talking about shamans and dreamers, I employ the masculine pronouns. Among the Parakanã, as in most Amazonian societies, the great majority of dreamers are men and the activity is supposedly restricted to them. This does not mean that there are no women who dream, but that the activity is genderized as male, even when the dreamer is a woman.
- 7 The word *opetymo* seems to result from the combination of the noun *petym* (“tobacco”) and the verb ‘*o*’ (“to eat”).
- 8 There is a specific term to speak of the concrete forms in which the *karowara* may present themselves in the patient’s body. This term is *topiwara* and comprehends monkey teeth, some species of beetles, stingray stings, and sharp-pointed bones; in sum, every tiny, pointed object when animated by a shaman. Among other Tupi/Guarani-speaking people, *topiwara* are the shaman’s auxiliary spirits, the majority of which are animal spirits.
- 9 *Jawataranga* can be analyzed as *jawa(ra)-tarang-a* (jaguar—to wear out—nominalizer). Other Amazonian peoples seem to draw the same association between the giant otter and the jaguar. Among the Yáuga of Peru, for instance, the former is named “aquatic jaguar” (Chaumeil and Chaumeil 1992:27).
- 10 Once the Parakanã told me that just after contact some killers vomited whenever they took Western medication, and this vomiting made them lose their *pajé* (shamanic power). They supposed that there was an incompatibility between the drugs and the stench of blood in their mouths, and they believed to have discovered an efficient neutralizer for it.
- 11 *Akwawa* is a general category for all entities in their condition as a person, who are not a member of ego’s group. In other words, all “real” enemies and all dreamt interlocutors.
- 12 In the first sense, one may say: “The white man is distributing his stuff” (*omajarang aka Toria oma’ejiroa*). In the second sense, one may say: “I going to hunt and kill the game” (*aata weha ijokao ma’ejiroa*).
- 13 Let me briefly note that an important connection here that I cannot develop in this essay is the idea that homicide is linked to a long life and the curing of diseases. The Parakanã say, for instance, that one kills an enemy “for his illness” (*ojemonawa-pé oja*). On this theme, see Fausto 2001a:308–14.
- 14 For a thorough exploration of this dream, see Fausto 2001a:358–62, 2001c.
- 15 A man who has slain a jaguar may bring its corpse to the village and dance with it in order to favor the dreaming about a jaguar.
- 16 In this case, the Parakanã do not say that it is the dreamer in “his real skin” (*ipireté*) that enters into the beast, because the skin here is the jaguar fur. When I asked Iatora about who effectively dressed it, he said: “I, indeed” (*ije éte*).
- 17 I am drawing here on Strathern’s notion of partible persons (1988:178–79) without conceptualizing, however, all relations as gift exchange.
- 18 See Fausto 1999a, where I argue that the ritual killing in the *opetymo* is connected to real killings. See also Fausto 1999b, where I develop the idea that a central feature of Amazonian warfare is the producing of many effects from a single death.

- 19 Two *opetymo* were realized after a warfare expedition: one just after the warrior's return, the other to mark the end of the posthomicide taboos. In this occasion, the killer announced his intention to dance and make his victim's hair fall as a reference to the corruption of the corpse.
- 20 Once a man said to me that women do not suffer from the swelling of the spleen because they do not shoot people (which is not entirely true in what concerns western Parakanã history). A woman contended, however, that the proximity to a killer may occasionally contaminate them with the victim's blood.
- 21 These trees are regionally known in Portuguese as *carapanaúba* and *quina*. The Parakanã call them, respectively, *marawa* and *inajarona*.
- 22 Whereas the latter is a diurnal rite of individually executed songs, focused on tobacco smoking and the killing of male enemies, the former is a nocturnal festival of collectively danced instrumental music, associated with eating honey and with sexual relationships between lovers.
- 23 To be precise, the Parakanã do not exactly associate blood contamination with predatory disposition. This state is connected instead to another part of the victim: the *kawahiwá*. This term is composed of the word for "fat" (*kawa*) and the suffix *ahiwa*, which occurs in key shamanic terms like "dream" (*ipoahiwa*), "song for curing" (*karahiwa*), and "oneiric prey" (*temiahawa*). As I understand it, *ahiwa* is a modifier that indicates, at the same time, fierceness, danger, immateriality, and fertility (see Fausto 2001a:316–17).
- 24 *Tauari* (*Couratari* sp.) is a *Lecythidaceae*, whose inner bark is commonly used in Amazonia as a cigar wrapper. The Parakanã call it *petyma'ywa*, that is, "cigar or tobacco tree."
- 25 I point to this analogy when I analyzed the symbolism that makes initiation (and warfare rites) a kind of ritualized male menarche and a mode of male procreation (see Fausto 1999a:947; 952, 2001a:456–68).
- 26 "Naturally" is here the correct term, if we take it for not depending on intersubjective relation. Preadolescents may take infusions to retard the menarche but not to spur it. Menstruation just happens to them. What depends on intersubjective relation is the development of the breasts. The Parakanã say that boys "make breast" (*mokom*) on girls by having sexual relations with them.
- 27 For the expression "ontological predation," see Albert 1985, and Viveiros de Castro 1993:192. For a description of the phenomenon, see, among many others, Fausto 2001a, Viveiros de Castro 1996a; Vilaça 1992; Lima 1995; Sterpin 1993; Journet 1995.
- 28 For the Yanomami, see Albert 1985:341–81 and Lizot 1996; for the Wari', see Vilaça (1992:107–13); for the Matis, see Erikson 1986:194–97; for the Araweté, see Viveiros de Castro 1992:240; for the Juruna, see Lima 1995:203; for the Nivacle of the Chaco, see Sterpin 1993:43; for the Kayapó, see Vidal 1977:156–57, and Verswijver 1992:194–201; for the Timbira, see Carneiro da Cunha 1978:103–5, and DaMatta 1976:85–87.
- 29 The literature is full of examples in which the killer's digesting of the victim's blood replicates the familiarization of the victim's spirit. The Wari' provides the most clear instance. After the homicide the victim's blood-soul penetrates the killer's body and makes him fat, a fact that is compared to a female pregnancy. During the seclusion the blood is digested and transformed into semen, which will inseminate the women. Homicide leads thus to the constitution of two rapports of filiation: an actual one (the

- killer fertilizes the women with the exblood, now sperm), and a spiritual one (the killer is conceived as the “father” of the victim’s spirit) (see Conklin 1989:239–41; Vilaça 1996:120–23).
- 30 For some Amazonian peoples cooking is not enough, and a shaman must treat the food before it is safe for consumption. The “shamanizing” of food corresponds to its de-subjectifying. On this theme, see Viveiros de Castro 1996b:119;139. For examples, see Arhem 1993:111; Hugh-Jones 1996:127–28; Crocker 1985:152; Vilaça 1992:66–68; and Kaplan 1975:39.
- 31 The expression is formed by the word *awa* (“person”) plus the negative suffix *y’yma*. Whenever speaking of a dead person, it is suffixed to his or her name, meaning “the late so-and-so.”

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