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PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON SHAMANISM, CURING  
RITUALS AND PROPITIATORY CEREMONIES AMONG THE  
ASURINI INDIANS OF THE MIDDLE XINGU IN BRAZIL

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Photographer

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### Acknowledgements

Above all I am most grateful to the Asuriní for the openness with which they let me carry on this work. Perhaps my warmest feelings go to the main shaman Pinatsir'e and to the old A'iwa who, despite the language barrier, were eager to share their knowledge with me. Also of invaluable help were the shaman Iwakak'a, and the women M'aya and Tupawer'i. I wish to thank Professors Robert Carneiro, Júlio César Melatti and Lux Vidal who did not hesitate to recommend me to the FUNAI authorities; General Ismarth de Araújo Oliveira, President of FUNAI; all the FUNAI personnel whose cooperation greatly facilitated the work in the field, especially Salomão Santos, chief of the FUNAI *ajudância* in Altamira, and Benigno Pessoa Marques, head of the FUNAI post at the Asuriní settlement. I am also most grateful to Regina Müller who enthusiastically agreed to accompany me to fulfill the FUNAI requirement that non-anthropologists be accompanied by an anthropologist, and to continue her studies of the symbolism of Indian body painting and pottery decoration. She kindly shared some of her observations with me, helping fill some gaps in my notes. The firm CNEC graciously provided air transportation. I also feel indebted to Professors Napoleão Figueiredo and Anaiza Vergolino who provided me with working space at the Federal University of Pará in Belém, and to Professor Expedito Arnaud who read the initial draft of this paper and encouraged me to have it published. However the responsibility for the contents of this work is entirely mine, as there were some gaps in my observations and I did not speak the Asuriní language, making all the interpretations conjectural. And finally, I am most grateful to Professor Esteban Emilio Mosonyi of the Department of Linguistics of the Central University of Venezuela who provided me with a tentative phonological system of the Asuriní language.

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1. Introduction<sup>2</sup>

The Asurini<sup>3</sup> are a Tupí-speaking tribe located in the middle Xingú region in the state of Pará, at approximately latitude 4°S and longitude 52°30'W. They were contacted in 1971 by the Austrian missionary Anton Lukesch.<sup>4</sup> Now FUNAI

1. The photographic field work, during which the observations leading to this paper were made, was carried on between August 6 and September 7, 1976.

2. The Asurini<sup>1</sup> of the middle Xingú are different from the Asurini<sup>1</sup> of the Tocantins described by Arnaud (1961) and called by Laraya (1971) Akuáwa-Asurini<sup>1</sup>. The two groups differ both linguistically and culturally. In both cases the name Asurini<sup>1</sup> was used by the local Brazilian population or by neighboring tribes, but does not seem to be an auto-denomination (Nimuendajú 1948, p. 225; Lukesch 1976, p. 41).

3. Compared to Loukotka's short word lists, the vocabulary I collected shows the closest affinity to his Central group, closely followed by his Northern, Kamayurá, Pará and Tupí groups (Loukotka 1968, pp. 108-116). In my transcriptions of Asurini<sup>1</sup> words I am using a tentative, and possibly incomplete, phonological system established by Esteban Mosonyi on the basis of a limited amount of tape recorded material. However, the linguistic material recorded on tape was minimal; most terms related to shamanism and curing rituals were not tape recorded; and most transcriptions were made without Professor Mosonyi's assistance: therefore, he should in no way be held responsible for any linguistic error that may appear. For the sake of brevity, I have also deleted some of Professor Mosonyi's clarifying notes. The Asurini<sup>1</sup> words given should be considered as references for further research and should be used very cautiously, especially those referring to ritual or supernatural concepts, as it was often difficult to ascertain which aspect of the ritual or which concept was being designated.

Tentative Asurini<sup>1</sup> phonological system

VOWELS

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ	u
Mid		e ə	o
Low		a	
		unrounded	rounded

STRESS

' before the stressed vowel

CONSONANTS

	labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Voiceless stops	p	t			k	ʔ
Affricates			ts			
Voiceless fricatives	ɸ					h (rare)
Voiced fricatives	w			ɣ		
Nasals	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
Flap			r			

Remark: The voiceless stops p, t, k becomes voiced: b, d, g after a nasal.

4. Lukesch 1976

(National Indian Foundation) has taken the responsibility for their protection from, and at the same time their introduction into, the modern Brazilian world.<sup>5</sup> Contact resulted in changes to their traditional economy of slash-and-burn horticulture, hunting, and gathering of forest products. The relocation of the Asurini from their pre-contact inland retreat to a new settlement on the bank of the Ipiagava river, a tributary of the Xingú, and the introduction of canoes and fishhooks, made fishing a major subsistence activity. An increased need for metal tools and utensils, clothes and other industrial products stimulated the production of surplus crafts for trade with Brazilian society through FUNAI. The use of modern medicines provided by FUNAI runs now parallel with cures by supernatural means in the hands of shamans. Despite these acculturative influences the cultural identity and religious beliefs of the Asurini remain strong. The total population at the time of the field work was 59 individuals.

During my stay among the Asurini with anthropologist Regina Müller there was a flu epidemic (without tragic consequences, as the Asurini seem to be already partially immunized) and several cases of individual sicknesses. We were able to witness extensively the curing rituals, taking turns as these rituals often lasted all night. However, we did not speak the Asurini language, and my interpretation of these observations is, to some extent, conjectural or inferred from comparison with published material on other Tupi tribes.

The conjectural aspect of this work requires a rather loose meaning to be attached to such words or concepts as "spirit", "entity", "force", "immaterial substance", "fluid", etc. I will usually say that an object becomes "activated" by ritual rather than "animated", the meaning of the latter word, i.e., having a soul or spirit, being often too specific in a conjectural context. I do not know if, to the Asurini, ritual objects

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5. Soares 1971

actually "become" the entities they represent, or if they are only a receptacle or channel of their forces. Whenever an alternate interpretation of an observation cannot be ruled out, I will mention it in the text or as a footnote. For the clarity of exposition I have, in the following three paragraphs, anticipated some of the conclusions. These points will, however, be fully discussed in the paragraph "Discussion".

## 2. Central role: the shaman.

Disease is attributed to supernatural causes by the Asuriní. Mediation between the realm of the supernatural and the world where we live our everyday lives is the task of the shamans. The Asuriní shaman (pay'e) is a part-time specialist who can invoke supernatural forces, entities or spirits, be endowed with their power or be possessed by them. In possession, the shaman becomes the spirit he has been calling, behaves like it, speaks its words with its voice. Similarly, the pay'e (or more probably, a few shamans belonging to one of five classes) can attract to himself the disease-causing "substance", becoming himself temporarily sick. Spirit or disease possession manifest themselves by a state of trance. It seems that the Asuriní shaman can also acquire some supernatural force which penetrates him, but he remains human, or, at least, behaves like a human being. Being endowed with the supernatural forces the shaman can then fight evil forces which are causing disease. He can do this by transferring "positive" forces into the sick person, or by extracting the disease-causing force or substance. He need not always be in a state of possession or be penetrated by supernatural forces: it seems that part of these activities can be achieved through proper performance of ritual and use of ritual objects. Shamans seem to be also endowed with an innate supernatural power, which does not require the performance of ritual to be made accessible and used.

There are at least 5 classes of pay'e, called respective-



1. The main shaman, Pinatsir'e. The genipa dye dots on his hands suggest that genipa may have magic power: during the previous night's rites Pinatsir'e asked the girl who would later serve the ritual meal to paint these dots on his hands.



2. Another of the most active shamans, Tataokw'aya, has his face and his body painted with genipa dye by his wife before a ceremony.



3. A shaman, Iwakak'a, invokes the supernatural in front of the main ritual center late in the afternoon, at the beginning of a night's ceremony. He sings to the beat of his gourd rattle ornamented with macaw feathers and, between songs, smokes a cigar. An apprentice/assistant sits behind him.



4. Curing by traditional shamanic methods is now complemented by western medicine. In this photograph, the same shaman Iwakak'a, is being vaccinated by a FUNAI nurse, who is part of a visiting medical team.

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ly: tiw'a, apikw'ara, karuw'ara, arapo'a and taya'o. Each different class has its songs, and it seems that each shaman - or at least the most active ones - may have his own songs. Some curing rites appear to be restricted to a particular class of shamans. As far as I was able to ascertain, twelve adult men were shamans, nine were not, and three youths were apprentices.<sup>7</sup> There is thus a slight majority of men belonging at least to one of the five categories. At least two men belong to all five classes; most shamans belong to two or three classes. There are indications that some women may also be shamans (one woman was seen blowing on a sick baby). It is not known what factors determine that a man will become a shaman, nor what factors determine to which categories he belongs. The apprentices act as assistants to the shamans and keep some of their ritual objects such as special whistles (yaw'ara).

3. The physical setting. Location of main ritual activities. Ritual objects.

In the context of curing ceremonies three settings in the village need to be considered. (The village is composed of a few communal houses each sheltering a few families, and a few individual houses sheltering nuclear families.) These three settings are: a main ritual center in the communal house inhabited by the main shaman, a temporary structure outside this house, and the house of the sick person.<sup>8</sup> The main ritual center consists of a structure made of two logs (iw'ara) suspended by vines from the structural beams of the house, and of the spaces in front and behind it, where dances are per-

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6. I have deleted the suffixes that are sometimes attached to the names of some of the classes.

7. One young man was hospitalized in Belém; I do not know if he was a shaman.

8. According to Soares (1971, p. 18) at the time of contact there was a special cult house:

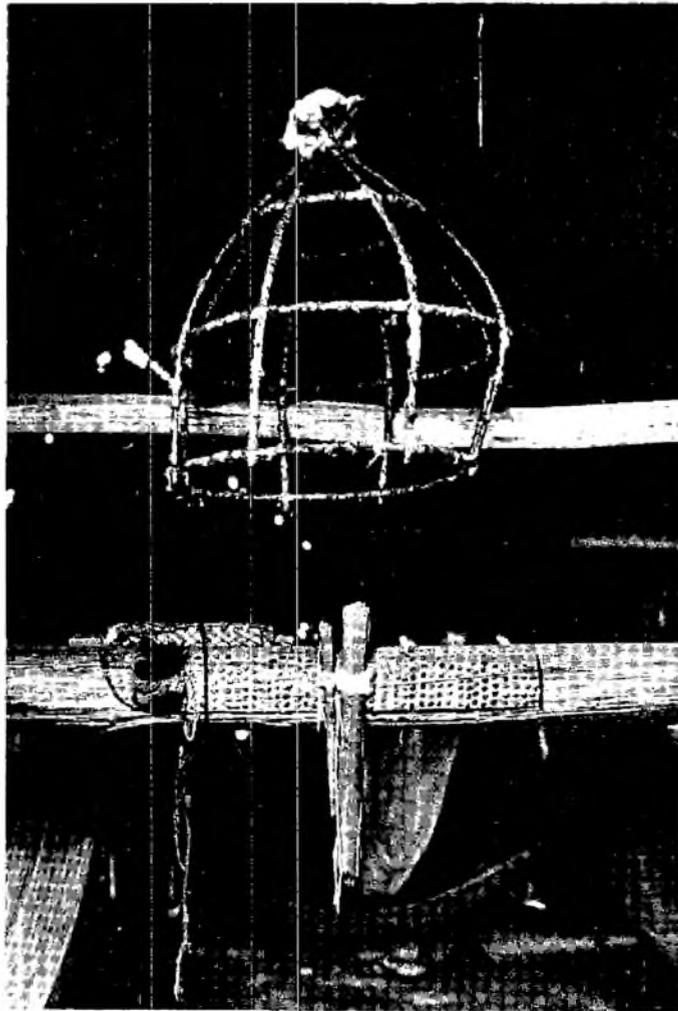
O rito era efetuado em uma casa de culto, localizada no fundo da aldeia. A casa de culto tem forma retangular - 6 X 4 metros -, sua parte frontal (sem paredes) fica situada em direção oeste; suspenso na entrada existe uma tora de madeira, tendo embaixo um vasilhame contendo cauim.

formed and where ritual food is prepared. The front log is painted with a genipa<sup>9</sup> motif of dots within a rectangular outline rounded at one end. A ring of feathers is tied to this log. Above the double log is suspended a sort of cage-like object, yawaraik'a. A temporary ritual structure, tiwaruk'aya (I have also noted the names tukwaik'una and tuk'aya) is sometimes built outside this house, facing its lateral door. It consists of a sort of cage of more or less cubical shape, about 2 m high, made of a light wooden frame covered with palm fronds. It is provided with a double log smaller than, but homologous to, that of the main ritual structure, and perpendicular to it. It is also called iw'ara. Someone standing in front of the main ritual structure can see the temporary one outside the house just by turning his head. These double logs seem to be the receptacle of some supernatural force, or perhaps more exactly the channels through which the shaman can have access to this force. This force also seems to "activate" ritual objects, perhaps enabling them to become the receptacles of spirits, forces or fluids. These two ritual sites are where the supernatural forces or spirits are called or invoked by songs and dances, where often curing acts are performed, and where ritual meals are held. Curing acts are performed in the house of the sick person when they are not able to go to the ritual sites. The shamans would then invoke the supernatural entities in front of the ritual structures, then go to the house of the patient to perform the cure (essentially, by extracting an invisible substance, the cause of disease, and by transferring beneficial supernatural force). During this house cure the shaman or shamans may go to the temporary ritual structure to fetch additional "force" above the double log. Perhaps the forest, the river and the gardens should also be included in a larger ritual setting, as the probable dwelling place of supernatural entities, and

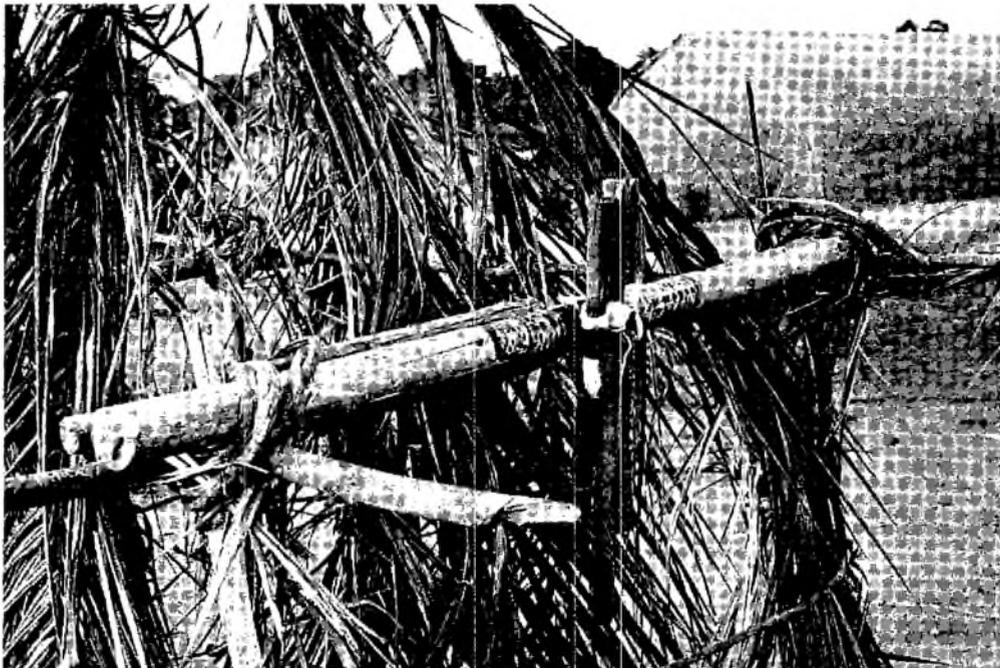
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9. Genipa: black dye extracted from the fruit of Genipa americana.

5. Detail of the main ritual structure, showing the front iw'ara log decorated with a genipa motif and with feathers, and to which cigars have been tied. Above the iw'ara is the yawaraik'a.



6. Detail of the temporary ritual structure, showing the smaller but homologous two logs, also decorated with a genipa motif and with cigars tied to it.



as the source of ritual materials: the materials for the ritual structures, and also stones, water, fern leaves, genipa, and tobacco, which seem to be the receptacles of spirits or supernatural forces. Ritual activities were not, however, observed there.

The shaman's implements include various ritual objects and substances, which appear to belong to two major categories: first those that are used in invoking the supernatural, that act, apparently, as channels to the supernatural: the shaman's gourd rattle (yap'u); <sup>10</sup> cigars (pət'imu), wrapped in the thin inner bark of the tauari <sup>11</sup> tree, that are smoked throughout the ceremony, and perhaps the shaman's whistles: the yaw'ara mentioned earlier, made of a hollow nut in which three holes have been drilled, and a small two-tubed panpipe. Secondly are objects and substances that need to be "activated" by ritual, that appear to act as receptacles for the supernatural, and that are used apparently to transfer supernatural forces to the sick, and possibly also have a purifying function. They include various <sup>12</sup> stones, water, the leaves of a fern (amamb'aya or samamb'aya), cigars decorated with genipa dots and a ring of small feathers tied with thick cotton thread. The place of the ritual food, a thick beverage made of sweet manioc and maize, is somewhat ambiguous, as it appears to belong sometimes to one, sometimes to the other category. A third category of ritual objects should be added: it consists of accessories such as the cooking utensils and containers for the beverage and the containers for water; an hourglass-shaped support made of wooden sticks tied together with vines which is sometimes used to hold these containers; a wooden bench on which a ritual stone is usually placed, but which can also be used as a seat by the shaman or by the person being treated; and a grater made of the thorny aerial

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10. In Asuriní the word marak'a does not refer to the gourd rattle, but to singing.

11. Brazilian name.

12. Adiantum latifolium. The Brazilian name for ferns is samambaya, a word of Tupí origin.

root of the palm tree Iriartea exorrhiza, used to prepare the genipa dye.<sup>13</sup> Another ritual object was always present but was never observed in use: a palm leaf basket containing unidentified nuts.

#### 4. Sequence and description of ritual activities.

The curing and propitiatory rites observed follow approximately the following sequence:

1. Late afternoon and early evening: preparation and call: songs and dances, presumably to invoke the supernatural. Simultaneously, preparation of the ritual meal.

2. Late evening, early night: presence of the supernatural: eventually, possession of one or several shamans. Curing session: mostly extraction of disease-causing "substance".

3. Night: rites of a conjecturally propitiatory nature. Ritual meal. Dance with sieve used to prepare ritual meal. "Joyful dance", presumably to thank and honor the spirits.

4. Early morning (the order of the early morning rites may vary). Curing session: presumably transfer of "positive force" through ritual objects; sometimes also "disease-extraction" cure. Eventually, possession of one or several shamans. Ritual meal, dances (continuation of propitiatory rites).

5. Washing of the sick with ritualized water; purification of assistants.

This sequence is somewhat idealized, as I have combined segments from different ceremonies observed. It is also quite possibly incomplete. Some of the events described occur only occasionally or rarely. I have mentioned the occasional occurrence of such events in the text. The order sometimes varies, especially for the early morning activities. Some ritual activity may also occur at any time during the day.

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13. At least the wooden support and a painted container are used exclusively during ceremonies; I do not know if some of the other pots and bowls and the bench also serve in everyday use, as nothing distinguishes them from non-ritual ones.

At least some ritual activity occurs almost every evening. For example, one of the shamans (always accompanied by an apprentice/assistant) may sing and later dance in front of the main ritual structure. Some women may join in the dancing, the whole ritual terminating quite early. Perhaps an "extraction cure" (described later) will also be performed. According to Salomão Santos,<sup>14</sup> sickness is not necessary for the ceremonies to be performed: they are performed frequently, presumably as propitiatory rituals.

When there is a serious illness which requires more elaborate treatment, the curing ceremony will usually last five to six days, and most ritual activities will be carried on at night. A group of people, usually one of the main shamans and his relatives, will go on a fishing trip for two or three days to provide food (smoked fish) for those days when subsistence activities will be reduced. A temporary ritual structure will be built in the afternoon of the first day of that special ceremony by apprentice shamans, who will also act as assistants to the shamans during the whole ritual. Different shamans may lead the ceremonies on different nights. More people than usual will appear with body painting, with more elaborate motifs, especially during the last days of the ceremony when most women and some of the shamans will present elaborate body painting, even those women who do not seem to be directly involved in ritual activities and do not participate in the dancing.

The more elaborate rituals begin very much like the simpler ones described above. Most ritual activities are carried on at night, beginning before sunset and ending after sunrise, but some activities (singing and dancing, curing acts) may also occur during the day. A shaman and his assistant begin to sing shortly before sunset in front of either ritual structure, presumably to call the supernatural entities. At the foot of one of the structures several ritual objects have been placed, which

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14. Oral communication.



7. Two apprentice shamans building the temporary ritual structure, tíwaruk'aya.



8. Women preparing the ritual beverage of sweet manioc and maize. Their bodies are painted with black genipa dye.



9. Beginning of the ceremony in late afternoon: a shaman assisted by two apprentices is invoking the supernatural in front of the temporary structure, while women are preparing the ritual food inside the house where the main structure is located.

10. On another occasion, a shaman is invoking the supernatural in front of the main ritual structure, sitting on a bench with an apprentice behind him and smoking a cigar between songs, while women are preparing the ritual food on the other side of the ritual structure (close-up of the shaman: photo 3; close-up of the women: photo 8). A ritual stone and a ritual container are placed under the iw'ara, and three cigars are tied at the center of the front log.



seem to act as receptacles of specific supernatural forces and will be used later, during the night or morning curing sessions. Similarly, decorated cigars have been tied at the center of one of the front iw'ara. When the ceremony begins in front of the main ritual structure, the shaman sits on a bench, his assistant sitting behind him; in front of the temporary structure, songs are always performed in a standing position. The shaman's songs are accompanied by the rhythmic beat of his ritual gourd rattle. Between songs he shakes his rattle rapidly so as to produce an almost continuous sound, and he smokes a cigar. A group of women is already preparing the ritual food inside the house of the main shaman.<sup>15</sup> This food will be eaten by the shamans during the night. Sometimes another ritual meal will be held early the next morning. After several songs the shaman may start dancing, his assistant behind him or to his side repeating the shaman's words as a second voice. A group of young women and girls may join them in the dance, always at their left, interlacing arms over each other's shoulders and those of the shaman. Some accompany the assistant's song as a second voice, while others sing a low-pitched counterpoint. The dance follows a several-step, forward-backward pattern, the dancers facing the ritual structure. Between songs - which I interpret as being calls to the spirits, as the rattle and cigars are perhaps channels or bridges to the supernatural world - the shaman may go to the ritual structure and grasp for an invisible "substance" above the double log, which seems to be the focal point of concentration of supernatural forces. At this point a cure may occasionally be performed in the main ritual center, to which the patient has come (a detailed description of curing acts will be given below, for a curing session in the house of a sick baby). The remaining activity will then generally con-

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15. I did not make any specific observations regarding the preparation of everyday food, but as I can recall normally it is done outside the house, often under a small shelter.



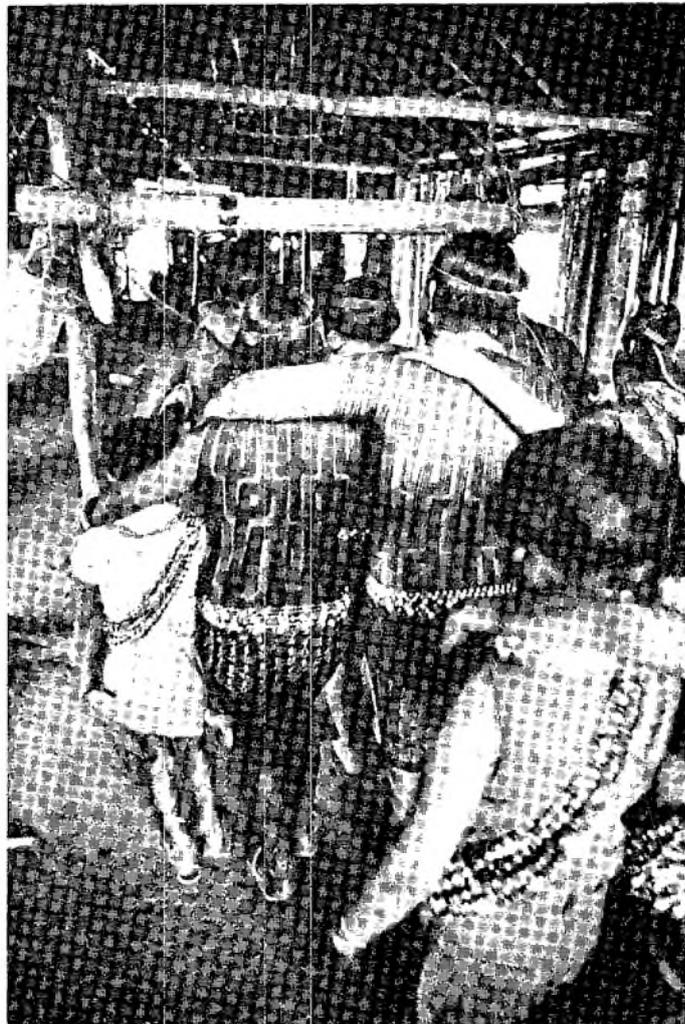
11. A shaman, Tut'ei, invoking the supernatural, singing and dancing in front of the temporary ritual structure with two apprentices at his right and two girls at his left. Ritual objects are on the ground, below the iw'ara. They include the fern leaves, the hourglass-shaped support, the wooden bench, and an aluminum basin. Cigars are tied at the center of the front log.



12. The temporary ritual structure has been dismantled and replaced by a stick planted in the ground, in front of which dances are taking place (pp. 25; 47-48).



13. Dance formation, showing the main shaman, Pinatsir'e, singing and dancing to the beat of his gourd rattle, with two apprentices behind him and women, always to the left of the shaman and his assistants. (night rites)



14. Rear view of a dance formation, in front of the main ritual structure (the shaman, always in the first row and to the right of the women, is not seen). Some of the girls and women present elaborate body painting.

tinue outside, in front of the temporary ritual structure. The shaman will dance in front of the structure with his assistant, soon being joined by women as before. Again, between songs he smokes a cigar, and may reach for "force" above the double log.

Simultaneously another shaman or a group of shamans may be preparing themselves for possession, either inside the house where the main ritual structure is located, or outside at the temporary structure, invoking the supernatural and reaching for "force" at its top.

On one such occasion, two shamans were involved, one, Yuru'i, presumably calling the spirits, the other, Tut'ei, concentrating, preparing himself to receive a spirit, to be possessed.

Tut'ei had been the first to invoke the supernatural, toward the end of the afternoon, dancing and singing in front of the temporary ritual structure with an apprentice/assistant, Takir'i. Later, at about sunset, while Tut'ei had stopped singing and dancing, Yuru'i began to sing, to the accompaniment of his gourd rattle. He was sitting inside the house near the main ritual structure, but facing the temporary ritual structure through the lateral door, Takir'i now sitting behind him. After a while, as night had fallen, Tut'ei came to sit at the left of Yuru'i, listening with concentration, smoking ordinary commercial cigarettes and making frequent gestures of reaching for "something" in the space in front of him and attracting it to his own body. He then had a mild trance (of a type which was frequently observed, characterized by uncoordinated movements, often an apparently intense pain, and the uttering, often as a dramatic cry, of the word 'eyu, repeated several times). During Tut'ei's trance, Yuru'i would sometimes stop singing, and emit one of the whistling sounds. Yuru'i then stood up, now stand-

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16. The difference in function of the two structures is not clear. Some possibilities will be considered in the discussion.

ing in front of the main iw'ara, and was soon joined by young women and girls, standing at his left side, whose chorus replied to his songs. Tut'ei, possibly still in a mild state of trance, went out, although I did not notice it until later. After several songs in front of the main iw'ara, Yuru'i and the women also went out, now standing at a distance in front of the temporary structure. Tut'ei was already there, standing close to it, sometimes his hands laid on its double log, concentrating, sometimes reaching for "force" above it, toward the top of the structure, sometimes walking back, as in expectation. Yuru'i and the women, standing behind Tut'ei, were now singing a three-voiced song consisting of the song of the shaman, repeated or replied to by the assistant and some women, while other women sang a low-pitched, non-verbal counterpoint. Tut'ei was now emitting various blowing, "hu-uh-uh" and other sounds. Between stanzas Yuru'i was making tense "mmm, mmm" sounds. The song's intensity diminished as the low-pitched counterpoint stopped. Tut'ei's trance increased in intensity. He began again to emit the words 'eyu....'eyu, and started coughing. Finally the songs were interrupted as Yuru'i joined Tut'ei in reaching for the force, the two shamans emitting various blowing and moaning sounds. Tut'ei's 'eyu cries and moanings became more frequent. Takir'i was now squatting inside the temporary structure. Now Tut'ei's voice modulated almost to a falsetto, still saying the word 'eyu, but as his voice changed he progressively began to sing. He started dancing a heavily stepped, animal-like dance, his body bent forward. A young man was holding him at the hips, while Tut'ei's wife in turn was holding the young man by one shoulder. Tut'ei's song was entirely different from the usual shamanic songs. He was not using a gourd rattle. Except for Tut'ei's singing, the silence was now complete, with perhaps an occasional low-voiced comment by one of the spectators. Now Tut'ei was in complete trance, his possession was total, he was

the spirit, singing the spirit's words with the spirit's voice and moving like the spirit. As his voice reached a higher pitch his song gained in intensity. Almost suddenly his singing stopped, his movements became uncoordinated, he became very agitated, emitting again, repeatedly and insistently, the words 'eyuuuuuuu...hu-uh-uh...'eyu...as he fell to the ground, being restrained by some of the people present. His 'eyuuuuu and other cries now sounded like the expression of an intense pain, and his movements were those of a person in great distress. He was finally made to sit on a bench, calmer now, but still suffering, uttering the words 'eyu and emitting blowing and whistling sounds. The voices of the spectators could now be heard, probably commenting on his possession. Progressively Tut'ei regained his normal countenance, looking quite exhausted. When recordings of this trance sequence were played back to various informants, it was referred to as umandoa'ip (sometimes heard umbandoa ip or umanoa'ip).

After this possession and after Tut'ei had regained his composure, the two shamans made long invocations in a subdued voice, first toward the northwest then toward the northeast. Tut'ei, probably now endowed with supernatural powers, took charge of the next stages of the ceremony. Accompanied by other shamans and by spectators, he went to the house of the sick baby for which the ritual was held, and curing acts followed, Tut'ei being the officiating shaman. It was also Tut'ei who was in charge of other curing rites the following morning.

Another occurrence of possession is worth describing,

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17. My interpretation. Tut'ei's modified behavior as well as his voice change strongly suggest that the Asuriní interpret the shamanic trance as possession by some supernatural being whose characteristics are transmitted to the shaman during trance. This spirit possession hypothesis was given additional support when an informant was shown a photograph of another shaman in trance, and indicated that an "añ'íja" was present in and about his head and neck. Closely related words in other Tupí languages designate either various bush spirits or spirits of the dead.



15. One shaman, Yuru'i, is invoking the supernatural at the main ritual center, singing to the beat of his gourd rattle, while another shaman, Tut'ei, makes gestures suggesting that he is attracting some immaterial substance to his body, preparing for possession.



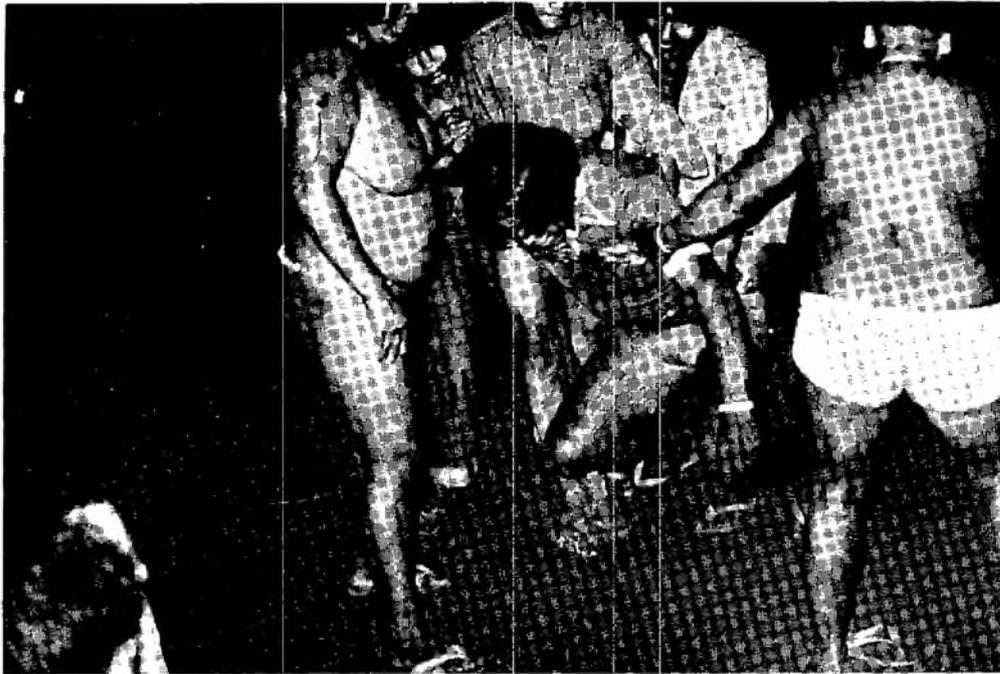
16. Tut'ei, who has reached the first stages of trance, stands in front of the temporary ritual structure, probably requesting more supernatural help and emitting various sounds while Yuru'i, now accompanied by young women, continues his incantations to the supernatural.



17. Now the two shamans join in reaching for supernatural force at a point which seems to be the locus of concentration of supernatural forces (see also photographs 23 and 26) while the assistant, Takir'i, squats inside the temporary structure.



18. Tut'ei is now in trance, presumably possessed by a spirit. He is dancing in a way probably characteristic of that spirit and singing in an almost falsetto voice.



19. Toward the end of his trance Tut'ei has now reached an uncoordinated, apparently painful stage; spectators and assistants restrain him.



20. Tut'ei is finally made to sit on a bench, apparently exhausted.

although incompletely recorded. Together with the preceding sequence, it illustrates the variety of spirits that can possess the shamans, as well as the powers with which the shamans become endowed through possession.

After the end of a previous ceremony the temporary structure had been dismantled, and symbolically replaced by a stick planted at its site in the ground. In front of the stick was a wooden bench. One of the shamans, two assistants, and several women, were dancing, in front of the stick, as usual in the early hours of the night. At the same time, four shamans (including the main shaman) were inside the house, smoking and making various blowing, "animal", and grunting sounds. The group formed by the shaman who was dancing with the assistants and the women then began to make a half-turn dance, sometimes facing the stick, sometimes facing the entrance of the house (this form of dance usually occurs later in the night). The four shamans then came out of the house, each holding a lighted cigar, facing the group of dancers, and themselves dancing a heavy-stepped, grotesque dance. They followed the group of dancers, then danced past them and, facing the opposite way, "attacked" the dancers and the spectators with their cigars, falling frequently to the ground, to the amusement of everyone. They seemed to represent grotesque or buffoon spirits, but who, as will be seen, also must have been endowed with curing powers. After this episode, which was quite funny to the observer as well as to the Asurini, the four shamans stood for a while next to each other, in front of the group of dancers and facing the stick, smoking their cigars. Then they went into the dark of the night about 10 to 15m beyond the stick, grasped some immaterial thing and came back, all four of them holding that "thing". Still holding it they went back into the house, followed by the other shaman and his group of assistants and women dancers. I did not observe what was happening inside.

Soon the women came out. A little later three women, one carrying a baby, went into the house. I assume that some curing rite took place, after which the three women came out with the baby. Thereafter I was invited to enter and was offered some of the ritual beverage. The main shaman then began to sing ordinary shamanic songs, sitting on a bench in front of the main ritual structure, an apprentice/assistant sitting behind him. The singing lasted all night. I did not stay, but I assume that later the shaman danced and was joined in the dance by the women, as usually occurs.

The next step, after invoking the supernatural and the eventual possession of one or several shamans, consists of curing acts. My data (as, for example, Tut'ei's trance) suggest that generally, one shaman is in charge of the principle stages of the ceremony, from early evening until the next morning. It is he who sometimes (perhaps always) becomes possessed at some point during the ceremony and who leads the evening and morning curing rituals. Sometimes, however, two or more shamans are involved and coordinate their actions.

The various acts performed during the curing phase in the presence of the sick are at first quite confusing to the observer, as several of these acts may be carried on simultaneously. To permit clarity of exposition, I will use an analytical approach to this description rather than a narrative one. Repeated observation permitted me to separate some of the elements, which may be grouped into two categories, although the two are probably carried on simultaneously: extraction of the evil, negative forces or disease-causing "substance" from the body of the patient, and transfer, injection, penetration of positive forces into his body. It seems that both functions are performed during the night curing ritual, with a greater emphasis on extraction of evil forces, whereas the function of the curing ritual carried on in the morning, which emphasizes the use of ritual objects and substances, seems to be exclu-

sively the transfer of positive forces to the sick.

During the night cure, one of the ritual stones, which presumably had earlier received supernatural power at the foot of the temporary structure during the dancing and singing phase, is usually placed, on its bench, under the hammock of the sick person. It presumably radiates its accumulated force, transferring it to the patient, to help fight the cause of the disease. Alternatively, the treatment may be performed in front of one of the ritual structures, the patient sitting on the bench, the stone being placed on the ground in front of it.<sup>18</sup> The various shamans sit on benches around the hammock of the patient. A variety of "animal" and whistling sounds are produced, while certain gestures are made, the purpose of which is clearly to remove bad fluids surrounding the patient and to extract and drive away the disease-causing "substance". Among the "animal" sounds are a frog-like sound produced by aspirating through the closed lips (as in a kiss) using the cavity left between the palms of the joined hands as a resonator; a whistling sound produced by blowing into the same cavity; another whistling sound produced by using the yaw'ara whistle. These "animal" sounds, and other "animal" sounds sometimes emitted during the other rites at the temporary structure suggest that animal spirits may be involved.

The most common of the gestures consists of movements of the hands away from each other, the palms facing outward, as if trying to drive away some fluid surrounding the patient.<sup>19</sup> This gesture (pətim'u or pətimb'u) is accompanied by a vibration of the lips. It often ends with a snapping sound pro-

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18. Similarly, during some of the other rites, the officiating shaman may sit on that bench, with the stone in front of it. I once observed a shaman tilting the bench, apparently to rid it of impurities, after a patient had been sitting on it.

19. I did not record clearly if there is really a distinction between the words pətim'u (cigar) and pətim'u (this curing hand gesture). If not, then perhaps the word refers both to cigars and to this curing rite. Cigars are smoked by the shamans throughout the ceremony; however I failed to

duced by the sudden separation of the hands locked together by squeezing the folded index finger of one hand between the folded index and middle finger of the other hand. The "animal sounds" described above are frequently emitted between such successive hand movements, sometimes as a seemingly random sound produced by one of the shamans, sometimes as an almost simultaneous succession of these sounds, the various shamans joining in their emission.

Two forms of removing the disease-causing "substance" are less frequent and probably of a more powerful nature, and are perhaps reserved for the more powerful shamans, or for shamans belonging to a particular category. In the first, all of the shamans present (or perhaps only the shamans belonging to one of the five categories?) hold their closed fists jointly over the sick person's body, as if forceably grasping something. Then with an apparently great muscular effort, they attempt to lift that which they are holding, which is offering great resistance. Finally after several minutes of intense effort they succeed in extracting from the body and lifting that immaterial "substance", which they then release. A few of the shamans then make hand gestures, as if driving it away, at the same time blowing, as one would do with irritating tobacco smoke. A feeling of satisfaction, of relief, of happiness can

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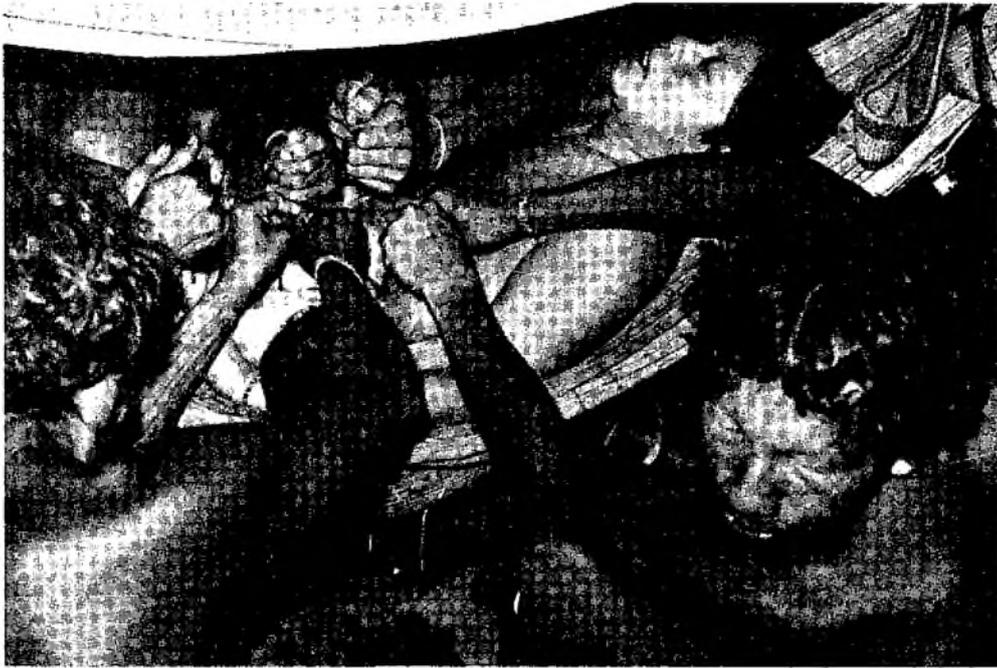
observe whether cigar smoke is blown on the sick. That it is not, is suggested by Lukesch (1976, p. 67), who witnessed only a few of the curing acts and writes:

I came across no treatment of sickness whereby the healer blows tobacco smoke over the body and sucks at the pain-ridden area of the body, afterward spitting out the removed poison which had been placed in the body by evil magic.

Soares' description is so general as to be of little comparative use (Soares 1971, p. 18):

A purificação é feita com defumações, massagens e sucções, finalizando com gestos que simbolizam a expulsão de uma personagem maléfica - EMAMOE.

Neither Lukesch nor I witnessed any sucking out of the disease-causing agent. I will, however, return to the "maleficent personage - EMAMOE" in the discussion.



21. "Extraction cure" at night: the various shamans join in their effort to extract an invisible "substance" from the body of a sick baby held by his mother, who is laying in her hammock.

be felt among the persons present. In the second of these more powerful disease-removing actions (tíwamow'aim), the officiating shaman makes hand gestures of attracting to his own body the fluid or substance surrounding the patient, each gesture being accompanied by a "he!" shout. After doing this for a while he enters an agitated, apparently painful trance (of the type in which the words 'eyu...'eyu...are uttered), as if the disease had entered him. Some of the persons present restrain him, while the other shamans practice curing procedures on him, especially the hand gesture accompanied by lip vibration, to help him get rid of the evil forces. Finally the shaman enters into a violent coughing fit, coughing out the evil, and returns to a normal state. In a fourth procedure <sup>20</sup> a shaman may first pass his hands, without touching, around his own head, as if to gather some positive fluid or force; then in a continuous movement he will pass his hands (again, without contact) along the body of the sick person; then, joining his hands, palms upwards, in front of his mouth he will blow away the bad fluids they have gathered from the sick person's body. Thus, if my observation was correct, in the same movement good fluids or forces (perhaps an innate shamanic power) are transferred to the patient and bad fluids

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20. In the confusion of the various curing acts carried on simultaneously, I did not clearly observe this curing procedure, and I first thought that my initial observation was not correct. However, toward the end of my stay among the Asurini the head shaman, Pínatsir'e, was sick and had been transferred to the FUNAI infirmary. I visited him there and placed my hand on his forehead to know whether he had fever. He made me understand that he wanted me to pass my hands over his whole body. His wife, who was present, showed me the correct procedure. I had first to pass my hands over my own head - presumably to collect some innate supernatural force - then pass my hands, without contact, over his whole body, after which I had to join my hands, the palms up, and blow away the "bad fluids" that they had gathered. After I had done this, Pínatsir'e asked me if I was a karuw'ara. This transfer of innate force - shamanic power? - simultaneous with the removal of bad fluids would thus be a specialty of this class of shamans, and would not require any ritual setting or preparation. Lukesch (1976, p. 66) describes a curing procedure during which each shaman (men and women) in turn strikes with the palms of their hands and rubs the body of the patient. Otherwise, his description corresponds approximately to my observations of this fourth curing procedure, except that he does not mention the shaman first gathering power from his own head in his hands. Lukesch's description conveys, however, the same impression that the disease-causing fluid or substance is transferred from the body of the sick to the hands of the shaman and is then blown away by the shaman.

are removed.

During the performance of this complex of curing acts one or several of the shamans may sing, without the accompaniment of a gourd rattle. The officiating shaman and his assistant, or a group of the other shamans, may go to the temporary structure to fetch some additional "force" which they bring back in their hands. In one instance also the shaman and his helper went to the temporary structure, at the foot of which was a clay pot containing water. They brought back this ritualized water in a small calabash which the shaman passed over the body of the sick baby being treated, without touching him.<sup>21</sup> I once saw, during the night curing session, a woman washing a sick baby with ritualized water (a similar rite is also performed in the morning at the end of each night's ceremony), and I once also saw a woman blowing over the same sick baby.<sup>22</sup> During some home curing sessions, another shaman may stay in front of the temporary structure, dancing with an assistant and some women.

After the curing session food is served to the shamans in the house: the officiating shaman eats first and last. He is then presented with food, water and babaçu oil<sup>23</sup> which he "purifies" or "blesses" with a light gesture of the hand in their direction accompanied by blowing in short puffs. The food, water and oil are then taken away, presumably for subsequent use by the household.

After this session, the shamans return to the area in front of the temporary structure where they sit in a circle for a while, talking. They may then proceed to another home

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21. This passing of ritualized water over the body of the patient suggests a similar function as that of the "force transfer" curing rites performed in the morning, which will be described below.

22. This indicates that some women may also have curing powers. Lukesch (1976, p. 66) also observed women performing curing acts.

23. Babaçu (Brazilian name): a palm tree. The oil extracted from its nut is used as a body lotion.

cure if necessary; or they can hold a curing session for another sick person in front of the temporary structure, the patient (or the mother holding her sick baby) sitting on the bench which usually supports the ritual stone, which is placed on the ground. The curing proceedings in front of the temporary structure are similar to the ones inside the house.

A formal ritual meal in front of the temporary structure usually follows the cures. The shamans sit in a circle again, with the officiating shaman sitting in the center, facing the temporary structure. The ritual food is served by one of the women who prepared it, usually a girl or a younger married woman. She brings a calabash of the thick beverage of sweet manioc and maize, from which the officiating shaman eats first, then passes it around to the other shamans, after which it is returned to the officiating shaman who eats again, last. The girl takes away the empty calabash and brings it back, refilled. The ritual food is passed around three times, first clockwise, then counterclockwise, then again clockwise.

After the meal, the shaman who has been in charge of the ritual usually retires to rest. Another shaman takes over and dances with an assistant in front of the temporary structure. They are later joined by women.

Later a special dance takes place: while the new shaman is standing at the side of the temporary structure, singing, his assistant performs a dance alone with the manioc sieve which had been used for the preparation of the ritual food.

Dancing by the new shaman with his assistant and the women then resumes, either in front of the temporary ritual structure or at the main ritual center inside the main shaman's house. Sometimes there is a variation in the dance in front of the temporary structure: the group of dancers, who have been dancing in a back-and-forth motion facing the temporary structure, make the half-turn movement. This movement may be repeated, the dancers sometimes facing the temporary structure,

sometimes facing the entrance of the house. This night dancing, following the curing phase of the ceremony, has now become a very joyful, happy event. The words of some of the songs seem to be very humorous and are sometimes accompanied by funny gestures by the shaman, which have to be imitated by the assistant who is singing the second voice. All the spectators then burst into laughter. This could be interpreted not only as a feeling of happiness because the shaman has been successful in extracting the disease, but also as a social happening, and third, but perhaps most important, as a propitiatory rite, a feast offered to the spirits to thank them for their actions and to make the village hospitable for them. The dancing usually lasts all night. The shamans in charge of such a night ceremony often take turns in leading the dance.

Shortly after sunrise a special curing ritual is usually held in front of the temporary structure (sometimes in front of the main one) or, if the patient cannot go there, in the patient's house. The purpose of this ritual seems primarily to transfer supernatural forces (presumably the forces of various spirits) to the sick. At least in some cases observed the shaman leading this ritual was the one who had lead the late evening and night rites. Ritual objects are passed over the body of the sick person, without contact. These objects have presumably become the receptacles of supernatural power, first by exposure at the foot of the ritual structure or by being tied to its iw'ara (double log) during the night ceremony, then by being presented above the double log, at what appears to be the locus of concentration of supernatural forces, just before performing the rite. These ritualized objects include the fern leaves, genipa dye on a cotton swab, and a decorated cigar. After the symbolic passing of the genipa over the body, a woman (at least once, the one who had served the night ritual meal) applies a small dot of genipa with a finger on parts of the body of the sick.

Ritual food is also given to the sick person after it has been exposed above the iw'ara. The various parts of this ritual may be preceded or separated by a sharing of ritual beverage by the two or three shamans present (also after it has been exposed at the locus of concentration of force) as well as by a dance by the officiating shaman, the apprentice/assistant and a few women, or by trance of a shaman. Again, while these curing acts are performed, the patient sits on the bench of the "sacred stone", which is placed on the ground. Similarly, during the sharing of food by the shamans or during some of the preparations, the officiating shaman sits on this bench, the stone being also placed on the ground in front of it. Whenever no one sits on the bench, as between two rites or during a dance interlude, the stone on its bench is placed back under the iw'ara. If this "force transfer" curing session is held at the home of the sick, the stone on its bench will be placed under the hammock of the patient, as during the night "disease extraction" cures.

After these "force transferring" acts a purification rite is performed for the assistants, including the girl or young woman who had been serving the night meal and applying the genipa dots. The person being purified stands in front of the temporary structure, facing away from it. The shaman gathers some of the "force" at the top of the structure, then passes his hands, without contact, along the whole body of the assistant being "purified", first from head to feet, then back along the body to the head, and back to the top of the structure again. The assistant then carries the ritual objects to the house where they are kept. Finally, the mother of the sick baby, a woman of the patient's family, or the patient himself (if he has no close female relatives, as was observed in the case of an old man) are asked to fetch water at a nearby stream. The shaman then ritualizes ("purifies" or "fortifies" or "blesses") this water with the subtle hand gesture accompanied by

22. Tut'ei performs one of the "force transfer" curing acts - the passage of a cotton swab with genipa dye - for a baby.

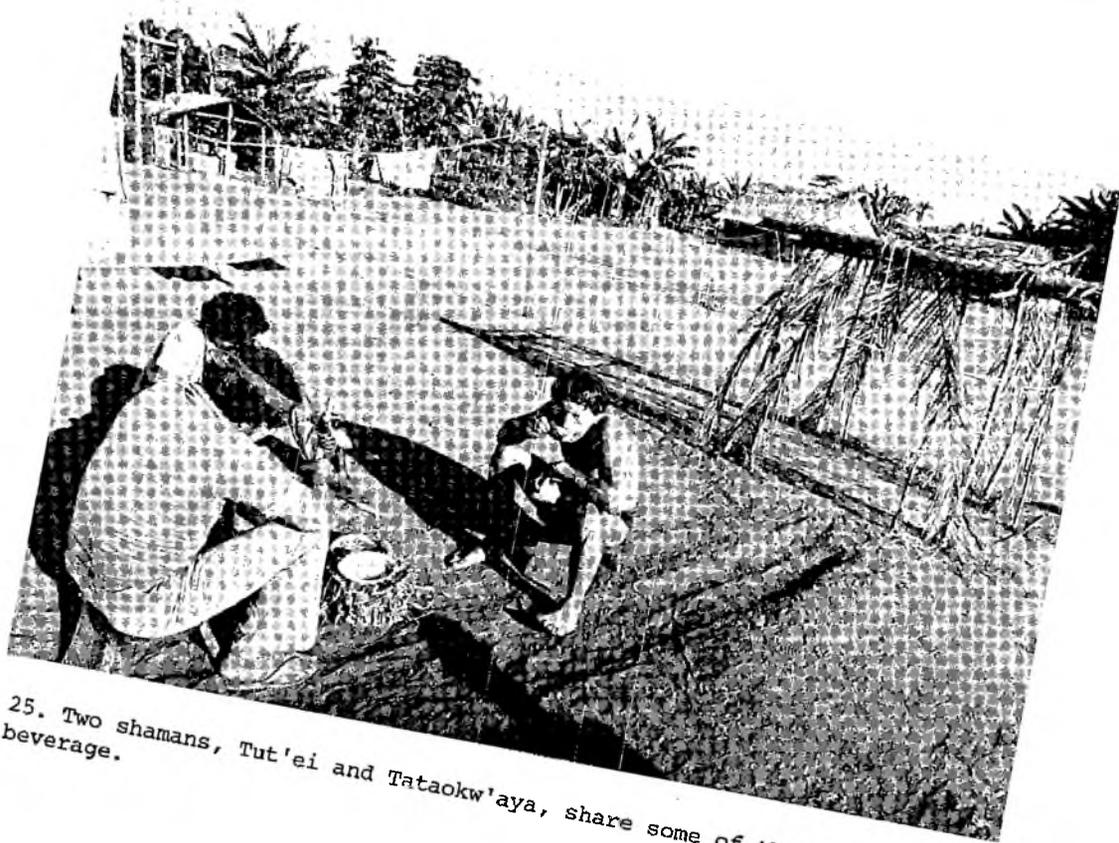


23. Morning "force transfer" rites: Tataokw'aya exposes some of the ritual beverage above the double log of the temporary structure, at the locus of concentration of supernatural forces.





24. Morning "force transfer" rites: Tut'ei gives some of the ritual beverage to a baby being treated.

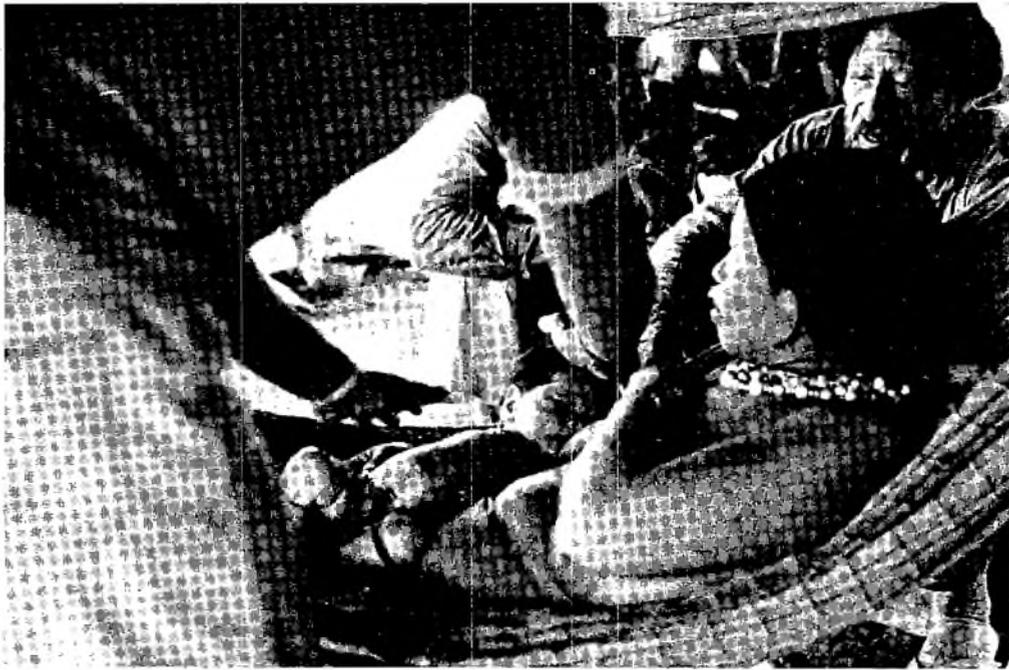


25. Two shamans, Tut'ei and Tataokw'aya, share some of the ritual beverage.

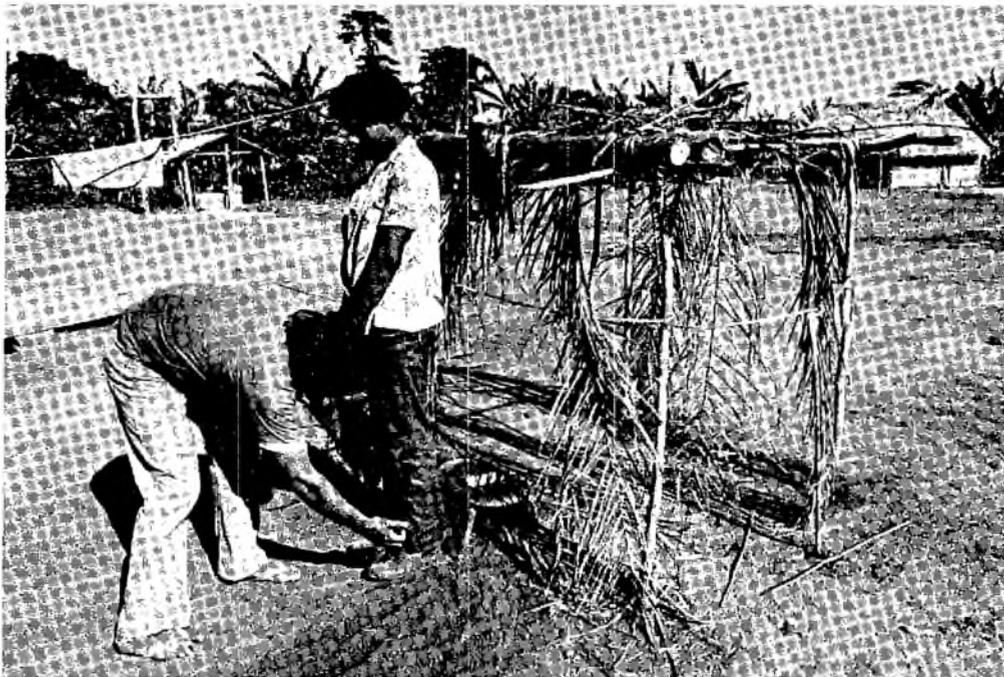
26. The morning "force transfer" rites are sometimes separated by a dance interlude. Here Tut'ei, holding his gourd rattle, reaches for "force" above the "iw'ara" of the temporary structure between two songs. A ritual stone placed on a bench under the iw'ara is presumably gathering and concentrating supernatural force.

27. Tut'ei has now joined the other shamans who were performing curing acts at the house of a sick baby. The stone on its bench, in which presumably supernatural force is now concentrated, has been placed under the hammock of the mother of the sick baby, presumably radiating its accumulated force to the sick. Tut'ei is about to perform some of the "force transfer" rites for the sick baby.





28. After performing the "force transfer" acts involving ritual objects, Tut'ei lays his hands (without contact) over the baby's body and head.



29. Toward the end of each night's ceremony the officiating shaman "purifies" the assistants in front of the temporary ritual structure. The stone on its bench has been placed again under the iw'ara, and will now be taken and kept in the house.



30. At the end of a night's ceremony: the officiating shaman, Tut'ei, "purifies" water presented by the mothers of two babies being treated.



31. One of the mothers washes her baby with this "purified" water.

blowing. This ritualized water is then used to wash the patient.

"Extraction cures" such as the one performed at night may also be performed in the morning, and trance of one or several shamans may occur. They will be illustrated by the following two sequences (unfortunately incompletely observed) of curing acts and possession, and will show again the variability of ritual sequences that may be performed and the different patterns of possession that may occur, corresponding perhaps to the summoning of different spirits.

In the first of these sequences, the main shaman, P̄natsir'e, was dancing with the women at the main ritual center, as occurs often in the morning. P̄natsir'e had been, together with Tataokw'aya and Yuru'i, one of the leading shamans during the preceding night ceremony. In the morning a stone was placed on the ground, under the iw'ara in front of which P̄natsir'e and the women were dancing. The young woman to the left of the group of dancers was holding an enormous symbolic cigar, burned at one extremity but now extinguished. At the same time an "extraction cure" was performed by the other shamans on a man who was sitting in front of the iw'ara, almost under it, and facing away from it toward the dancers. After the cure the shamans who had performed it went to sit on their benches on either side of the house, and the dancing stopped. P̄natsir'e now sat in the center of the dancing area, facing the iw'ara. A ritual meal was served, P̄natsir'e eating first some of the beverage from a clay pot that had been placed in front of him. Then each shaman in turn came in front of P̄natsir'e to eat some of the ritual beverage. P̄natsir'e had been given the huge cigar, which he was holding now under his arm and at times symbolically "smoking". He was also smoking an ordinary cigar. After this meal his dancing with the women resumed. The tempo

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24. The same gesture is sometimes applied to food before a meal, and is the same that was described at the end of the night "extraction cure".

of the songs accelerated as Pinatsir'e became more and more excited and the dancing became more frenzied. Between each song Pinatsir'e stopped and puffed from a cigar handed to him by one of the other shamans or a spectator. Then the pattern of the dance changed: the usual forward-backward movement now alternated with a circling movement around the main dancing area in front of the iw'ara, sometimes passing to the other side of it, around the ritual cooking utensils (pots and manioc sieve) gathered beyond the iw'ara, the group of dancers then coming back to the main dancing area. He also briefly left the other dancers, dancing alone under the double log. The spectators, including the other shamans, were obviously enjoying Pinatsir'e's performance. The end of this sequence was not observed. Although the Asuriní interpretation of this performance is not known, Pinatsir'e's hyper-excitation, his apparently modified personality (although his behavior remained "human" in form and the coordination of his movements was never lost), and the change in the dance pattern suggest that they might interpret it as spirit possession.

The second morning sequence was, again, the continuation of a night ceremony. Pinatsir'e and Tataokw'aya had been the main performers during the night dances, after the initial invocations by another shaman, Iwakak'a, and the usual night "extraction cure" that was held, in this case, for two men and a baby. In the morning the officiating shamans, were, again, Pinatsir'e and Tataokw'aya. Pinatsir'e performed the fern, ritual beverage and decorated cigar "force transfer" rites for the three patients. Tataokw'aya then began dancing with the women, while Pinatsir'e sat on the side, hunched forward and motionless. Between songs Tataokw'aya went to the iw'ara, grasping for "force" above it. The dance stopped, Tataokw'aya going to sit on a bench next to that of Pinatsir'e. On a cue that I did not observe they went simultaneously into an "eyu"-type trance, reaching only the agitated, uncoordinated, pain-



32. Morning rites (first sequence, pp. 40-41). Pinatsir'e (left) is dancing with the women and girls, while curing acts are performed for a man sitting under the iw'ara. These acts are carried out by the other shamans, who are sitting around him.



33. The shamans performing the cure are extracting the disease-causing "substance" from the sick man. One shaman, his hands joined in front of his mouth, is emitting one of the whistling or "animal" sounds.



34. The shamans are lifting the disease-causing immaterial "substance", while Pínatsir'e and the women are still dancing.



35. A ritual meal is served after the cure, each shaman in turn coming to take some of the ritual beverage in front of Pínatsir'e, who is holding the huge symbolic cigar under his arm. An ordinary cigar is resting on his foot.



36. Dancing by Pínatsir'e and the women resumes. Note Pínatsir'e's excited expression.



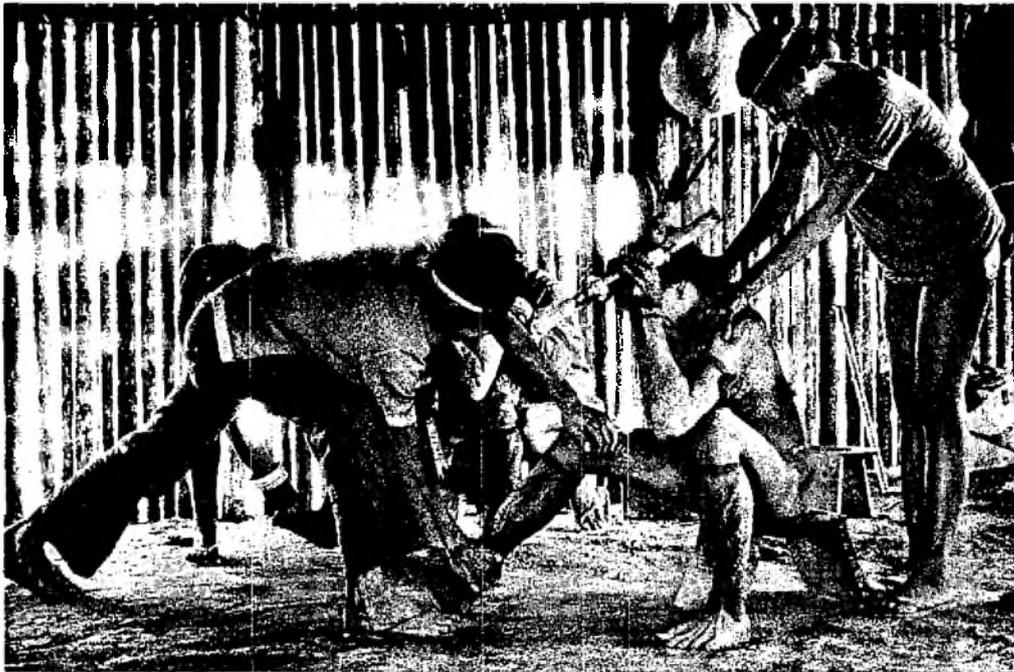
37. Between songs, Pínatsir'e smokes a cigar held by one of the other shamans (here, Yuru'i) or a spectator, who are sitting along the walls of the house.



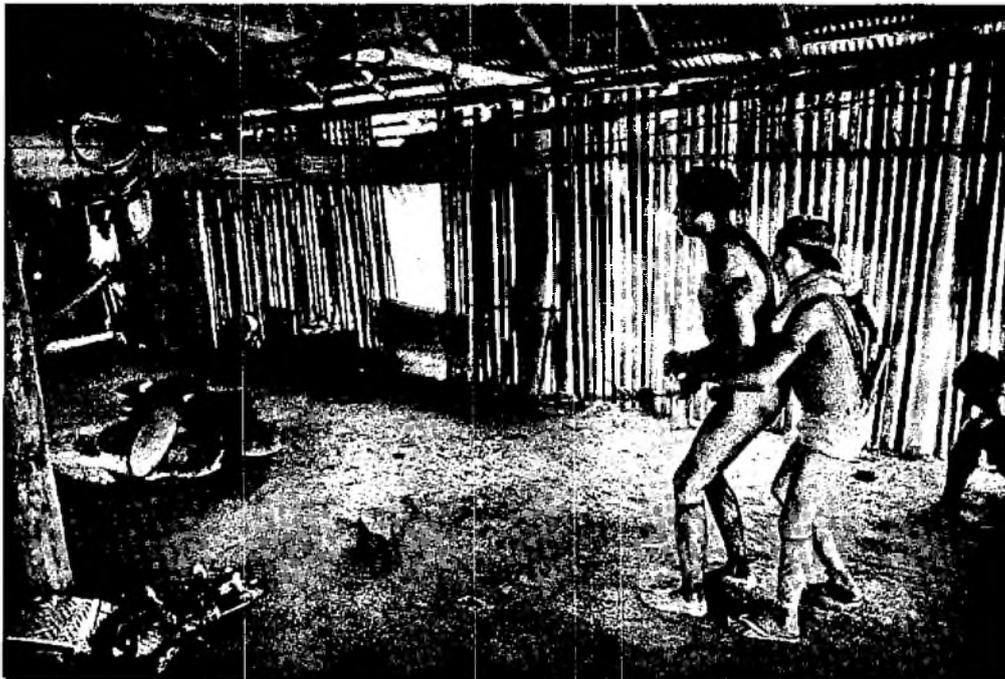
38. Pínatsir'e and the young women and girls perform the circling movement around the main dancing area. The young woman at his left is holding the huge symbolic cigar. The ritual stone on the ground below the iw'ara can be seen to the right of Pínatsir'e's right hand.



39. Morning rites (second sequence, pp. 41-42). Tataokw'aya is dancing with the young women and girls in front of the main ritual structure. Pínatsir'e (left) is sitting, hunched forward and motionless. A ritual stone is on the ground, under the iw'ara.



40. Almost simultaneously Tataokw'aya and Pínatsir'e enter into an "eyu"-type trance, characterized by uncoordinated movements and apparently in intense pain. They are restrained by assistants and spectators. (Pínatsir'e is hidden by the assistant holding Tataokw'aya's leg.) It is in this photograph that I was shown by an Asurini informant that an "añ'íya" was present in and about Tataokw'aya's head and neck.



41. After the trance, Tataokw'aya resumes dancing, with only an assistant behind him. Pínatsir'e is sitting again, hunched forward as before (extreme right). Ritual objects include Tataokw'aya's gourd rattle, the stone under the iw'ara, the cooking utensils that were used in the preparation of the ritual beverage, now assembled beyond the iw'ara, and various unidentified objects (lower left corner).

ful stage, though apparently not "becoming spirits" (as presumably had been the case in Tut'ei's night possession).<sup>25</sup>

They were restrained by assistants and other persons present. The trances ended with a coughing fit and spitting, corresponding probably to the expulsion of the possessing agent. After the trance was over Tataokw'aya went back to dance in front of the main ritual structure, with only an assistant behind him, while Pinatsir'e assumed again the sitting position he had maintained before the simultaneous trance. Later Pinatsir'e performed the genipa "force transfer" rite for the three patients in front of the main ritual structure. Then the wife of one of the sick men, the other sick man (who had no wife) and the mother of the sick baby went to fetch water at a nearby stream. Pinatsir'e "blessed" this water with the subtle hand gesture and light blowing. The women and the sick man then took the water away.

As in the case of Tut'ei's sequence, these two examples show that usually it is the same shamans who seem to be in charge of the night and of the morning rites. However it seems that the spirits or other supernatural forces involved may be summoned to possess the shamans at any time during the ritual sequence, perhaps according to which spirit is involved, what action he is expected to perform, or which part of the ritual is felt to need the additional help of a spirit.

##### 5. Miscellaneous

On one occasion, the two logs (iw'ara) of the temporary structure were discarded and replaced by new ones. It was perhaps felt that the supernatural entities had not accepted them. On another occasion the temporary structure had been dismantled, presumably because the ceremony was considered terminated. It was probably felt later that more assistance from the supernatural was needed, and the structure was symbolically replaced

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25. It is with a photograph of Tataokw'aya taken during this occurrence of trance that I elicited the word añ'ípa (see footnote 17).

by a stick planted in the ground at its site. In another instance, a palm frond was planted at the site of the temporary structure. During one ceremony, the temporary ritual structure had at first a more or less cubical form. On one of the following days, a pyramidal top had been added to it.

In some instances of probable possession during the night ritual, the shaman went inside the temporary structure, squatting, smoking a cigar and emitting roaring "animal sounds" (this was observed casually, and I cannot place it in a sequence).

Sometimes, during later parts of the ceremony, a cigar, the extremity of which had been previously burned but is now extinguished, is "smoked" symbolically, of course without smoke inhalation. Perhaps this happens when the shaman is possessed, when he belongs actually in another world where actions are no longer on a material level. At the time of the field work I did not notice any difference in behavior, but I was not familiar with the phenomenon of possession trance.

Once one of the less active shamans (but one of the prominent political leaders) brought to the father of the sick baby a stone around which a cotton thread partly threaded with seed beads had been wound three times. The father placed this stone at the foot of one of the posts supporting the mother's hammock (this did not happen during ritual activities). Perhaps the owner of the stone was lending his personal guardian spirit to help in the cure. On another occasion, while the main shaman was sick, a cigar which had been burned at one extremity was tied to one of the poles supporting his hammock.

During the sickness of the baby his father did not participate in any ritual activity, although he was himself a shaman. During home cures he was instead sitting in his hammock, smoking cigars.

After a night home "extraction cure", I once saw the main shaman, Pınatsir'e, back in front of the temporary structure

before the ritual meal, asking the girl who would later serve the ritual meal to paint genipa dots on his hands, which suggests the magical value attributed to genipa dye.

During most parts of this complex of rituals some women are spinning cotton. I do not know whether this is associated with the ritual (coarse cotton thread is wound around the decorated cigars) or if it is simply a pastime for older women who do not participate in the dancing.

#### 5. Discussion.

An ideal sequence of the curing and associated propitiatory rites can be drawn from the preceding descriptions. First the supernatural forces or spirits are summoned, early in the evening. Occasionally possession trance of one or several shamans materializes the presence of the spirits. Once the supernatural has been made accessible, curing rites are performed to extract the disease. (These "extracting" rites may be repeated in the morning.) Various rites, probably of a propitiatory nature, are then performed during the night, such as a ritual meal and dances. Early in the morning, a transfer of supernatural forces to the patient is performed by the use of ritual objects which have become animated, which have become the receptacles of specific supernatural forces or spirits by exposure at the supernatural-gathering site during the night ceremony. Again, possession trance of one or several shamans may occur to reinforce their shamanic powers. The ceremony ends by purification of the assistants, who presumably have been exposed to all the malefic fluids or spirits but, perhaps, do not have yet the power to fight them.

Some of these points demand further discussion. The following interpretation of Asurini shamanic rituals is conjectural, since their language was not known by the observer. Several details of ritual are still without explanation, but

a general pattern can be seen to emerge.

A supernatural world of powerful forces or spirits influences the Asurini's daily, material life. One such influence is through disease. Disease is caused by the presence of an evil supernatural "substance" in the sick person's body. Not knowing the language, it was not possible for me to know the cause of the presence of this "substance", whether it was the act of a malevolent spirit or an act of witchcraft; neither was I able to ascertain its nature. A clue is, perhaps, given by the curing method, tiwamowaim, in which a shaman attracts to himself the disease, and subsequently enters into a trance. This trance, of the uncoordinated "'eyu" type, does not differ to the observer from other "'eyu" trances involving the presence of an añ'ina, or spirit. Thus possibly, spirit possession is seen as a cause of disease by the Asurini.

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26. Aspects of Asurini supernatural beliefs not related to disease and curing have not been observed by the author and therefore are not dealt with. Other observers (Lukesch 1976; FUNAI personnel: Soares 1971; Benigno Pessoa Marques, Vincent Carelli - oral communications) have observed various ceremonies.

27. If this interpretation is correct, the Asurini provide an elegant illustration of Chesser's statement (Chesser 1975, p. 112) that:

Possession belief (the idea that one's body has been invaded by an alien entity) does not invariably involve trance phenomena; very commonly in South America and elsewhere spiritual possession is blamed for physical disease.

In this method of curing ("possession curing") among the Asurini, the same possessing agent is held responsible for the two phenomena: first, the disease of the sick person, then the trance of the shaman to whom it has been transferred.

28. Soares (1971, p. 18) reports that the curing acts end with the extraction of a malevolent being, emamoe.

A purificação é feita com defumações, massagens e sucções, finalizando com gestos que simbolizam a expulsão de uma personagem maléfica - EMAMOE.

I did not hear the term emamoe. Could it be that Soares misheard umandoa'ip, which may sound somewhat like emamoe when pronounced quickly? However emamoe could quite possibly be a cognate of the umae (ymae) of the Tenetehara, the substance that the Tenetehara shamans extract from the sick (Wagley 1942, p. 287):

This disease-causing substance or spirit can be fought by extraction manipulations, and by the transfer of "positive" forces to the patient. These are the tasks of the shamans. The shaman is a two-way mediator between our material world and the supernatural world. Two-way in the sense that he can call, gather, concentrate the positive forces that will fight the cause of the disease - either through the use of his innate shamanic powers, through possession, becoming himself endowed with outside supernatural powers, or through proper manipulation of ritual and ritual objects. He can then transfer these positive forces to the sick. Reciprocally, he has the faculty of removing, extracting the evil, the cause of the disease, again either through ritual manipulations or through possession, drawing to himself the disease which he can then expel (with the help of other shamans) thanks to his innate or ritually acquired positive supernatural forces.

That an innate shamanic power is conceptualized by the Asurini is suggested by the fourth curing procedure and by my own experience as a karuw'ara shaman (see p. 30 and footnote 20), when I was shown that I first had to pass my hands over my own head before passing them over Pinatsir'e's body, prob-

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Enquanto o pagé Guajajara [Tenetehara] é possuído, ele pode curar. Em geral a doença é considerada como resultado de feitiçaria. Cada sobrenatural tem um "espírito" que entra no pagé e um UMAE, que pode ser literalmente traduzido como "coisa". Essa "coisa" é representada materialmente por uma fita ou um pedaço de osso ou madeira. É esse objeto o que um pagé mau joga para dentro do indivíduo causando assim a doença. Possuído pelo espírito do sobrenatural, o pagé bom pode fazer massagens ou chupar para tirar a "coisa" que é responsável pela molestia.

The umae and the spirit possessing the shaman are thus, in Tenetehara belief, two emanations of the same supernatural entity; perhaps similarly, among the Asurini, one could conceive a merging of the concepts of disease-causing "substance" and possessing spirit. Emamoé could also possibly be a cognate of the mama'é (spirit) of the Kamayurá (Oberg 1953, p. 20) or of moan (illness-causing foreign objects) (ibid. pp. 59-60).

ably to collect some of my own shamanic power. Obviously no previous calling of supernatural forces or entities had been performed; however I do not know whether in Pínatsir'e's thinking, my force was innate or whether I had acquired it through learning the shamanic skills of the white man's tribe. This force would be universally available, since I am not an Asuriní and was not knowledgeable about Asuriní curing practices. I would, however, favor the first explanation, that the force is innate, since I did not know how to use "my power" and Pínatsir'e's wife had to show me the correct procedure. It was confirmed that he really thought I had that power when Tataokw'aya told me, a few days later: "nd'e (you), karuw'ara; 'ye (I, me)..." (he then listed the shamanic categories he belonged to): it was obvious that Pínatsir'e had told him about my curing attempt at the FUNAI infirmary. Innate shamanic power was a concept known of the Tupinamba and the Guaraní,<sup>30</sup> the Mundurukú,<sup>31</sup> and,<sup>32</sup> according to Métraux, probably widespread in South America.

29. Apparent cognates of the word karuw'ara exist in various Tupí languages, and refer either to the supernatural, or to disease. In Tenetehara, karowára is a generic term for all supernaturals (Wagley and Galvão 1949, p. 100). Huxley (1957, p. 284) defines the Urubu-Kaapor word caruwa as "A magic spell or spirit token". Among the Kagwahiv, a similar word refers to disease or fever (Waud Kracke, oral communication; previously Nimuendajú (1924, p. 268) had reported karuatip for disease (Portuguese: *doença*). A related meaning is found in Guaraní: carúguá: pains, pustules (Spanish: *dolores, bubas*) (Ruiz de Montoya 1876.) In his Yuruna vocabulary, Nimuendajú (1932, p. 586) lists kanewa as meaning sick (German: *krank*). And among the neo-Brazilian population of Belém, caruana means spirit and is sometimes used by Batuque religion believers synonymously with "encantado", "guia" or "orixá" (personal observation; also Vergolino e Silva, circa 1976, p. 213, with the more restricted meaning of a malevolent indigenous spirit). When I mentioned to an Asuriní informant the name of an old man who had died since my fieldwork, he went into a monologue in which the word karuw'ara was heard several times.

30. Métraux 1928, p. 89: "Les anciens Guaraní croyaient, tout comme les Tupinamba, à la force potentielle contenue dans le corps des magiciens."

31. Murphy 1958, p. 29: "The Mundurucú shaman, or mamú, has the possibility to deal with supernatural threats through possession of a mystical power latent within him from the time of his birth."

32. Métraux 1967, pp. 89-90: "Le pouvoir du chaman ne dérive pas exclusivement de son association avec le monde des esprits. La source de sa force peut être aussi une substance de nature mal définie dont il est le réceptacle. La croyance en cette matière magique est, sans doute, plus répandue en Amérique du Sud qu'il n'y paraît."

A distinction already implied above can be made between curing rites in which the shaman himself is the channel or receptacle of supernatural forces or spirits, either innate or acquired through ritual (possession) and those where he is a mere manipulator (through his specialist skills) of other channels or receptacles, namely, the various ritual objects.

In addition, a distinction can be made between ritual objects which would act as bridges between the material and the supernatural and those which would be receptacles of specific supernatural forces or spirits, once the latter have been made accessible by the bridges and by the shaman's incantations. The first category would consist of the cigars smoked during the ceremony and the gourd rattle, which are both used and, presumably, are active from the beginning of the ceremony, and seem to be used to call the various supernatural forces or entities and could thus be considered as channels to the supernatural.<sup>33</sup> The objects-receptacles would include the stones,

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33. Kamayurá spirit/object relationships hint at a possible interpretation of the different functions of tobacco and other ritual objects or substances among the Asuriní. Oberg (1953 pp. 24-25) writes:

...It was later learned that although shamans could smoke tobacco for pleasure, its primary use was in shamanistic rituals.

Manioc and piqui, for instance, have guardian spirits or mama'é which are represented by symbols. Tobacco, on the other hand, is itself the living representative of the mama'é. Tobacco is called petim, and petim is also the mama'é. Although no exhaustive analysis of native ideas about tobacco and attitudes toward it could be made, owing to linguistic difficulties, the general notions concerning it appear to be as follows:

- (1) Tobacco when smoked has the power to bring the shaman into contact with the mama'é of men, animals, and plants;
- (2) tobacco has the power to inject harmful objects into the bodies of one's enemies or into gardens or objects such as canoes, bows, and arrows.

The first function of tobacco among the Kamayurá is stated more explicitly (*ibid.* p. 60):

...tobacco has the power to call the spirits, which then carry out the orders of the shaman.

It seems likely that the function of tobacco and the gourd rattle among

fern leaves, decorated cigars, genipa dye and water. They would need to be activated by ritual, becoming then the receptacles of specific forces or spirits. Once so "animated", they would, in turn, operate as bridges or channels at a lower level, bringing the spirits or their forces to the patient. Thus the supernatural forces are brought in successive steps from the supernatural world to the shamans and to ritual objects, whence they are transferred to the sick.

We have seen that ceremonies generally begin by songs and dances in front of the double log (iw'ara) of either ritual structure, that shamans often grasp for or collect "something" above these double logs, and that ritual objects are often attached to the iw'ara or placed on the ground below it, and exposed above it by the shaman before the performance of a rite. This frequent collecting of "something" and the exposure of ritual objects above or under the double log suggest that, in addition to the specific forces or entities referred to above, there is a superior, general, non-specific force, the force that gathers above the double log of either ritual structure. This force would be needed to activate (or, more specifically, to animate) the ritual objects-receptacles or to make their spirits or their respective forces available to the shaman. Similarly, it would be this superior force which makes it possible for the shaman to be penetrated, to be possessed by the spirits. It also appears that the shaman has direct access to this force, that he can collect it in his hands and use it subsequently during the various curing acts.

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the Asurini would be somewhat similar, that their spirits would be readily available, as manifested by the sound of the rattle and the smoke and narcotic effect of the cigars; whereas the other ritual objects or substances would be the receptacles, "animated" by ritual, of the various spirits active in the cure.

Some speculation can also be made as to the nature of the individual supernatural forces or entities involved. The varied but specific behaviors of the shamans during some of the trances observed (especially Tut'ei's trance and the trances of the four shamans)<sup>34</sup> hint at the nature of the possessing agents, and suggest that they are spirits. It should be noted that Tut'ei's trance, characterized by a specific behavior (singing and dancing in a non-ordinary but controlled way), and the uncoordinated "'eyu"-type trance were both referred to as umanoa'ip (umandoa'ip, umbandoa'ip) when tape recordings were played back or photographs shown to Asuriní informants, suggesting that the two forms of trance were essentially of the same nature. Also, significantly, Tut'ei's trance began and ended as an "'eyu" trance. When shown a photograph of Tataokw'aya taken during his joint "'eyu" trance with Pínatsir'e, an informant, who had previously referred to it as umandoa'ip, pointed to his head and the back of his neck, pronouncing the word "añ'ina". It is easy to recognize in this word various cognates found in other Tupí languages which represent, according to the tribe (or, perhaps, depending on the interpretation of the various authors), either bush spirits or spirits of the dead.<sup>35</sup> Many features of the ceremonies, such as the

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34. In this case, the four shamans gave the impression of playing a role rather than being really in an altered state of consciousness. The place of this event in the whole ritual sequence suggests, however, that to the Asuriní this performance was similar in nature to that of Tut'ei who, to the observer, was obviously in a trance state.

35. Among these probable cognates of añ'ina we find, for example, the añanga or añã of the southern Tupinamba (corresponding to the Yurupari of the northern groups) (Métraux 1928, p. 60), which were variously interpreted by early missionaries as devils and souls of the dead but which Métraux (ibid., pp. 62-64) argues were in reality the designations of bush spirits or demons. Métraux (ibid., p. 64) notes that these words appear to be derived from ang, soul. These words correspond to the añay of the Apapocuva-Guaraní (Métraux, ibid., p. 63), or the aña (Devil) or ang (soul, shadow, spirit) of the modern Guaraní (Jover Peralta and Osuna, 1950-51, pp. 7, 9, 286). Additional cognates are found among other Tupí tribes: the añang of the Kagwahiv (Kracke ms. a, p. 14) "...which include ghosts of the recently dead..., and certain general types of vaguely maleficent forest spirits,..."; the anchunga of the Tapirapé (Wagley 1977, p. 306): "the generic term for shadows; souls; spirits of game animals and fish; also the masked dancers representing those spirits who visit the takana [dance house]."; the azang

natural character of many ritual objects or substances (stones, water, fern leaves, genipa dye), the various "animal" sounds emitted, and the "animal-like" dance observed in some forms of possession, are suggestive that nature or animal spirits are involved. Because of the language barrier, however, I was not able to confirm this.

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of the Tenetehara (Wagley and Galvão 1949, p. 98) "the disembodied souls of the dead"; or the anyang ("spirits of the dead") and ang ("soul, shadow, ghost") of the Urubu-Caápor (Huxley 1957, pp. 283, 285). Present-day lower Amazon Brazilians call Anhanga "a ghost or demon who hunts people in the forest" (Wagley 1964, pp. 233-234).

36. This is consistent with what is known about spirits involved in curing rituals among some of the linguistically closely related tribes, such as the Tenetehara (Wagley and Galvão 1949, p. 109):

The supernaturals most commonly "called" by Tenetehara shamans nowadays are Ywan, the water spirit; azang, the ghost of the dead, and the spirits of such animals as the monkey, the opossum, and the deer. Only a few shamans are able to "call" such strong spirits as the hawk and kururu-toad; so far as we know, there are no modern pazé so powerful as to be able to call Marana ywa, the Owner of the Forest, or the spirit of the jaguar. The piwára [spirit] of almost any animal may be "called" by shamans. Each shaman knows the songs and the dance and is able to "call" a series of supernaturals.

Similarly among the Kagwahiv, (Kracke, ms. a, p. 18):

The spirit journeys the ipaji made in the curing ceremony, from what my informants told me, used to take place in a trance. Entering a little shelter (tokaia) he had made of palha-palm leaf thatch, the ipaji would go into a trance, during which his spirit would go to visit, successively, all the spirits of the various parts of the earth and levels of the sky--first añang, then spirits of various species of animals. At the climax of this spiritual journey, he ends up talking to each of the Sky-People, finally approaching their father and chief Píndova'úmi'ga. Each spirit he meets sings a characteristic song, and the ipaji begs that spirit, in a fixed formula, to help the patient recover.

However, among the Kamayurá (Oberg 1953, p. 60):

The spirit which assist the shamans are known by the general name, mama'ê, and, according to the Kamayurá, are dwarflike, with white hair and black beards. These spirits differ from the mambê of the rituals, who, as we saw, are not anthropomorphic in appearance, although tobacco can be used to bring one into contact with them as well.

The state of trance, or of spirit possession, would be an indication, a proof, a witness, that the shaman has successfully entered in contact with the supernatural world and that he has now acquired through ritual the power of a supernatural entity<sup>37</sup> and can now proceed to fight the disease-causing negative forces with this acquired power. Similarly possession can show that the shaman has successfully drawn to his own body the evil that was causing the illness. His learned shamanic skills and the previously acquired "positive" supernatural forces will enable him not to be hurt (or only temporarily, as this form of trance seems quite painful) by the evil force and eventually to reject it.

The "'eyu" trance or stage of trance is somewhat puzzling. In contrast to the "typical" spirit possession trance showing a distinctive, controlled behavior (such as Tut'ei's night trance), the "'eyu" trance shows uncoordinated behavior and appears to be painful. It was with a photograph of such a trance by Tataokw'aya that I elicited the word "añ'íña", or spirit. Tut'ei's "typical" possession trance began and ended as an "'eyu" trance. It is also an "'eyu" trance which a shaman reaches in the third "extraction" curing procedure, (t±wamow'aim) when he draws the disease to his own body. Only the knowledge of the language and the elucidation of such words as "'eyu" and "umandoa'ip" will clarify this point.<sup>38</sup>

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37. Or, following Eliade (1951, pp. 296-297), has received its message?

Le transe chamannique fait partie de la cure: quelle que soit l'interprétation que le chaman lui accorde, c'est toujours par le moyen de son extase qu'il trouve la cause précise de la maladie et apprend le traitement le plus efficace.

38. The difference between these two forms of trance corresponds perhaps to an incomplete possession in the case of the "'eyu" trance. This difference is, perhaps, somewhat similar to the one between "sombreado" ("shaded" by the spirit) and "incorporado" (possessed) in contemporary Brazilian spirit possession religions such as Batuque (Leacock 1972, pp. 190, 202; Vergolino e Silva, c. 1976, pp. 212, 218) or Umbanda. Similarly it is conceivable

No observed occurrence of trance suggested the interpretation of a soul voyage by the Asuriní, although Kracke's data on the Kagwahiv suggest that both concepts - possession and voyage - may exist side by side.<sup>39</sup> Of course some of my observations may have been distorted by my lack of experience in the observation of shamanic techniques and of the trance phenomenon. Of course, again not knowing the language, it was not possible to know if dreams intervened in shamanic divination or if they would be considered as "soul voyages".<sup>40</sup>

Another question that arises concerns the reason for having two ritual structures: the main one in the main shaman's house, and a temporary one. As we have seen, rites can be performed in front of both structures during the same ceremony, as for example, the night of Tut'ei's possession. Salomão Santos pointed out the similarity in form of the cage-like object (yawaraik'a) hanging over the iw'ara of the main ritual structure, to that of the temporary ritual structure (tíwaruk'aya), suggesting that

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that during the 'eyu trance or stage of trance the shaman is painfully penetrated by an alien supernatural entity, but is not transformed. Thus, in the possession induced by extraction of the disease, the shaman brings to himself the disease, and becomes temporarily a sick person, penetrated by an alien entity (as opposed to becoming the alien entity), and whose symptoms take the form of an "'eyu" trance. On the other hand, in the controlled, specific forms of possession the shaman would be transformed into the spirit, would no longer be human, and thus would not suffer any more.

39. On the interpretation of shamanic trance by the Kagwahiv, Kracke (ms. a, pp. 18-19) writes:

Though the ipaji's soul is considered to be making this spiritual journey to meet the spirits, the spirits are also conceived to come into the tokaia to talk to the ipaji--invited down, as one informant described it, by the shaman's familiar, ga rupigwára. Both voices are heard from the tokaia, the shaman in trance alternately addressing the spirit and singing the spirit's response (or, according to other accounts, another helping shaman addresses the spirit, who responds through the voice of the shaman in trance.)

40. Quoting Kracke again on the Kagwahiv (ibid. p. 17), we find that:

Dreaming has a key place in Kagwahiv spiritual life: It is the special province of the pajé, or ipaji, the shamanistic healers who are the central practitioners of Kagwahiv religion.

one may be the symbolic representation of the other. One explanation would be that the temporary structure, being used exclusively for ritual purposes, provides a "pure" or "clean" gathering site for the spirits or forces, whereas the main one is located in a house where people live, where "bad fluids" may be present. Another explanation might be that each structure appeals to different entities, that these cage-like structures represent the residences of different spirits. This seems to be implied by their different names: it is perhaps significant that both words present the radical -ka-, found in 'aka (house), which suggests that both the cage-like object above the main ritual structure and the cage-shaped temporary ritual structure might be the residence of spirits (perhaps yawaraik'a being the residence of a conjectural jaguar spirit, and tīwaruk'aya the residence of a conjectural tīwa spirit, to whom one of the classes of shamans would be dedicated).<sup>42</sup> It is also conceivable that the roof and walls of the house are an obstacle to some spirits. Still, why is the temporary structure not made permanent, and is built anew for each ceremony? The homologous double logs of either structure would have the same function, that is, to act as bridges to or from the supernatural, to be the way of access to the non-specific superior force through which individual spirits are contacted, or which manifests itself through various spirit guises.

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41. Salomão Santos, oral communication.

42. The third "extraction cure", tīwamow'aim, would perhaps also involve the same spirit.

## 6. Conclusion

I have relied to a large extent on examples from Tenetehara, Kagwahiv and Kamayurá shamanism to support my conjectural interpretation of Asuriní shamanism and curing. It seems that these tribes are not only closely related linguistically, but that indeed various aspects of shamanism seem to be related among them. I would venture, at this point, that there is perhaps a northern, Amazonian group of Tupí tribes, possibly ranging from the Kagwahiv in the west to the Tenetehara in the coastal region, who are likely to share many shamanic beliefs and practices. Some examples are: the concept of spirit possession; an emphasis on bush or nature spirit cults rather than on the mythical hero cults which seem to have dominated Guaraní shamanism (Métraux 1928, Schaden 1959; 1974);<sup>43</sup> and the practice of complementary cooperation between shamans. Specially emphasized among the Asuriní, is the hierarchical organization of shamanic concept symbolized by ritual objects organized at different levels of supernatural power.<sup>44</sup> This

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43. Schaden 1959, p. 124: "Mas foi a instâncias do próprio filho que Nyanderuvusú lhe confiou o govêrno; e a fim de pôr-se em comunicação com o pai, que desaparecera, Nyanderykey inventou a dança medicinal. A eficácia dêsse invento constitui por certo o principal precedente mítico no conjunto das representações religiosas dos Apapokuva. Para êstes, a dança medicinal é o rito mais importante e de cuja eficiência julgam depender o seu próprio destino. Assim como Nyanderykey recorreu à dança medicinal para entrar em comunicação com o pai, os índios empregam-na hoje para ir à morada do héroi civilizador. É em tórno da dança medicinal que gira toda a vida religiosa do grupo."

44. A hierarchical organization of the supernatural conceptualized as levels (although not, as far as is known, represented by symbolic objects) existed among the Kagwahiv (Kracke, ms. b, p. 17):

In trance in the curing ceremony, the shaman--pají or (Lingua Geral) pajé--used to ascend one by one the levels at which these spirits live in the sky, meeting first the spirits of fish, then of animals and other birds, then spirits of less familiar forms. Reaching the level of the sky-people, he would converse with them one by one; until finally he reached the chief of the sky-people, the one responsible for having lifted that realm of perfection from the earth in the first place, Píndova'úmiga.

organization can be summarized in the following manner: A complex network of transactions with the supernatural world rules the states of health and disease of the Asurini. Asurini shamanism and associated ritual are part of an integrated world view, which associates everyday events closely with supernatural forces. These forces are often symbolically represented by objects which, once activated - or animated - by ritual, become, together with the shaman himself, bridges or channels linking the material world to the supernatural. The preliminary data on curing suggest that this complex world operates at three levels: the material world; a world of spirits which can directly influence our lives (in this case through disease) but which can also be manipulated by the shaman to fight disease; and a superior, non-specific supernatural force which is necessary to make the spirits accessible and to allow the shaman to manipulate them. <sup>45</sup> What makes Asurini shamanism remarkable is its hierarchical symbolism, by which superior, remote, perhaps abstract supernatural forces are transferred in descending steps to lower, more accessible, easy to manipulate, directly acting ones (probably spirits) through the symbolic use of ritual objects which represent these different levels of supernatural forces, and which may act either as bridges to or from the supernatural or as temporary receptacles of these forces. The step is short between this interpretation of Asurini shamanism and Métraux's statement <sup>46</sup> (speaking of Amazonian

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45. Even modern medicine has its place in this system: the Asurini know that it works. In the eyes of the Asurini it does not contradict their ideas about the supernatural: it complements them. However, it seems that it does not reach beyond the first level, the realm of the material world, and thus it does not interfere with the supernatural. (Asurini natural curing is probably extremely poor if not nonexistent: no instance was observed of curing with herbs or other natural remedies. However, the use of herbs in a non-ritual "home" context may have escaped my observations.) The use of modern medicine seems to be limited to cases where supernatural influence is not overwhelming: two cases were observed of a shaman refusing the use of medicines: once for himself while he was performing his shamanic activities, and in the case of a baby gravely ill for whom elaborate ritual was being performed (the baby eventually recovered).

46. Métraux 1949, p. 593.

shamanism in general) that:

There is no basic difference between the magic substance - an invisible but tangible stuff - and the arrows, crystals, and thorns that sometimes lodge in the shaman's body. These objects really are materializations of the shaman's power that is sometimes conceived of in the more abstract and vague form of "magic substance". The guardian spirit or familiar of the shaman likewise is a personification of the same power rather than a different entity coexisting with the notion of invisible substance. Magic substance, pathogenic objects, and guardian spirits are three different aspects of the same fundamental but vaguely conceived notion of magic power.<sup>47</sup>

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47. No "arrows, crystals or thorns" have been observed in Asurini shamanism. However this restriction does not alter the relevance of Métraux's statement.

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