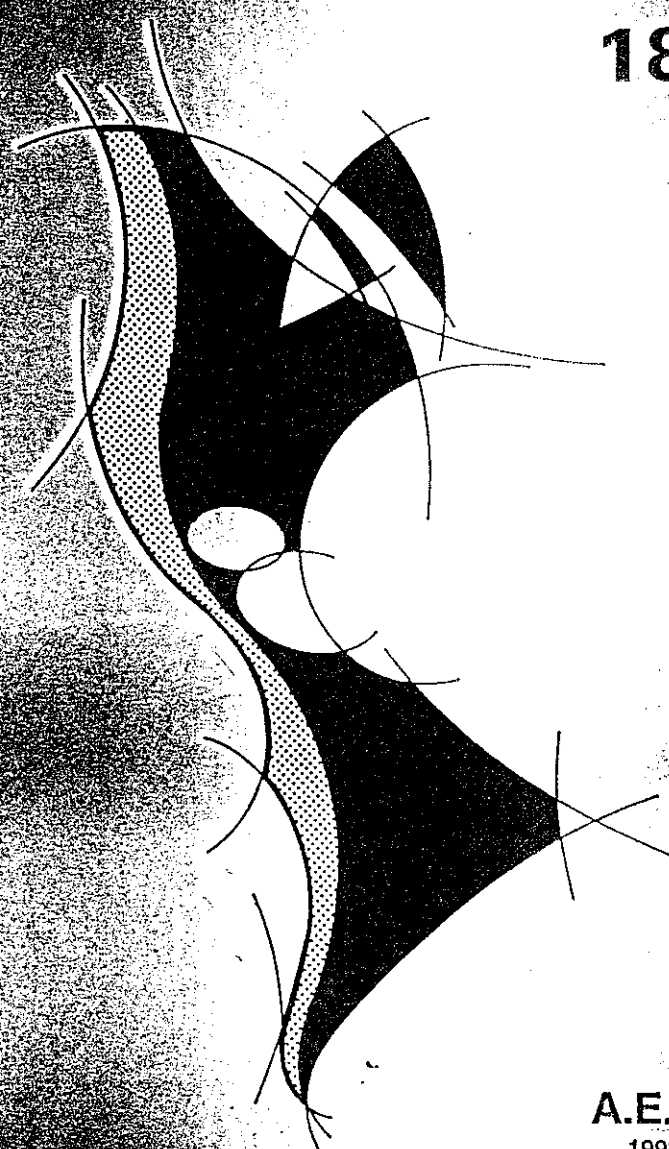


REVUE AMÉRINDIA  
AISA

# amerindia

revue d'ethnolinguistique amérindienne

18



A.E.A

1993

publié avec le concours du  
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique

CCJ

INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL	
data	28/8/95
cod.	BWD 00025

## pursuing the spirit

### Semantic Construction in Hohodene *Kalidzamai* Chants for Initiation

Robin M. WRIGHT

Dpto Antropologia - UNICAMP- Campinas

## Introduction

This article explores the ritual language of chant specialists in male initiation rituals among the Hohodene, a Baniwa phratry of the Aiary River in northwest Brazil. Its main purpose is to understand the semantic and poetic principles upon which the complex chants called *kalidzamai* are based. It thus builds on the ground-breaking work done by the anthropologist Jonathan Hill in his recent book *Keepers of the Sacred Chants. The Poetics of Ritual Power in an Amazonian Society* (1989). Hill's work was undertaken among the Dzauinai, a Wakuenai<sup>1</sup> phratry of the Guainia River in Venezuela and affines of the Hohodene.

<sup>1</sup> "Baniwa" is the name used in Brazil, "Curripaco" in Venezuela and Colombia, and "Wakuenai" ("People of Our Language") an ethnonym used in Venezuela - all for the same ethnic group. There does not appear to be an all-inclusive ethnonym. Two of the above terms refer to language, "Curripaco" being the name of one of the five reported dialects of the group. Since "Wakuenai" is not recognized as an ethnonym by the Hohodene and other phratries of the Aiary, I use "Baniwa" when speaking in general of these and other phratries of the Içana. "Baniwa" is a name of undetermined origin but, since early colonial times, has been used by outsiders and is, today, used by the Indians as a term of self-reference.

In his analysis of Dzauinai **malikai**, a genre comprised of a wide variety of "orations, chants and songs performed in childbirth rituals, male and female puberty initiation rites, curing rites, and other, less formal contexts" (Hill, 1989:4), Hill explores the relationship of myth and ritual chanting as an "active process of constructing an emergent, hierarchical patterning of more-to-less powerful beings" defining ritual power relations. In considering this process, Hill builds on recent studies of ethnopoetics to argue that

"In performances of **malikai**, Wakuenai chant-owners use the lyrical, rhythmic qualities of speech to poetically explore the outer limits of meanings originating in narrative accounts of the life cycle of Kuwai, the primordial human being. The underlying principle of this process is that human beings and the natural species and materials that are used in defining a specifically human, cultural world are analogously constituted through an intrinsic, taxonomic relationship between their generic and specific souls, or spirit-names. The mythic being of Kuwai furnishes Wakuenai chant-owners with a series of taxonomies of natural species and objects, which are transposed onto the horizontal line of chants and songs. The individual spirit-names refer to Kuwai, Amaru, and other mythic beings through the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synechdoche, and irony. However, all these individual figures are subsumed by a more general level of meaning at which the entire series of spirit-names within each chant or song constitutes a complex, poetic construction of the powerful mythic being of Kuwai and the original coming into being of natural species and objects. It is on this more general, macro-level of semantic naming processes and the musical organization of language that **malikai** can be understood as a poetic process of mediating between language music and mythic meaning" (Hill, 1989: 8-9).

Our study similarly concentrates on the semantic level of ritual chants which, as Hill has aptly stated, creates "a rich variety of visual, tactile, olfactory, auditory, and gustatory imagery that greatly exceeds the semantic complexity of everyday, conversational speech" (*ibid.*: 11). In so doing, the ritual language of **kalidzamai** creatively "reformulates the same range of natural and social phenomena into a more dynamic, hyperanimate world of mythic beings and the presocial, cosmogonic processes whereby the experiential world originally came into being" (*ibid.*: 12). Hence, the efficacy of such ritual languages "as metaphorical processes of connecting the known, experienced world of natural and social beings with an unknown, or partially known, universe of mythic meanings" (*ibid.*: 13).

"Moreover, the mythic powers evoked in esoteric ritual languages are not perceived as a remote, abstract system of knowledge grafted onto a pre-existing experiential world but as emergent properties, or a sort of hidden dimension, of the world of everyday things and life experiences" (*ibid.*: 13-4).

I believe the semantic principles Hill has evoked in Dzauinai chanting apply equally well to the Hohodene. The material I present here, as texts and summaries of texts, however, offers interesting contrasts which illustrate a range of possibilities such principles can assume. Such aspects as symbolic coding in

the chants, structures of the chants and ritual action differ in ways that are more than simply a question of local context and detail. The Hohodene material is thus a variant of a tradition, which no doubt has others among different Baniwa phratries. In the final section of this study, I briefly compare chanting traditions among the Hohodene and other Arawakan peoples of the Northwest Amazon, specifically of the Northern Maipure language family. Despite their differences, such traditions show remarkable similarities which may provide independent evidence for the historical and linguistic relationships among Northern Maipure-speaking peoples.

### Ethnography of the Hohodene

The Baniwa are an Arawak-speaking people of the Upper Rio Negro basin on the borders of Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia, with a total population of approximately six thousand<sup>2</sup>. Horticulture and fishing are their principal subsistence activities, although a long history of contact has involved them in various forms of production and extractive labor for markets. They are organized into approximately six localized, patrilineal, exogamous phratries, each consisting of four or five sibs ranked according to a model of agnatic siblings. Traditional religious life was based largely on the cult of the sacred flutes and trumpets, Kuwai, representing the first ancestors of the phratries, on the importance of the religious specialists, the shamans and chanters; and on a complex cycle of dance festivals coordinated with seasonal activities.

Since at least the mid-nineteenth century, the Baniwa have engaged in messianic and millenarian movements in which traditional religious preoccupations and the powers of religious specialists have served as the basis for resistance to external forms of colonial domination<sup>3</sup>. Since the 1950s, the introduction of Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism has created, a serious division among Baniwa communities over religious loyalties and the continuation of religious practices and beliefs. Invasions by prospectors and mining companies since the early 1980s, and the reduction of their lands by military and development projects, have posed very grave threats to Baniwa survival in Brazil. Nevertheless, they have become increasingly and more effectively organized politically in defense of their rights.

<sup>2</sup> Recent studies include Journet (1988) and Hill (1989). The principal study of the Baniwa in Brazil is Wright (1981); other works include Saake (1959-60), and Galvão (1959). The first and most extensive work on language is by Taylor (1991).

<sup>3</sup> See R. Wright and J. Hill (1986).



My fieldwork on shamans and chanters was conducted among the Hohodene and Oalipere-dakenai, two phratries of the Aiary River. The guiding question of my research was to understand the religious bases of historical millenarian and messianic movements. Oral histories, mythology, cosmology, ritual, and shamanism were the principal topics of my interviews with Hohodene elders. The material on which this article is based consists of some fifty chants, including the more powerful and lengthy **kalidzamai** sung at rites of passage. In several cases, different versions of the same chant were obtained from several chanters. In previously published work (Wright, 1992), I have examined the curing practices, duties, and attributes of shamans in the context of a discussion of cosmogony, cosmology, shamanic initiation and voyages. The present study, however, is exclusively concerned with the chants and more specifically **kalidzamai**.

### *Iapakana*

The **kalidzamai** are a specific form within a broader category of shamanizing activity (**malikai**)<sup>4</sup> called **iapakana**, or the blowing of tobacco smoke. **Iapakana** are used for a wide variety of purposes: protection against illness, curing illness and promoting healing, promoting the growth of gardens, the abundance of forest-fruits, game animals and fish. Most **iapakana** are spoken formulas performed by individual elder men or women, using tobacco and plant remedies specific to the illness to be cured, or ritual objects specific to the activity to be realized. Following the recitation of a part or the whole formula, tobacco smoke is blown over the plant remedy (or directly over the object of the formula), empowering it with the effect of the words.

**Iapakana** are differentiated in terms of their power, complexity and importance. The simpler formulas involve no more than a brief recitation to accomplish a highly specific activity, such as curing minor ailments, or promoting good hunting, fishing, and gathering. The more serious ailments involving life-threatening conditions - soul-loss, witchcraft (individual and collective), difficulties at birth - require more extensive and powerful formulas to remove and cast away the harm. Serious ailments are frequently the result of witchcraft in

which individuals seek to kill their victims by "putting [the sickness] on" (**nafeta**) the victim, that is, blowing the actions entailed in the formula with tobacco smoke over objects pertaining to the victim or places where s/he may frequent. Curing involves the process of "taking off" (**natuhrueta**) and "casting away" (**nuanhenta nudzawa**) the ailment to the underworld (**wapinakua**, place of our bones). "Taking off" and "casting off" are the most frequent actions; others include: "I sweeten" (**nuputidtha**) the ailing part; "I loosen" (**nuthewa**) the knots causing the ailment; "I turn away" (**nukapuita**) the source of the danger; "I revive" (**nuafetawa**) the sick person; "I bring back his soul" (**nudieta likaale**). The more powerful of these formulas (that is, those used in cases of life-threatening ailments) may be chanted, and there is clearly an expressed value that the longer and more forcefully these chants are sung, the more effective the cure will be in "taking off" the illness.

Essential to the process is the naming (**liakuna**) of spirits and the elements within their domains that cause the sickness; and the "looking for" (**liumaka**) names of spirits and elements that counteract the sickness. For example, the spirits and elements called **walama** -concretely identified as sharp, prickly thorns- cause hot, itching pain. In the curing formula, the elder "looks for not-hot names" (**liuma mamukaite liakuna**), "not itching, prickly names" (**mawakaaka liakuna**).

A formula will usually begin by invoking the spirit-category most directly related to the condition to be altered. The spirit-category is the generic name for the spirits of mythic origin who gave rise to the elements causing the sickness. For example, the **Iupinai** are spirits who originated ("were born") in mythic times and who created a wide variety of plants, animals, insects, fungus, trees, etc., that share a common characteristic of causing hot, itching pain in humans. The formula to cure the ailments of the **Iupinai** must name in correct order all elements left by these spirits and neutralize their effects, casting away their heat, cooling the body of the patient by invoking cold elements.

The order of the elements named is governed not only by inclusion within classes (insects, fungus, etc.) but also by a distinct spatial dimension. Formulas vary in their use of this spatial dimension: many work along a vertical axis corresponding to the layers of the cosmos. As their goal is to remove the ailment, they work from the top (upper layers of the cosmos) down (to the underworld) where the pain is cast. One lengthy formula to revive the victims of witchcraft, however, works along a horizontal axis in which the first victim of witchcraft in

<sup>4</sup> Hill ( *op. cit.*: 4) states that, for the Dzauninai, **malikai** refers to a complex genre of orations, chants and songs performed in life-passage and curing rituals. The Hohodene use **malikai** in a broader sense to include both the speech genre and the *powers*, which the genre implies, of clairvoyance and of transformative sound. According to myth, Yaperikuli's younger brother obtained these powers from the harpy eagle Kamathawa (Wright, 1992).

myth, Kuwaikaniri, makes a journey from downriver and outside the Içana River region (hence, outside Baniwa lands) upriver to the upper Aiary River (the center of Baniwa lands and their mythic origin place), stopping in named places along the way where Kuwaikaniri eats sweet fruits which gradually revive his soul until he is completely well at the end of the journey. In yet another formula, to plant gardens, the mythical bird *Hiiwe* is invoked to bring plants from the four corners of the sky to the center of the garden to concentrate its growth. A final example : in a formula to cast away the disastrous effects of epidemics, *tchiakali iakuna*, the danger represented by the epidemics is first concentrated from downriver to a central place where it is literally exploded to the four corners of the sky. The spatial dimensions, on both vertical and horizontal planes, however, are by far the most elaborate in the *kalidzamai* chants.

### *Kalidzamai* Chants for Childbirth

As a sung form of *iapakana*, *kalidzamai*<sup>5</sup> is a highly specialized chant associated exclusively with life-passage rituals (birth, initiation and death). The chants are performed by elders during the final stages of the rituals, when those who have undergone seclusion and dietary restrictions are about to be re-integrated into the community. The chants are a shamanizing activity the purpose of which is to protect those in seclusion from the harmful effects of a variety of dangerous spirits which manifest themselves during such transitions.

Post-birth rituals consist of a combination of spoken *iapakana* and *kalidzamai* chants and essentially have two objectives : (1) to protect the newborn and its parents from the forest-spirits (*awakarunanai*), water-spirits (*umawalinai*), and all underground-spirits (*kewakamalinai*) who seek to gaze upon or penetrate the bodies (especially the bones) of the natal family, weakening them and giving them sickness; and (2) to make safe the food the natal family will eat as it comes out of seclusion, preventing the spirits of various domains (water, forest and air) from entering their bellies and transforming into deathly sickness. The first objective is accomplished through a series of spoken formulas in which the elder names and casts away the spirits from the earth where the family walks, the hammock where the mother lies, the river where the family bathes, and the garden where the mother takes the child. As the father of the newborn goes in search of food, he must likewise be protected from the spirits that penetrate

<sup>5</sup> The term *kalidzamai* may be translated as "chant" and is derived from *ka-*, possessive, "to be with"; *lidza*, "tears"; *-mai* unidentifiable suffix, possibly a classifier.

(*kewakamalinai*) in the earth (the roots, *hikopalinai*), the rivers (*umawalinai*), the forest (*awakarunanai*, *iupinai*), the rocks (*hipadanai*), lest they enter his body and take out his bones.

All food the natal family will consume must then be neutralized from the effects of the spirits of the domains (water, forest, air) from which the food is obtained. *Kalidzamai* chants for post-birth seclusion are thus lengthy, sung formulas which create a framework in which all edible species are named and properly "cooked" so that they may then be safely eaten.

The first and most elaborate set of these chants focusses on the category of fish (*kuphenai*) and the mythic fish ancestors (*uleiyainai*) which are subsumed under the spirit-category of *umawalinai* (literally, anacondas but used in a generic sense of water-animal-spirit) for, as myth explains, *umawali*, the anaconda, is the "father of all fish." These chants, in fact, form a separable piece of the larger set of *kalidzamai* for post-birth seclusion with a corresponding repertoire of myths which explain, for example, the beginning of fish at Tunui, a hill on the mid-Içana; how the Hohodene ancestor Kufali obtained fish from the Dzauinai phratry of the Içana and brought them to the Aiary; and how Yaperikuli, the Creator, killed the giant anaconda *Uliamali*, whose mother, the pirarara fish, was Yaperikuli's wife but who betrayed him by having sex with the anaconda. Such myths are sometimes spoken as interludes at appropriate places in the chants, but since these myths of creation constitute an especially powerful set of references to spirits, they are usually told -or simply referred to- at the end of the chants.

On a separate occasion, or altogether, the chanter continues by naming the spirit-categories of other domains - the birds (*kepinai*, or night-animals, *deepinai*), and animal-spirits (*eenunai*), each of which includes numerous species. In one complete version of this *kalidzamai*, I recorded some 65 different species named. There is a definite sequence for naming species (from small to large, from most common in diet to least common) and spirit-categories (from water-spirits to bird-spirits to animal-spirits) which reflects both proximity and interdependence among the categories.

Each species has a spirit-name which identifies the species in the category and, at the same time, a quality of the species referring to its color, marking, or some other distinguishing feature. Thus, for example :

*umawali waaruli* - water-spirit with markings of a parakeet = acara fish ;

**neramaita eenunai** - the red animal-spirits = the red guariba monkey;  
**madufenali eenunai** - the hairless animal-spirits = the tapir whose hide is smooth.

The spirit-naming of animal species is, in fact, an art of poetic creation in which the everyday names of the species are transformed into sensual images which put the species into the world of the spirits.

Such poetic imagery is implied in the myth of **umawali** who, in actuality, is the piranha (**umai**) or, more exactly, is the piranha-ancestor-soul (**umaiferi ikaale**). In the myth, **umawali** wears a cloak, like a shirt (**limaka, likamitsa**) but takes it off and becomes a person (**newiki**). The myth is a play on the theme of identity; like wearing a cloak, spirit-naming of species puts the poetic attributes of otherness on to its referent.

The principal actions entailed in the chants are the same throughout: "joining together their names" (**liwaketa naakuna**), "killing them with pepper" (**linuana athi iyu**), "cutting off their heads" (**litakeka hliwida**), and "taking off their scales" (**linua linaapi**, literally, "he kills its bones"). The chanter begins the **kalidzamai** by invoking the sacred instruments to be used in these actions: four kinds of sacred pepper (of the primordial sun, **Häri**; the primal shaman, **Dzuli**; and the "arrow of jaguar **Yaperikuli**," the Creator) and the sacred ceramic bowls made by the first woman, **Amaru**, inside of which the pepper is placed and onto which the chanter will blow the actions of the chants with tobacco smoke. That is, the spirits named are "put" in the bowls and "killed" with pepper. In all myths and chants, sacred pepper is equated with fire which cooks the rawness from edible food, consuming the sickness it may bring. Once all spirit-categories have thus been named and killed, the sacred pepper is given to those in seclusion who may then eat without any harm.

There are, then, qualitative differences between the spoken, or chanted, formulas of **iapakana**, and the actions of the **kalidzamai** chants. First of all, **kalidzamai** chants are preventive forms of action, the objective of which is to negate the potentially harmful effects of a spiritualized nature from invading the bodies of the natal family. As such, they contrast with **iapakana** to remove, or take off and cast away, spirits that have been put on the victim. Consistent with this, **kalidzamai** actions are forms of aggressive shamanism - warlike, as opposed to defensive, characterized by "killing" and decapitation (an ancient war practice) prior to eating the enemy once it has been neutralized of its power to cause harm (Wright, 1990). Hence the chanter invokes the "weapons" of the

deities (pepper as the "arrow of **Yaperikuli**") with which to kill the enemy. Thirdly, only the **kalidzamai** are pepper chants the objective of which is to cook the live rawness from spiritualized nature, consuming it with the fire of pepper and turning it into edible food. Finally, **kalidzamai** chants extend the taxonomic principles of spirit-naming from the restricted domains of **iapakana** curing formulas to a much wider, more inclusive set of domains of spiritualized nature. They thus work at a higher level of hierarchical order. Hence their predominant emphasis on "joining together" (or "heaping up" - Hill, 1989) spirit-names, collectivizing them into categories which are related by unifying principles (edible food), as set forth in the myths of creation. In this regard, the set of myths of the creations of fish (which can be told as a set) establish a series of interconnected centers within a localized mythic geography on the **Içana** and **Uaupés**. In doing so, **kalidzamai** chants for newborn children contrast with the universalizing, world-wide creation of mythic geography characteristic of the **kalidzamai** for initiation rites.

### **Kalidzamai Chants for Male Initiation Rituals**

#### **- Basis in Myth.**

The basis of the **kalidzamai** chants sung at male and female initiation rites (called **Kuwaipan**, **Kuwai House**) is the myth of **Kuwai**, the child of **Yaperikuli** and **Amaru**. Below (pp.11-13), I provide a summary of the Hohodene version of the myth (for complete versions, see Wright, 1981; for a **Dzauinai** version, see Hill, 1989).

The myth of **Kuwai** is a central myth in **Baniwa** culture for through it, the **Baniwa** understand such fundamental questions as the beginning of sickness and misfortune in the world; the relations between ancestors and deities and their living and future descendants, the relations among the human, spirit, and natural worlds and the beginning of initiation rituals and the cult of the sacred flutes, **Kuwai**. In effect, this myth cycle bridges the gap between the primordial world of the deities and a more recent, life-sized, and dynamic past brought into the experience of the living in rituals.

The drama of the myth develops along two complementary lines: firstly, the process of development of individual and collective identity that unfolds in parallel with a series of transformations in the spatial and temporal structure of the cosmos; and secondly, the politics of gender relations in a patrilineal and patrilocal social order and the emergence of a horizontal structure of other



peoples and places in this world. The first of these is represented in the life of Kuwai from his conception until his death in a great conflagration which burned the world (corresponding to parts 1 - 4 of the Summary). The second is represented in the war between men and women over possession of the sacred flutes which represent Kuwai's body (parts 5 - 7).

### THE MYTH OF KUWAI (Summary)

1. Kuwai is conceived when Yaperikuli sends his thought to Amaru, his aunt (*likuiro*). Yaperikuli eats coca, thinks to where Amaru is, and his knowledge (*ianheke*) enters her. He chants over his coca and she becomes pregnant with Kuwai. But Amaru had no vagina; Kuwai could not be born. Yaperikuli then took a patawa log and broke a passage in her. She "died" but Kuwai came out. Yaperikuli revived her and she looked for her son, but the men took the child away to be nursed by a sloth of the forest. As Yaperikuli took Kuwai away, he saw that Kuwai was extraordinary, not of this world, for his body began to hum and sing melodious animal-song as it broke wind, urinated, and cried. Since there was no way he could stay in this world, Yaperikuli sent him away to the sky where Kuwai lived for a long time before he appeared again.
2. One day, a long time later, four children were playing with noise-making instruments, tying up bumblebees and putting them inside earthen pots. As the bees droned inside the pots, the children danced. Kuwai was watching them from the sky; he came down to them; and they saw a White Man (*yalanawi*) with shoes. They tell him they are making Kuwai music to which he responds that it was nonsense for he is the real Kuwai and that if they wish to hear his music, they must undergo ritual seclusion and not eat pepper or cooked food for three dry seasons. The children accept the condition and Kuwai sings to them, whipping them, giving them a fruit (*japurá*) to sniff, and then promises to return later. When Yaperikuli finds out the children have seen Kuwai, he immediately makes preparations for the "patron's" (=Kuwai) return, sending the children's mothers away and waiting for Kuwai's return at the ritual house. When Kuwai returns and meets Yaperikuli, he confirms the period of fasting but tells them they may eat all types of forest-fruits as their diet. He sings for them again, this time all of his body together in a great roar, and then leaves them, announcing that he would return at the end of the fast to whip (*likapetan*) them.
3. When the appointed time came, Kuwai gradually descends from the sky to the ritual house, where he whips the initiates and sings in an ominous and fearful way. He stays with the initiates and Yaperikuli until the conclusion of the fast. Then, as the fast was ending, Kuwai takes the children to Hipana (on the Aiary River) to gather uacú nuts. Kuwai stayed on top of the uacú tree and the children on the ground below him. Three of the children decide to break the fast by roasting and eating the nuts. The smoke of their fire blinds Kuwai, causing him to "die". His entire body sings out in a great roar, as streams of spit fall from his orifices. He descends the tree and causes an enormous flood of rain to come. He transforms his mouth and belly into a huge rock cave and he calls the children inside. Three of the four children enter the cave and are devoured. Only the smallest child stayed outside and was saved, for he saw that Kuwai had changed into a demon *Inyaimé*. Kuwai flies back to the ritual house, vomits up the remains of the three dead children, and returns to the sky. Yaperikuli knows of the disaster, for blood falls from his hand.
4. A long time later, Yaperikuli wishes to end the fast and to lure Kuwai back down to the ritual house. He makes wooden images of the initiates with their ornaments

and sends a wasp carrying white maggots (*halieri*) to the sky to summon Kuwai down. Kuwai gobbles up the maggots and throws the wasp back down. Yaperikuli then sends another wasp with maggots who succeeds in squeezing through the door of Kuwai's house and convinces Kuwai to return and end the fast. Preparations are then made for the ritual. Kuwai then comes to chant over the sacred pepper which will be served to the initiates at dawn. Kuwai teaches Yaperikuli and his brothers the special chants (*kalidzamai*) for pepper in an all-night ceremony with dancing and singing. When he finishes the chanting, Kuwai then tells Yaperikuli that he knows that Yaperikuli will kill him, but that nothing can kill him for his body is everything in the world (machetes, axes, shotguns, clubs, arrows, etc.). Only one thing, fire, can destroy him. As Kuwai continues to sing and dance, Yaperikuli leads him around a huge fire and suddenly pushes him in, throwing the heaviest logs on top. (The huge fire is likened to an "Inferno" that burned the world). As Kuwai burns, he leaves sickness and venom, his "vengeance" (*lipwamina*) in the ashes of the fire, and his spirit ascends to live immortally in the sky.

5. As Yaperikuli pushed him into the fire, Kuwai tells him to return to the burning-place, at Hipana. Yaperikuli knows that Kuwai would leave, in return for his killing, the materials to make the Kuwai flutes and trumpets for all future initiation rites. When Yaperikuli returns, a paxiúba tree shoots out from the ground up to the sky. Yaperikuli gets other plant materials that go along with the flutes. A squirrel then cuts the paxiúba tree to the correct lengths of the instruments, in pairs and triplets. A woodpecker breaks the tree and the logs fall in a heap to the ground. Yaperikuli then takes an eagle feather and adorns the flutes, thereby producing the music of Kuwai.
6. A long time later, Yaperikuli is initiating his son with the flutes and tells him to bathe in the river at dawn, and to cleanse his penis with a suds-making vine. Before the boy arises, Kuwai's mother, Amaru, and the women secretly steal the flutes from Yaperikuli. As he tries to get them back, spirit-darts (*walama*) shoot from the mouths of the flutes, turning the men back. The women escape and take the flutes upriver to a fenced settlement on a stone hill at Motípan (headwaters of the Uaraná River, off the upper Aiary). There, their youngest sister had her first menstruation, so the women began to chant over her food. Yaperikuli watched them in anger; he was their enemy and would make war against them. He went downriver to Tunui to get poison-arrows from their owner. He told the birds that there would be war. Yaperikuli tries out the arrows - one of which pierces the earth and the other shoots like a lightning bolt to the door of the sky and zigzags back to earth. Yaperikuli then joins together all the animals, his kin, to go with him back to Motípan and when they arrive, they sing like frogs to warn the women that they had come. When the women finish their chanting and begin to distribute the food, Yaperikuli and the animals charge into the settlement. They grab away the flutes, there is much killing, and Yaperikuli throws the women to the sky. One woman puts a flute in her vagina, and Yaperikuli kills her. Another tries to run away with a flute and Yaperikuli kills her. then he throws four women to the four skies, one after another, and the war ends.
7. A long time later, Yaperikuli turns the womens' hearts around so that they would not remember Kuwai. He tests them but they have forgotten and they now flee at the sound of the music. Satisfied, Yaperikuli completes the instruments, with hair and fur, and then leaves them for all future generations of people. Yaperikuli looks for the ancestors of the phratryes and then leaves the world, ascending to his place in the sky.

## - Ritual Context.

The ritual of **kalidzamai** chanting in initiation rites today essentially recreates the first ritual of chanting as described in part 4 of the myth. There should then be three or four chanters (a lead and his assistants) as in the myth (Kuwai, Yaperikuli, Eni, Dzuli). On the night before the initiates are to end their month-long seclusion, the chanters sit together inside the ritual house, **Kuwaipan**, and chant all night long, until dawn, with tobacco and a bowl of pepper and salt. As they chant, the men play the Kuwai sacred flutes and trumpets around the dance-floor inside the house, with interludes of drinking *caxiri* (manioc beer), and conversing. The task of chanting is of the greatest importance and difficulty, as one elder explained to me :

"He blows for them the **kalidzamai**... One whole night he sits... with great force it seems they sat, the elders of the past. But thus Kuwai began it like so *with* the world (**hekwapi inai**), with the world. Which means the world became so with this blowing of **kalidzamai**."

Thus the **kalidzamai** must be sung completely to the end and in the correct order. Once the chanters have finished, they summon the owner of the ritual house, present him with the bowls of pepper, and announce that they have finished. Shortly after, the elders summon the initiates to give them counsel, a formal ritual speech in which the initiates are told the laws of social living which they must respect henceforth. The initiates are given a bit of the sacred pepper on manioc bread to eat ; the elder explains the law and then whips the initiates three times, in a symbolic "cooking" of the initiates with the whips. Both the actions undertaken in the chanting over the pepper and the laws of living in the world have thus left indelible marks in the initiates for them to remember the rest of their lives.

In all, the chants consist of sixteen sets, sung with interludes when the chanters blow tobacco smoke over the bowls of pepper. In essence, the chants recount a series of five voyages by the men to regain the sacred flutes and instruments, **Kuwai**, that the women stole from Yaperikuli (part 6 of the myth). The women, **Amarunai** (or **Inamanai**), take the instruments throughout the world, stopping at numerous places where they play the music of Kuwai. As they did so, the world "opened up" to its present-day size, with rapids, hills, rivers, towns, and ends of the earth (or "corners of the sky"). Yaperikuli and the men pursue (**napinetaka**) the women and Kuwai, following them to the ends of the earth where they leave the women and music of Kuwai and bring back (**nadietawa**) the chants to the center of the earth at **Hipana**, a rapids on the upper

Aiary, the place of Kuwai's creation and the emergence site of the ancestors of humanity. As the elder cited above concisely states, "Kuwai began it *with* the world", that is, the present-day world and all places in it began with the voyages and music of Kuwai.

## - Kuwai's Voyages : A Summary.

In the Appendix to this article, I present the text and linear translation of the first set of chants, corresponding to Kuwai's first voyage, as sung by a Hohodene elder. Here, I summarize its thematic content, and the content of the other 15 sets of chants (Kuwai's 2nd-5th voyages).

### *The First Voyage (refer to Appendix) :*

**Sentences 1-15** : The chanters establish the vertical connection between the center of the sky (**pamudsuakakwam eenu**), where Kuwai is, and the center of the world, **Kupikwam** (an alternate name for **Hipana**), where Kuwai's sacred flutes and instruments emerged as a giant paxiúba tree connecting earth and sky (part 5 of the myth). This connection is also called Kuwai's umbilical cord (**hliepulepi Kuwai**) ;

**Sentences 16-31** : The chanters invoke the beginning of **kalidzamai** chanting at the center : the sacred bowls of Amaru containing the sacred pepper, the weapons of the chanters. The chanting is done for the initiates (**walikaniri ienipe**, our young children) ;

**Sentences 32-116** : The chanters begin a horizontal movement, "pursuing the Kuwai", "beholding" (**ikatsenam**) places where Kuwai spirits began, preventing the "danger" (**nakanupam**) of the spirits to the children. The series of places named trace a circle around the center of the world, starting from a place across the river from the present-day village of Hipana, descending the river to a place called **Hiuihrikwam** (Star-place), a rapids where the phratric ancestors of the Oalipere-dakenai emerged, and returning upriver, "bringing back" tobacco to the origin and center, Hipana ;

**Sentences 117-153** : -The chanters jump downriver to the opposite end of a "loop" (like the "rim of a shield") between Hipana and **Ehnípan** (Jandú rapids on the Içana River near the mouth of the Aiary), places connected in the myth (part 3) as forest (Hipana) and ritual house (Ehnípan), where Kuwai devours three initiates who break their fast and vomits up their remains in bread baskets. At Ehnípan, the chanters recall these events, comparing Kuwai to the cutia (**piitchi**),



an animal who likes to eat manioc bread. From there the chanters bring back the chants to the center at Hipana ;

*Sentences 154-170* : The chanters make a second and much larger loop between Hipana and the "corner of the sky", "beyond the headwaters" (*iedahle*) of the Solimões River, naming a place of Kuwai's venom, *Dumatchipanikwam*, whence they bring back tobacco, passing through an unidentifiable middle and return to Hipana.

In terms of spatial movement, the first set of chants thus creates a vertical connection between the centers of the sky and this world; a horizontal circle (descending and ascending) around the center; a horizontal connection (descent and ascent) between Hipana and Ehnípan; and a final, horizontal (descent and ascent) connection to a corner of the sky. The significance of these connections will be discussed below.

*The Second - Fifth Voyages* (refer to Figure 2, p.16):

In the Second Voyage (sets 2 - 5), the chanters ascend upriver to beyond the Aiary headwaters, return downriver to the *Dzukuali* (Uaraná stream, off the upper Aiary), and ascend to beyond its headwaters. The chanters recall especially the myth of the beginning of a wasting sickness, called *purakali*, (see below, p.18) and the war of the men to regain the flutes at Motípan. The chanters then return to Hipana.

In the Third Voyage (sets 6 - 10), the chanters cross over to the Uaupés and descend to its mouth, naming some fifteen places in rapid succession. They then ascend up the Tiquié to beyond its headwaters, in the territory of the Tuyuka (*Dekai*, *Maakunai*), return to the mid-Tiquié, jump over to the mid-Papury and ascend to beyond its headwaters, in the territory of other *Maakunai* (people who do not speak the Hohodene language). From there, they continue to beyond the headwaters of the Uaupés, going far beyond by a trail that leads to a mountainous region (the Andes foothills ?), leaving Kuwai's music there and returning, bringing the chants back to the upper Uaupés. On the upper Uaupés, they ascend the Querary, naming some fifteen places, to beyond its headwaters. They remember several important events in myths related to Kuwai, Amaru, fish-spirits (*uleiyainai*), and the beginning of manioc. Finally, they return from the Uaupés to Hipana/Kupikwam on the Aiary, there joining together the Kuwai, whips, and bee-spirits.

In the Fourth Voyage (sets 11 - 15), the chanters cover an extraordinarily large and relatively continuous area from Hipana to the lower Orinoco, and from the Içana to the mouth of the Rio Negro. They first stop in Ehnípan on the middle Içana, proceed up the Cuiary and, via the Peguá/Ianá, to the upper Guainía, Temí River, and on to the upper Atabapo, below San Fernando, naming in all some 32 places. Around the upper Guainía and Temí, they enter the territory of the Marenai (or, Baré), "their affines". A loop is made between San Miguel (upper Guainía) and San Fernando (similar to the Hipana-Ehnípan loop). From there, they continue down the Orinoco, passing through the territory of the Makiritare, and on to the Cataniapo and Meta, passing through the town of Puerto Carreña and Bolívar, jumping over to Caracas, and then returning in a long jump to the mouth of the Ariari. The following set covers an area of the upper Ariari and beyond the headwaters of the Içana, making references (which I am unable to identify) to a people called *Patenai* and to places of historic contact. From there, they descend the Içana to its mouth and on to the Rio Negro, around the Rio Marié, naming along the way various places of poison and Tunui, the mythic source of fish. They continue down the Rio Negro to the Rio Branco, ascend to its headwaters and return to the mouth of the Rio Negro and "Barra" (Manaus). Most place-names on the Rio Negro are in *lingua geral* or Portuguese (Moreira, Ayrão, Boiaúassu, Paricatuba). Mariuá, the old name for Barcellos, is transformed into a homonym, the name of the first Kuwai flutes, *Maliawa*. At several points in this long journey (San Fernando; around the Rio Marié, and Barra), the chanters stop in places of "iron" - references, apparently, to historic centers of trade in iron tools (and possibly, to the 18th Century slave trade).

In the Fifth (and final) Voyage, the chanters cover an area of the greatest, discontinuous distance, first jumping over to the Japurá headwaters; beyond the Solimões headwaters; returning east to the Juruá, to the mouth of the Negro, to the mouth of the Amazon (Belém, or *Mairikwam*), to Portugal (*Putukwam*), and Rio de Janeiro (*Tchikutchikwam*), where they leave the music of Kuwai and return, bringing back the chants. The return is rapid and relatively direct, up the Rio Negro to the Içana, Cubate, Cuiary and Aiary, ascending the *Dzukuali* where they remember the first Hohodene ancestors, and back to Hipana, where they "sweeten" the initiates with tobacco, and send the music of Kuwai back up to the sky. Thus ends the *kalidzamai*.

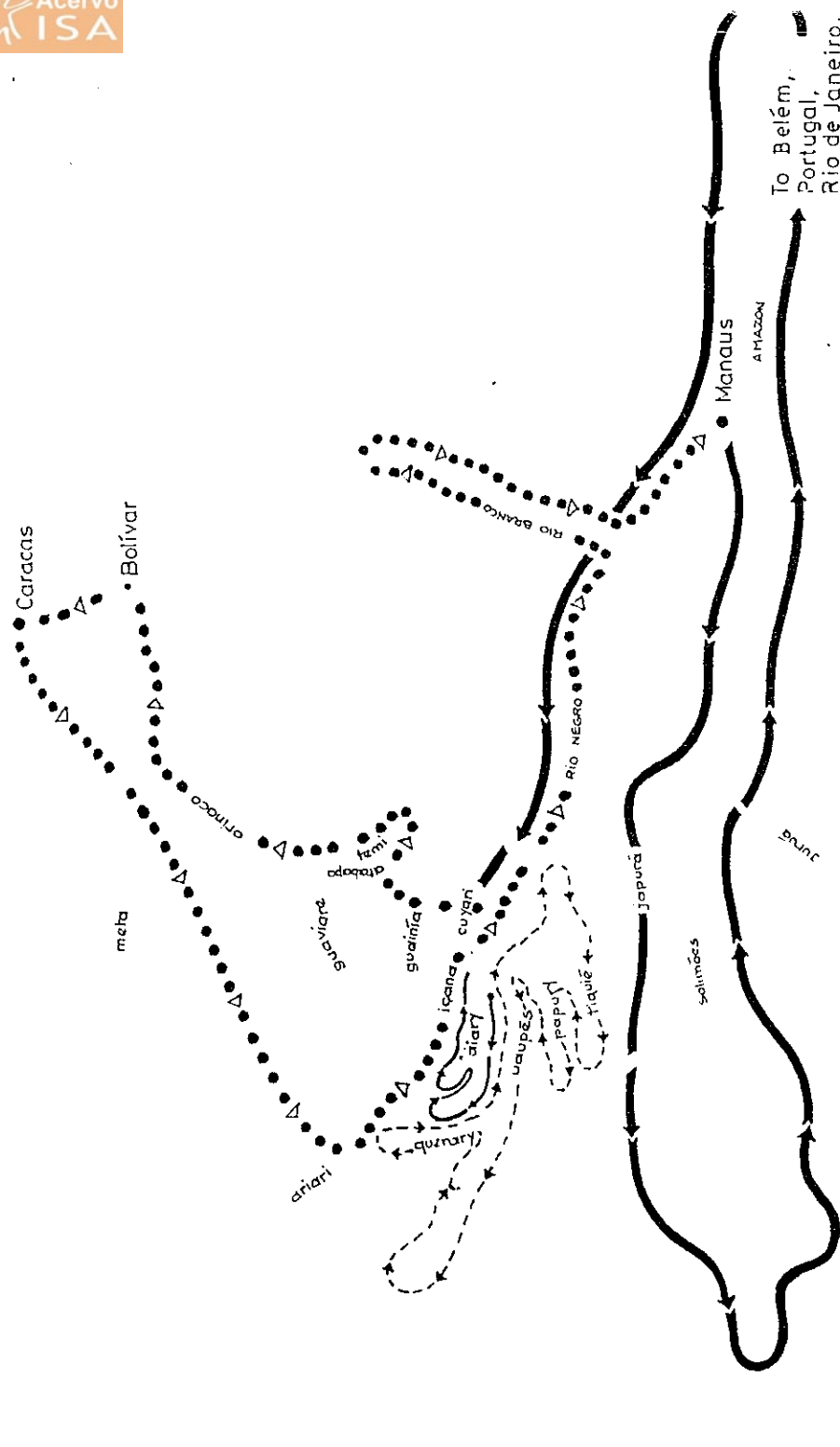


Fig. 2 Sketch-map of kuwai's Second-Fifth Voyages

### Semantic Construction in the Chants

The complexity of the chants demands a book-length treatment - a chapter, perhaps, for each of the five voyages of Kuwai. Here, we make a few observations indicating some of their principal features.

**- Shamanizing Actions.**

The predominant ritual actions throughout the chants concentrate on three forms of shamanizing activity : (1) Kuwai's journeys (*ianhiakawa*) and the mens' pursuing (*napinetaka*) (or, "chasing after" - Hill, 1989) the women to the ends of the earth where they leave (*napeku*) the music of Kuwai and return to the center of the world at Hipana ; (2) "drying the danger" (*metakenam nakanupam*), "drying the saliva" (*metakenam liahnumanam*) of the initiates, "drying the wasting sickness" (*metakenam purakanam*) from the initiates : and (3) "bringing back" (*nadietaka*) the chants, pepper and tobacco from the end-points of the journeys to the center.

The first form is directly related to part 6 of the myth when the women steal the instruments and Yaperikuli pursues them until he wages a war, "throwing" the women to the four directions. In the chants' translation of this episode, Yaperikuli "sends" (*lipira*) the women to the ends of the earth, pursuing them as they stop in determined places and play the Kuwai. The notion of "pursuing" is ambiguous : on the one hand, it refers to a hunter-warrior image of the mens' actions against the women as enemy ; on the other, the women creatively open up the world with Kuwai as the men, it is said, "could do nothing" but follow them. Or, Yaperikuli "sends" the women with Kuwai on the journeys. This ambiguity in the agency of the term is essential to the dynamics of the journeys. In contrast with the *kalidzamai* of childbirth, which simply "joins together" (*liwaketa*) spirit names of determined categories, and in which at most spirit names may crosscut categories, here the "pursuit" of the spirits opens the domains to a higher and wider level of inclusion.

The chanters in fact use the process of "joining together" in the course of their journeys -joining together, for example, Kuwai-spirits, ancestral fish, wasting sickness children (**purakalinyai ienipe**)- but it is as though to gather these spirits up and, with them, then move on in pursuit of others. Thus **wapinetaka**, is the source of motion which goes beyond the taxonomic classification of joining together to include spirit classes and to create others. In this sense, it replicates Kuwai's powerful, world-opening, all-inclusive being.

The second form of activity is preventive shamanism - drying the wetness from the initiates, preventing the wetness of the spirits from harming the initiates, preventing a wasting sickness. In a sense, this process is equivalent to cooking the rawness from fish in childbirth rituals. To understand the notions of wetness and wasting sickness, reference must be made to myth, for the belief is that who sees Kuwai, the sacred instruments, becomes weak, his skin turns yellow, his body wastes away, and his saliva falls constantly. This is the condition of **purakali**; according to myth:

The son of Kaali (whose body gave rise to the first manioc), warned not to eat fish raw because it would make him sick, went ahead and ate fish and began to waste away (**lipurakawa**). His arm shrivelled up like an ingá fruit; his knee became swollen like an overgrown potato; his kneeband fell off; his leg looked like an inajá fruit; the sole of his foot transformed into a turtle; he began hearing a loud buzzing in his ears; he saw the "white Kuwai" (**Kuwai haaledzuli**) and its alter, the white surubí fish. He thought he was dying, and he called to his father: "Father, I am dying, I have wasted away." He called and called, as the cicadas (**dzurunai**) today call: "Fa-a-a-ather, I have wasted away." He transformed into a red japu bird and then a black japu and, as they sang, their saliva fell to the ground.

Without **kalidzamai**, the initiates would suffer a process of wasting away as described in the myth.

Kuwai's association with the condition of wetness is explained by his link with the world of the dead, the first ancestors who were both human and animal and who were raised from the holes of the rapids at Hipana leading to the underworld. Ancestral power is intimately linked to the rivers, the subaquatic world of the dead, where the sacred flutes and trumpets are kept (at the bottom of the river) when not in use. Kuwai is also associated with celestial wetness, or rains ("Kuwai's tears"); the beginning of the rainy season is the time when **Kuwaipan** are scheduled, a time of rapid growth, the appearance of forest-fruits and large fish runs.

Kuwai's power -in a word, of dangerous, ancestral fertility- is exceedingly harmful to humans unless it is controlled. The condition of being excessively open, raw and wet refers to uncontrolled sexuality, uncontrolled thought, uncontrolled contact with the spirits, or sickness - all of which are the very opposite of the condition desired in the initiates, of exercising voluntary control over one's instincts, through observing restrictions, in order to become fully cultural beings. Hence, in part 3 of the myth, three initiates break their fast, which provokes a catastrophic opening up of Kuwai's orifices, a torrential flood, and a devouring of the initiates. The one initiate who remained outside Kuwai's mouth,

who had not broken the fast, exercised self-control and hence completed the initiation.

The chanters thus "dry the wetness", the "danger" (**kanupa**) from the initiates, preventing the condition of **purakali**, of being consumed by the spirit-world of the dead. This is done with sacred pepper (= fire), tobacco, and the whips for, as Kuwai himself said at the great conflagration which Yaperikuli prepared for him (part 4), "only one thing can truly kill me - fire." In chanting over the pepper to be consumed by the initiates, and in "cooking" (**nuitsuka**) the whips with which the elders instil the laws of social living, the chanters give the initiates a form of protection essential to their well-being. The initiates are said to be henceforth able to repel the action of the spirits and the images of the dead.

In the third form of shamanizing action ("bringing back" the chants), the chanters revitalize the initiates for, in their contacts with all forms of the spirit-world, they have opened themselves up to extreme danger; hence, the weakness of their souls. The action of "bringing back" is, in all curing activity, that of retrieving a lost soul which has wandered from its body and gotten stuck in the world of the spirits. By reintegrating the souls with their bodies, the chanters revive (**nawafetawa**) the sick. In this task, tobacco is essential for it attracts the soul, especially dry tobacco given its powers against the wetness of the spirits of the dead. At the same time, tobacco "sweetens" the soul, like honey and the sweet juice of forest-fruits, against the "bitterness" of sickness, weakness, and pain.

#### - Place-naming.

By far the single most important category of names throughout refers to places (several hundred places are named in the chants) indicated by **dzakale** village site, and the spatial classifier **-kwa** added to all place-names. Places are subsumed under the spirit-category **Ipanai**, houses (**-nai**, collective, animate being). Thus, place-names consist of the construction:

_____	-pani	-kwam	dzakale
(name)	(house)	(class.)	(village)

It is clear, however, that the mapping of places is not just one of human occupation, nor do the chants refer strictly to human geography. Concretely, the places are predominantly rivers, rapids, hills, and lakes associated with Kuwai-spirits (**Kuwainai**), phratric ancestors, fish ancestors, houses of the souls of the dead, **Amarunai**, **Maakunai**, the animal-spirits (**itchirinai**, **eenunai**), the white



people, other native people. In short, the spirit-category of *ipanai* subsumes all classes of being, and especially spirit-being, associated with place, which populate the Hohodene universe. *Maakunai*, the white people, Amarunai and other native people would form a class of being characterized by the common feature of alterity, other-ness, and hence on the side of beings-beyond, on the periphery of Hohodene society. They are potential enemies, against whom wars have been waged, and hence similar to the spirits (animal, water, etc.) who may cause harm to humans.

Places may further be characterized by features related to an image of Kuwai's body: his two eyes (*dthamaati*), his mouth (*kanumakade*), his penis (*liishi*), his one arm (*manaapan*) - which may be poetic descriptions of geographical features, such as a river which does not branch, a cavern, etc. Or, they are related to the set of sacred flutes comprising Kuwai. The whole set of chants thus recreates the entire body of Kuwai and its representation in the orchestra of instruments.

Numerous places are connected through the events and personages of the myths of Kuwai, phratric emergence, the creation of fish. Thus their significance can be determined through a systematic survey of the corpus of Hohodene myths and chants.

Mythic significance often artfully combines with other criteria -ritual, meteorological, and ecological- in the sequence of place-names in order to construct a coded message. In the first set of chants, for example, the first eight names chanted, of places around the center of the world, refer to a *single* code having to do with the timing of the Kuwaipan rites and the appearance of animal species in the beginning of the ritual season. Thus:

1. *Dzaka-ka-kwam*: constellation of the early rainy season;
2. *Mare-dali-kwam*: jacu bird who appears in this season;
3. *Wana-dali-kwam*: Yaperikuli's mythical home;
4. *Daipi-kwam*: snakes, which appear in the rainy season;
5. *Dzauatsa-pani-kwam*: ?
6. *Kadana-kwa*: painted, engraved, the black body-paint used in the beginning of Kuwaipan;
7. *Maliawa-kwam*: the first pair of Kuwai flutes created;
8. *Hiuihri-kwam*: stars, referring especially to Oalipere (the Pleiades) constellation, which follows *Dzaka*, and the appearance of which is the signal for the beginning of the rites.

The next five places named refer to episode 3 of the Kuwai myth when Kuwai transforms into a monstrous demon and devours the three initiates who break the fast (e.g., *Inyai-kwam*: demon-place). And the next six places refer to the same episode when Kuwai vomits up the initiates at Ehnipan in bread baskets and manioc squeezers before returning to his place in the corner of the sky, *Dumatchi-pani-kwam*, a place of pain and poison in the lowest and furthest point west of the world, beyond the headwaters of the Solimões. In short, the first set of chants symbolically encodes the beginning of the rituals, as set forth in part 3 of the myth.

Throughout the chants, one may perceive this symbolic coding at work. Our purpose here, however, has been to indicate some of the criteria on which this coding is based and to high-light that the chants have an internal coherence, the common ground of which is the totalizing being of Kuwai through his manifestations in the spirit-category of *Ipanai*<sup>6</sup>.

#### - The Structure of the Journeys.

By no means do the voyages follow a linear-consecutive pattern, that is, of ascent and descent naming all places in-between. Each ascent and descent concentrates in three points (not necessarily in consecutive order): *iedahle*, beyond the headwaters, or the source of the rivers; *pamudsua*, the middle, center; and *inumana*, mouth. The axes of orientation of all voyages on the horizontal plane are the rivers. In some sense, these axes would correspond to the vertical descent in the first set from the sky middle to the center of the world connected by Kuwai's "umbilical cord."

Around each of the three main points cluster a series of villages associated with mythic events, or having mythic significance, representing some danger against which the chanters protect the initiates. In their journey on the Tiquié, for example, *iedahle* is associated with whiteness and alterity: the white heron, the white sand "full of holes" (*haladali*) of Kuwai, and other peoples (the Tuyuka and *Maakunai*). In their journey on the *Dzukuali*, tributary of the Aiary, *iedahle* is associated with the beginning of *purakali* and the children who suffered from it (*purakalinyai ienipe*).

6 A series of kinds of places are repeated at determined parts throughout the chants: hills of animal-spirit hair, places of poison (*hidzapa needzu*); places of animal-spirit houses (*itchinaikwam*, *itchikakwam*, *itchidapan*); bee-spirit houses, places of honey and the revival of the soul (*maapanaikwam*, *maapakwam*); "clear day" places. (*hlimaliakwam*). The significance of these repeated places in their contexts is not yet clear to me.

Building on this structure, voyages 2 - 5 encompass everwidening areas corresponding almost to overlapping, concentric circles of mythic and socio-historic knowledge. The second voyage takes place exclusively within territory most familiar to the Hohodene - the Aiary and *Dzukuali* (their true historic homeland), where all mythic events have a direct and local significance. The third voyage extends to the Uaupés and its principal tributaries, at the headwaters of which are numerous *Maakunai* against whom the Hohodene in the past made prolonged war campaigns to capture women and children to raise among their number. The end-point of this voyage, *Puadthapan* (upriver house) is associated with Bogotá in the west, where the women it is said became the "mothers of the Spaniards." On the Querary, however, various places of mythic significance confirm that, prior to its historic occupation by the Cubeo, this river was predominantly "Baniwa" territory.

The fourth voyage extends the circuit, and in a downriver direction, to the east - the Orinoco and Negro. It becomes more evident that the chants interweave mythic and historic knowledge of distant areas. First, in three key places, the chanters mark the voyage with "iron", a reference to historic centers of commerce with the white man. Second, the further afield they go, the chanters name places in Portuguese, Spanish, and *lingua geral*, indicating post-contact historic knowledge of these places. In fact, Hohodene oral histories confirm that, in their past, they were forcibly taken downriver (in the 18th Century) by the Portuguese to several places on the lower Rio Negro, which are cited in the chants. Their knowledge of the lower Orinoco (Puerto Carreña, Bolívar, Caracas) may similarly refer to Spanish *reducciones*, as well as to contacts with native peoples living in these peripheral areas (the Baré and Makiritare). Geographical distance is again correlated to social distance; native peoples on the periphery are *Maakunai*, affines (*nalimathana*) against whom the Hohodene have waged wars, and the white man.

The final voyage jumps exclusively around the edges of the known world in a sort of point-tracing of the limits of the eastern horizon. This last set of chants is sung at dawn, when the sun rises in the east; hence its predominant emphasis is the return of the chapters from the eastern horizon upriver and back to the mythic center and homelands of the Hohodene on the Aiary. The return upriver correlates with the ritual emphasis on "bringing back tobacco", reviving the initiates, and sending the music of Kuwai back up to the sky (that is, when initiation is complete).

The extraordinary power of the *kalidzamai* chants for initiation, which makes them unquestionably the supreme art of shamanistic chanting in Baniwa culture, lies in their cumulative, totalizing effect of including all types of being in one, and one-in-all, Kuwai. It is their capacity to traverse spatial and temporal boundaries on the vertical and horizontal planes of the cosmos in an all-encompassing vision of the world as it was created and as it has changed historically. It is thus we understand the chanters' affirmation that the "Kuwai world" (*Kuwai hekwapi*) refers to the structure and dynamics of an ontology of being. This vision is shared by various Northern Maipure-speaking peoples of the Northwest Amazon, who also have traditions of the voyages of Kuwai. In the following section, we briefly compare these traditions.

### Comparative

In recent years, several ethnographers of Northern Maipure-speaking peoples have revealed the existence of traditions, remarkably similar in content and structure, concerning the mythical voyages of Kuwai throughout a vast region of northern South America (besides the Dzauinai and Hohodene, such traditions have been recorded among the Piapoco of the *llanos* in Colombia and the Guarequena of Venezuela).

In her Master's thesis on the Piapoco (1987), S. Vidal has attempted to synthesize the information in these traditions in a series of maps plotting the itineraries of Kuwai's voyages according to the Curripaco, Guarequena and Piapoco -for whom the information is most complete- and refers to similar traditions among other Northern Maipure-speaking peoples. Her suggestion is that the voyages of Kuwai may refer to ancient patterns of migration and networks of intertribal commerce among the northern Arawak (1987: 127).

Independent of this suggestion, which may have some truth to it, it is remarkable that all the traditions cited coincide in localizing the place of origin of the world and of people as being localized in various rapids in the area covering the upper Içana and its tributaries :

"Tanto los Piapoco como los Hohodene, los Dzawinai, los Warekena, los Kabiari, los Yukuna, y los Baré relacionan sus orígenes con *Hipana*; mientras los Wariperidakenai y los Tariana los asocian a *Enu-koa* [a rapids slightly downriver from Hipana]. La emergencia de los Baniwa se produjo en el Cuyari" (Vidal, 1987: 139).

Given the historical relationships among these languages, as suggested by Gonzalez Nañez' reconstructions (1985, 1986), it would seem plausible to suggest that the region of the upper Içana may indeed have been an actual hearth

from which the dispersion of Northern Maipure languages, at least of the "Curripaco" subgroup, took place.

Also remarkable are the coincidences among the traditions in following certain routes to the extremities, place-naming along the way, and knowledge of the extremities (in the Guarequena version, once the chanters reach the mouth of the Orinoco, they proceed along the northern coast of the continent descending to the mouth of the Amazon, whence they return up the Rio Negro to Hipana). Such extensive knowledge would indeed suggest migratory patterns and networks of intertribal commerce characteristic of Arawakan societies of the North-west Amazon at the time of their initial contacts. The Manao of the middle Rio Negro, for example, were wide-ranging traders who served as intermediaries in trade networks linking the Upper Rio Negro to the peoples of the upper Solimões. The Achagua had a similar role in linking the peoples of the *llanos* to the Antilles.

Without attempting to piece together, or unravel, the fragmentary historical evidence which might lend support to such an interpretation, I would only conclude by stating that the Hohodene tradition of the voyages of Kuwai above all represent (1) a notion of territoriality, most especially of the Hohodene, as defined almost entirely by the second Voyage of Kuwai; (2) a notion of collective identity, of Hohodene society and other peoples on the periphery (affinal groups, *Maakunai*, the white men), as defined in the third and fourth voyages; and (3) a sense of cumulative historical knowledge, including the experiences of contact, networks of commerce and wars with other ethnic groups, which is always open to new experiences and interpretations<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The Baniwa say, for example, that Rio de Janeiro is a place of Kuwai because the giant thermonuclear funnels at Angra dos Reis, which the Baniwa have seen, are in fact Kuwai trumpets!

*Appendix : Set 1 — Kalidzamai Chants for Male Initiation Rituals.*

1. **Oopikatsa ikenyua Kuwai**  
Long ago he began Kuwai.
2. **Oopikatsa ikenyua Kuwai**  
Long ago he began Kuwai.
3. **Ikenyuaka Kuwai**  
It was begun Kuwai.
4. **Pamadsuakakwam eenu**  
The middle sky.
5. **Hliepoliekwam eenu**  
The umbilical cord sky.
6. **Kadzukaramita likenyuakatsa lipirami Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
Thus it was in the beginning his creation<sup>8</sup> Jaguar Yaperikuli.
7. **Kadzukaramita likenyuakawa lipirami Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
Thus it was in the beginning his creation Jaguar Yaperikuli.
8. **Ikapenam Kupikwam Dzakale**  
He saw Hipana village.
9. **Kupikwam Dzakale.**  
Hipana village.
10. **Kadzukarumita ikenyuakawa Kuwainai**  
Thus it was it was begun Kuwai spirits.
11. **Kadzukarumita ikenyuakawa Kuwaikam**  
Thus it was it began Kuwai.
12. **Ikatsenam ikenyuakawam lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli.**  
Behold it was begun for him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
13. **Lipirami Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
His creation Jaguar Yaperikuli.

<sup>8</sup> **lipirami** : creation in the sense of bringing-up, rearing, like a pet, but also used for children.



14. **Pamudsuakakwam Kupikwam dzakale**  
The center Hipana village.
15. **Pamudsuakakwam Kupikwam dzakale**  
The center Hipana village.
16. **Kalidzamai ikenyuakakwam**  
The chanting beginning-place.
17. **Ikatsenam hliwaliwam likaapi rumatchiakapi Amaru**  
Behold it fell his hand her (cold, beautiful) ceramic bowl.
18. **likaapi rumatchiakapi Amaru**  
His hand her ceramic bowl Amaru
19. **hlipolekapi Amaru**  
her blue bowl Amaru.
20. **Kalidzamai iatetenam kalidzamai iatetenam**  
His pepper chanting, pepper chanting.
21. **Hliwaliwam hlikudam kalidzamai cenu**  
It fell within the sky chanting.
22. **Kalidzamai iatetenam**  
The pepper chanting.
23. **Kalidzamai idthemana**  
The tobacco chanting.
24. **Kalidzamai iatetenam**  
The pepper chanting.
25. **Liwapere ekuakua**  
His shield rim.
26. **liwapere ekuakua hliwaliwam hlikudam likapichi-Häri**  
His shield rim it fell within, his arrow, the primal sun.
27. **Liwapere ekuakafia Häri**  
His shield rim, the primal sun.

28. **Liwapere inuma metanifia Dzuli**  
His shield mouth, the dry pepper of Dzuli.
29. **Hliwaliwam hlikudam Kalidzamai**  
It fell within the chanting.
30. **Nahliuenam walikaniri ienipe**  
For them our young children.
31. **Nahliuenam walikaniri ienipe**  
For them our young children.
32. **Ikatsenam Kalidzamai Dzakakakwam lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
Behold the chanting-Constellation place for him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
33. **Kalidzamai Dzakakwam lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
The chanting Constellation-place for him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
34. **Himenam Ikenam liakawam kalidzamai**  
Hear how far it goes the chanting.
35. **Iatetenam kalidzamai**  
The pepper chanting.
36. **Iukakena ikatsenam Maredalikwam dzakale**  
He comes and beholds the jacu-place village.
37. **Kadzukarumitam likenyuakawam Kuwainai**  
Thus it was it was begun the Kuwai-spirits.
38. **Nakenyuakanam Kuwainai**  
They began the Kuwai-spirits.
39. **Hlimenam lihriuenam wamalikapi wapinetaka Kuwai**  
He listens for him, we look for and pursue the Kuwai.
40. **Pamudsuakakwam cenu**  
The middle sky.
41. **Kuwaikwam tchitchi**  
The acary Kuwai.

42. Kuwaikwam tchitchi  
Tha acary Kuwai.
43. Lihrinam Dzaui Yaperikuli  
His son's penis<sup>9</sup> Jaguar Yaperikuli.
44. Lipirami Dzaui Yaperikuli  
His creation Jaguar Yaperikuli.
45. Ikatsenam Wanadalikwam dzakale  
Behold the mortar-place village.
46. Wanadalikwam dzakale  
The mortar-place village.
47. Himenam wapinetakam wamalikapi hadamitam dzekenakam  
liakenam  
Hear us pursue and look for, never difficult, his names.
48. Wamalikape dthema Kuwainai  
We look for tobacco Kuwai spirits.
49. Ikatsenam lirim -dzukwam iyesi  
Behold his son (...?) (...?).
50. Hademitam nakanupam nanakuam walikaniri ienipe  
Never the danger on them our young children.
51. Nuhliuenam nuitsuka likuruapo eenu  
For me I cook the whips<sup>10</sup>.
52. Nuhliuenam nuitsuka likuruapo eenu  
For me I cook the whips.
53. Nadzenam linupanam nadzenam walikaniri ienipe  
From them its danger from them our young children.

<sup>9</sup> lihrinam, his son's penis, referring to part 6 of the myth when Yaperikuli sends his son to wash his penis at dawn, but the women go before and steal the Kuwai. The word would be a contraction of liri-ishi.

<sup>10</sup> likuruapo eenu, literally, the sky's crown, but used metaphorically for the ritual whips.

54. Ikatsenam Daipikwam dzakale  
Behold The snake-place village.
55. Wapinetakam liako  
We pursue its name.
56. Himalam Kuwai wamalikapi  
Clear Kuwai we look for.
57. Pamudsuakakwam nam  
The middle place.
58. Dzauatsapanikwam dzakale  
(place) village.
59. Dzauatsapanikwam dzakale  
(place) village.
60. Himenam wapinetakam Kuwainai  
Hear us pursue the Kuwai-spirits.
61. Ikatsenam Kadanakwe dzakale  
Behold painted-place village.
62. Kadanakwe dzakale  
Painted-place village.
63. Wahliuena wadzukapa  
For us we cook them.
64. Lihrinam Dzaui Yaperikuli  
His son's penis, Jaguar Yaperikuli.
65. Wapinetaka Kuwainai  
We pursue the Kuwai-spirits.
66. Nakapanam Maliawakwam lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli  
They see Maliawa-place for him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
67. Ikenyuaka Kuwaika Maliawa  
It was begun the Maliawa Kuwai.

68. **Metakenam manupanam nadzenam walikaniri ienipe**  
Dry the danger from them our young children.
69. **Hadamitam (...?) ikenyuakawam walikaniri ienipe**  
Never (...?) it was begun our young children.
70. **Nakapena nakenyuakawam Kuwaikam Putu**  
They see they were begun Kuwai acoutiwaya.
71. **Nakenyuakawam Kuwaikam Putu**  
They were begun Kuwai acoutiwaya.
72. **Wapinetaka Kuwainai**  
We pursue the Kuwai-spirits.
73. **Nakapana Kuwai**  
They see Kuwai.
74. **Hiuihrikwam dzakale**  
The star-place village.
75. **Hiuihrikwam dzakale**  
The star-place village.
76. **Wadietaka dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
77. **Kalidzamai**  
Chanting.
78. **Iatetenam Kalidzamai**  
The pepper chanting.
79. **Iatetenam Kalidzamai**  
The pepper chanting.
80. **Nahliuenam walikaniri ienipe**  
For them our young children.
81. **Hiuihrikwam**  
Star-place.

82. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
83. **Nakapawanam ikaiteni enitanai lihrinam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
They see he says (...?) his son's penis Jaguar Yaperikuli.
84. **Nakapanam nakaiteni Kuwaikam paapa**  
they say they see Kuwai's (...?).
85. **Kuwaikam thuwa**  
Kuwai japu.
86. **Nahliuenam Dzulieni iumaniki**  
For them Dzuli's children emergence<sup>11</sup>.
87. **Nakanupa nanakua walikaniri**  
Their danger on them our young ones.
88. **Kuwaika thuwa**  
Kuwai japu.
89. **Wapinetaka Kuwainai**  
We pursue Kuwai-spirits.
90. **Wapinetaka Kuwainai**  
We pursue Kuwai-spirits.
91. **Kadzucarumita ikenyuakawam lihrinam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
So it was it was begun his son's penis Jaguar Yaperikuli.
92. **Inyaikwam dzakale**  
The demon-place village.
93. **Inyaikwam dzakale**  
The demon village.
94. **Wapinetakam Kuwainai**  
We pursue Kuwai-spirits.

<sup>11</sup> *Thuwa* is a Kuwai trumpet/japu bird, the ancestor of the Oalipere-dakenai phratry whose sacred name is *Dzuli-ieni*, Dzuliferi's (the first shaman) children.



95. **Ikatsenam Kukwa**  
Behold "Ku"-place<sup>12</sup>.
96. **Lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
For him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
97. **Kuwaikwam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
Kuwai-place jaguar Yaperikuli.
98. **Kuwaikwam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
Kuwai-place jaguar Yaperikuli.
99. **Watabubukwam dzakale**  
Saliva-falling-place village.
100. **Watabubukwam dzakale**  
Saliva-falling-place village.
101. **Hademitam nakanupam nanakuam walikaniri ienipe**  
Never their danger on them our young children.
102. **Kawaikam dapa**  
Kuwai paca.
103. **Kuwaikam dapa**  
Kuwai paca.
104. **Kuwaikam manderi**  
Kuwai acoutipuru.
105. **Ikatsenam Kuwaikam manderi**  
Behold Kuwai acoutipuru.
106. **Ikatsenam hliepolepi Kuwai**  
Behold his umbilical Cord Kuwai.
107. **Kuwaikam manderi**  
Kuwai acoutipuru.

<sup>12</sup> *Kukwa, Ku-*, the first two letters of Kuwai's name, and the sound he makes in the rainy season.

108. **Tsinikwam dzakale**  
(...?)-place village.
109. **Metakenam linupanam nadzenam walikaniri ienipe**  
Dry its danger from them our young children.
110. **Ikatsenam likaiteni Kapelikwam dzakale**  
Behold he says (...?)-place village.
111. **Hliepolepi Kuwai**  
His umbilical cord Kuwai.
112. **Hadalikwam dzakale**  
(...?)-place village.
113. **Manderi nakenyuakam Manderi Kuwainai**  
Acoutipuru<sup>13</sup> they were begun acoutipuru Kuwai-spirits.
114. **Pamusuakakwam Kuwai Kuwainai**  
Middle-place Kuwai Kuwai-spirits.
115. **Hipanakwam dzakale**  
Hipana-place village.
116. **Pamudsuakakwam Hipanakwam dzakale**  
Middle-place Hipana-place village.
117. **Neeninam ikatsenam ekuakuam lihriuenam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
For then, behold the rim-place for him Jaguar Yaperikuli.
118. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place village.
119. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place village.
120. **Ikatsenam dupitchikwam**  
Behold the basket-place.

<sup>13</sup> *Manderi*, the acoutipuru, who marked Kuwai's paxiúba tree to make the sacred flutes.

121. **lihriuenam Kuwai**  
For him Kuwai.
122. **Hipanikwam dzakale**  
Hipana-place village.
123. **Ikatsenam liakenam nakapenam Malinali ienipe**  
Behold his name they saw Malinali children.
124. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place village.
125. **Ikatsenam thirulikwam**  
Behold the manioc-squeezer-place.
126. **Nakakarumi ipeku Malinali ienipe**  
They gathered fruits, he threw them, Malinali children.
127. **Thirulikwam dzakale**  
Manioc-squeezer-place.
128. **Nakapenam Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
They see Jandu-place-village.
129. **Ikatsenam pitchidakwam dzakale**  
Behold cutia-place-village.
130. **Noentakanam nadzenam walikaniri ienipe**  
I cast away from them our young children.
131. **Ikatsenam pitchinamiwanale**  
Behold cutia-place-corner.
132. **Lihrinam Dzaui Yaperikuli**  
His son's penis Jaguar Yaperikuli.
133. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place-village.
134. **Ikatsenam pitchi**  
Behold the cutia.

135. **Liakenam Kuwai**  
Kuwai's name.
136. **Pitchipi liakena Kuwai**  
Cutia Kuwai's name.
137. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place-village.
138. **Ikatsena (...?)**  
Behold (...?).
139. **Dupitchikwam dzakale**  
Basket-place village.
140. **Pitchidakwam dzakale**  
Cutia-place village.
141. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place village.
142. **Himena wapinetaka Kuwainai**  
Hear us pursue Kuwai-spirits.
143. **Himena wapinetaka Kuwainai**  
Hear us pursue Kuwai-spirits.
144. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-village.
145. **Ikatsenam wadietakam dthema**  
Behold we bring back tobacco.
146. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
147. **"Pipi" liako Kuwai**  
"Pipi" says Kuwai.
148. **Ehnipanikwam dzakale**  
Jandu-place village.

- 149. **Wadietakam kalidzamai**  
We bring back the chanting.
- 150. **Iatetenam kalidzamai**  
The pepper chanting.
- 151. **Idthemanam kalidzamai**  
The tobacco chanting.
- 152. **Iatetenam kalidzamai**  
The pepper chanting.
- 153. **Kupikwam dzakale**  
Hipana-place village.
- 154. **Kupikwam dzakale**  
Hipana-place village.
- 155. **Hipanakwam dzakale**  
Hipana-place village.
- 156. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
- 157. **Ikatsenam ekuakuam hliwanale eenu**  
Behold the rim-corner of the sky.
- 158. **Ikaiteni (...)-nereni**  
He says (...?).
- 159. **Ekuakuam hliwanale eenu**  
The rim-corner of the sky.
- 160. **Watsulematsa iedahle**  
Our Solimões source.
- 161. **Watsulematsa iedahle**  
Our Solimões source.
- 162. **Dumatchipanikwam dzakale**  
Poison-hair place-village.

- 163. **Dumatchipanikwam dzakale**  
Poison-hair place-village.
- 164. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
- 165. **Watsubulikwam pamudsuum**  
(...?)-place middle.
- 166. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
- 167. **Hipanakwam**  
Hipana-place.
- 168. **Wadietakam dthema**  
We bring back tobacco.
- 169. **Pamudsuakakwam Hipanakwam dzakale**  
The middle-place Hipana-place village.
- 170. **Dzule, dzule, dzule...**  
*End.*

# References

- Gzhãa, E.  
1959 "Aculuração Indígena no Rio Negro." *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi : Antropologia*, 7: 1-60. Belém.
- Gonzales Náñez, O.  
1985 "La Prehistoria Lingüística Arawaka y su Contribución al Patrimonio Cultural," Primero Simposio sobre la Investigación del Patrimonio Precolombino Venezolano. Invesciencias, Caracas.  
1986 "Relaciones Tipológicas entre Lenguas Arawakas al Sur y al Norte del Amazonas", XXXVI Convención de ASOVAC, Valencia.
- Hill, Jonathan  
1989 *Keepers of the Sacred Chants :The Poetics of Ritual Power in an Amazonian Society*. Southern Illinois University, Department of Anthropology.
- Hill, J. and R. Wright  
1988 "Time, Narrative and Ritual: Historical Interpretations from an Amazonian Society", In: J.D. Hill (ed.), *Rethinking History and Myth*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 78-105.
- Journet, Nicolas  
1988 *Les Jardins de Paix : Etudes des Structures Sociales chez les Curripaco du Haut Rio Negro (Colombie)*. Thèse de 3eme Cycle. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris.
- Baake, Wm.  
1959-60 "Iniciação de um Pajé entre os Baniwa e a Cura de Marecaimbara", *Sociologia*, 6: 424-42.
- Taylor, Gerald  
1991 *Introdução à Língua Baniwa do Içana*. Campinas: Editora UNICAMP.
- Vidal O., Silvia M.  
1987 *El Modelo del Proceso Migratorio Prehispánico de los Piapoco : Hipótesis y Evidencias*. Tese de Mestrado. Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas, Caracas.
- Wright, Robin M.  
1981 *History and Religion of the Baniwa Peoples of the Upper Rio Negro Valley*. Ph.D. Thesis. Stanford.
- Wright, Robin M. and J.D. Hill  
1986 "History, Ritual and Myth: Nineteenth Century Millenarian Movements in the Northwest Amazon," *Ethnohistory*, 33(1): 31-54.
- Wright, Robin M.  
1990 "Guerras e Alianças nas Histórias dos Baniwa do Alto Rio Negro", *Ciências Sociais Hoje 1990*, pp. 217-36.
- Wright, Robin M.  
1992 "Guardians of the Cosmos : Baniwa Shamans and Prophets, Part I", *History of Religions* (August): 32-58.