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The Formation of Amazonian Shamanism in Brazil: Healers, Leadership and Ritual Power

A genesis of pajelança in Amazon Brazil: curators, leaders and rituals

The Making of Brazilian Amazonian Shamanism: Healers, Leadership, and Ritual Power

Mark Harris
Translated by Laure Schalchli
https://doi.org/10.4000/12t9p

Abstracts

French Portuguese English
This article examines some of the transformations that marked the ritual and religious life of indigenous societies in eastern Amazonia during the 17th and 18th centuries . At the heart of these changes is the complex and versatile nature of shamanic work. Influenced by changing political and religious contexts, shamanism evolved to be associated, in the colonial world, with the healing of certain types of ailments and diseases. In this sense, shamanism was shaped by the people who practiced as shamans and by those who used their services, a group that expanded to include landowners, the military, and administrators of the Portuguese elite. Shamans provided a greater voice for the difficulties and dilemmas experienced by the populations of this new riverine world. Thus, shaman men and women played a key role in the history of the Amazon, as has also been observed in other contexts. Few other areas of cultural and social life in the Brazilian Amazon allow us to understand these new riverside societies so comprehensively and so distinctly.

This art examines algumas of transformations of life ritual and religion of indigenous societies that live in the Amazônia Oriental ao longo dos seculos XVII and XVIII. No center of mud has a complex and versatile nature for xamânico work. Influenciado pela mudança de contextos politicos y religiosos, o xamanismo evoluiu no mundo colonial ficando associado a cura de certos tipos de doenças e aflições. Nesse sentido, o xamanismo faith elaborado pelas pessoas que trabalhavam como xamãs e por aqueles que necessitavam deus serviços, inclusive latifundiários, soldados e administradores da elite portuguesa. We have visited a new world of experiences and difficulties in the waters of the new river world. Homens and many people have already discovered a fundamental paper in Amazonian history, as it has always been observed in its form but amply in other contexts. Poucas outras áreas de la vida cultural e social da Amazônia brasileira expressam tão distinctly a qualidade abrangente dessas novas sociedades ribeirinhas quanto o xamanismo.

This article examines some of the transformations in the ritual and religious life of indigenous societies over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries who lived in the Eastern Amazon. At the heart of these changes was the complex and multivalent character of shamanic work. Influenced by changing political and religious contexts, shamanism evolved in the colonial world to be associated with healing certain kinds of ailments and afflictions. In this sense, shamanism was crafted by the people who worked as shamans and those who

required their services, which grew to include Portuguese elite landowners, soldiers and administrators. Shamans gave a novel voice to people's uncomfortable experiences and dilemmas of this new riverworld. In this way, men and women shamans played a key role in Amazonian history, as has been noted in other contexts. Few other areas of Brazilian Amazonian cultural and social life express so distinctly the encompassing quality of these new riverine societies than shamanism.

Index terms

Keywords : shamans , Amazonia , healing , ethnohistory , ritual , death , anthropology
Keywords: shamans , Amazon , curing , ethnohistory , ritual , death , anthropology
Key words: pajés , pajelança , Amazônia , ritual , morte , etnohistoria , antropologia

Editor's notes

Article received for publication in February 2023; approved in September 2023.

Full text

This article has benefited from the excellent comments and suggestions of the two reviewers. I am also grateful for the excellent French translation. Finally, I thank the teams of *Brésil(s)* for their editorial work.

1 In the Brazilian Amazon, the term *pajelança* refers to healing rituals performed by a shaman, the *pajé* . *Pajelança* as it is practiced today in towns and villages along the Amazon River is thought to have been identifiable in the 18th century , and perhaps earlier . [2] In these rituals, the shaman chants to summon helping spirits, blows smoke over the body of the afflicted person, and draws out the evil present in the body, among other key elements. This article explores the origins of *pajelança* by focusing on the shamans who practiced cures and healing during the colonial era, when violent death, illness, and suffering were pervasive, but so were indigenous responses to these colonial calamities. In this context, shamans were able to use their considerable skills to forge a cultural space in which their rituals and performances could take shape and attract both indigenous people from different ethnic groups and individuals from the colonial world. Despite the efforts of the Catholic Church, the Portuguese Inquisition, missionaries and the Portuguese state to repress it, shamanism grew and continues to do so. These various colonial authorities nevertheless exerted an influence on the formation of pajelança .

2 Here I will examine how shamans living along the lower Amazon developed *pajelança* as they grappled with their own communities and took on new importance in the broader context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amazonia . I will argue that by bringing together individuals of diverse backgrounds in a loose and widely shared framework of magical healing and beneficent and maleficent sorcery—all tied to *pajelança* —shamans opened the door to new understandings and interpretations of indigenous Amazonian experiences in the colonial era . [3] And they did so with remarkable success, as these shamans resisted pressure to cease their practices. Instead, they innovated their rituals and contributed to a cultural expression that has endured to the present day.

3 Like any other phenomenon, shamanism has its historical and political weight, as several recent studies have clearly shown . [4] These studies also reveal that shamanism in the South American lowlands is far from being a unified phenomenon: there is no common type or set of practices. [5] On the contrary, there is a great diversity of practices across the continent and over time, with shamans alternately prophets, healers, political leaders, or acting as priests, evil sorcerers, or killers . [6] One thing is certain: the testimonies dating from this period speak of the complexity and ambivalence surrounding both the identity and the role of shamans (see for example Daniel 2003 [c. 1760], 337). In other words, the *pajelança* of the lower Amazon was in the 18th century one of the expressions of a vast set of cultural and historical articulations that had been deployed throughout the continent since the previous century. By moving from one place to another according to kinship ties and marriages, migrations and exchanges, resistances and slavery, the indigenous people of this vast region must have encountered different types of shamanism.

4 I draw here on Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (1998), who conceives of the shaman as a translator of worlds, capable of changing points of view and perceiving new connections. These capacities make one turn to shamans for guidance and direction. In a sense, shamans act as leaders and advocates for a certain way of life, a thesis well developed by Silvia Vidal for the upper Rio Negro region, where for three centuries, shamans led political movements (Vidal 2000, 2002). In a similar vein, Bruce Albert and Alcida Ramos argue that shamans led a "pacification" of the whites (2002), by inscribing these newcomers in worldviews that allowed, for example, their malignancy to be explained in a familiar way. In studying the Waimiri-Ataori's experience of the construction of the Manaus-Boa Vista road in the 1970s, Stephen Baines highlighted the central importance of shamanic sessions in interpreting the actions of white people (Baines 2002). Following Vidal's studies and the work of Whitehead and Wright (2004, 5), we can affirm that shamans and their rituals play a determining role in the continuity of indigenous societies. The question therefore arises as to what happens to shamans and their rituals when this society is destabilized by external authorities or by external factors, such as disease.

5 While it is worth examining how shamans interpreted aspects of the colonial invasion and certain Christian beliefs, settlers also participated in the evolution of the role of the shaman and the perception of shamanism by the general public. In the texts cited below, each time the word *pajé* is used, a parallel is drawn between European witches and Amazonian shamans, in an effort to translate such a reference to those who remained in Europe. This equivalence, from a European perspective, shows the settlers' repulsion towards shamanism, institutionally reinforced by the Inquisition and forced conversions, as well as by the many attacks suffered on a daily basis (Hemming 2004, 112-114) . [7] By the end of the colonial period, *pajelança* had established itself on the margins of the Portuguese world, thus cutting itself off from some of its political and ritual roots within indigenous societies. This does not mean, however, that shamanism lost its political function of leadership for indigenous populations living outside colonial cities. On the contrary, it was precisely the networks established between indigenous and colonial spaces that nourished shamanism, through the introduction of new practices and innovative ideas, as shamans learned from each other and responded to the needs of their communities.

6 In the cases presented below, shamanism is associated with death and illness. Death is an essential element of shamanism for two reasons. Only one of them can be properly addressed here, although both are related. First, in some societies, shaman-priests officiated at major rituals, including funerary rites, in which they tended to the souls of the deceased . [8] Like shamanism, and as Jean Pierre Chaumeil has cleverly shown (2007), these funerary practices in the South American lowlands were highly diverse. Members of the elite such as shamans, warriors, and leaders were given special treatment to help them become ancestors, and, as we will see in the examples below, they were buried close to the community of the living. In the first part of this article, we will focus on how societies living along the Amazon treated their dead in the seventeenth century and the role of the shaman in orchestrating these rituals. Chaumeil (*Id* .) helps us to establish a link between the evolution of the roles of indigenous leaders, as a result of their colonial interactions, and the changes that occurred in mourning rituals in response to the repression exercised by the missionaries.

7 The second reason for the close association between shamanism and death is, in view of the above, implicit: indigenous peoples suffered massively from the epidemics, violence and famine caused by the European invasion. Many died, perhaps millions. This mass mortality affected not only the way the dead were treated, but also the knowledge needed to do so. Shamans then sought to alleviate this suffering and affliction through their healing powers. They also provided keys to explaining the origins of pain and illness, for example by interpreting such mortality as witchcraft by the invaders. More research is needed to understand the effects of illness and death in the lower Amazon, as well as their connection to shamanism and conversion to Christianity . [9] This monumental tragedy forms the backdrop to this article, and it is certain that mourning ceremonies and ancestor worship were transformed by the experience of mass death and suffering . [10] My interest here is specifically in the development of shamanism in the lower Amazon by indigenous shamans who, in one way or another, were part of the colonial world. The colonial and evangelical authorities of the invader indeed opened new ritual horizons to indigenous societies, both at the individual and collective levels. In this new space, some shamans found themselves in great demand.

Amazonian Mummies, Ritual Specialists and Leaders

8 As far as can be ascertained, the first mention of desiccated bodies – mummies – in the Tapajós region appears in a letter written in 1672 by the Jesuit missionary João Bettendorff to his superior in Rome . [11] Bettendorff reports that the Tapajó had a small number of human bodies preserved in oils and spices, with all organs removed except skin and bones, and which were enclosed in an ossuary (see Figure 1 below, for an image from northern South America) . [12] The walls of the burial chamber were elaborately decorated with the personal effects of the dead, and offerings were arranged around the mummies. Bettendorff elsewhere states that one of these deceased was known as *monhangarypy* , meaning first father. A later source indicates that each mummy had its own invocation: mother of birth, mother of marriage or mother of the stars, probably guardians of the spirit world [13] .

Figure 1 – Theodor de Bry, “America Pars 8”, plate no. XIIII, Typ GF.B90WH.

Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Library.

9 According to other descriptions of the period by Bettendorff (1990 [1694-1698], 172 and 354) and Heriarte (1874 [1662], 36), the desiccated bodies "came back to life" after ritual festivities supervised by shaman-priests and were venerated as the "original source of life and fertility" in a special square near the center of the village. Judge Mauricio Heriarte observed a ritual in which, he said, trumpets and drums intoned a "funereal and mournful" air, to the point of giving the impression that the earth was shaking and that the trees and hills were about to collapse. When the music was at its height, the women had to cover their eyes so as not to see a masked person advance to the circle formed by the men, then dance among them before returning to the ossuary; they then resumed dancing, singing and drinking, according to the orders of the shamans. It is difficult to know whether the character in question was a masked man, a man carrying an ancestor, or both. On several occasions, the shamans sang and called the ancestral and guardian spirits to come into the festive space . [14]

10 Among the Tapajó, the funeral of the common people took place in two stages. The corpse was first placed with its personal effects in its hammock, which was hung in a ritual house. A needle-woven object, shaped like a sock, was also placed inside the bundle. After the flesh had decomposed, the body was given a second funeral. The bones were ground into powder and made into a special drink consumed by the deceased's relatives . [15] Unlike other Amazonian peoples, the Tapajó did not bury their dead in mounds, nor did they place them in urns for burial. While the common people were placed in hammocks, the main leaders were mummified, with a construction reserved for each type of treatment . [16]

11 This Tapajó ancestor cult had become a volatile issue between the Tapajó and the Jesuits. Around 1672, after consulting with Maria Moaçara, a Tapajó leader, a missionary burned the ossuary containing the mummies to ashes . [17] In 1742, another Jesuit threw beautifully painted ritual objects into the river and smashed others into pieces (Daniel 2003 [c. 1760], 323). It is therefore remarkable that some 80 years after Bettendorff's letter, the presence of mummies was still reported near the mouth of the Tapajós . [18] However, their location had changed: by the 1750s, the mummies were no longer in the "holy of holies," as they had been in the 1670s, as Bettendorff had called the temple housing the ancestral bones, but in the middle of the forest, in places known only to ritual specialists and village elders . [19] This was probably the result of a deliberate desire to hide them from the prying and critical eyes of Europeans.

12 Among the peoples of the South American lowlands, embalming and display of ancestral remains was not common (Chaumeil 2007, 254-57). Brieva and Toledo, Franciscan friars who had traveled down the Amazon River in 1637, reported observing, somewhere in a village in the middle Amazon, skeletons covered in colored cloth (Sweet 1974, 189). This brief description seemed to confirm that their skin had been removed or had fallen off, unless they had mistaken their skin for cloth. Such an image recalls Walter Ralegh's brief description of the mortuary rituals reserved for the elderly in the lower Orinoco region. The bodies were left out until their flesh fell away, then taken up and decorated with colored feathers, or even gold plates, before being hung in their homes (Ralegh 1997, 76 and 159).

13 Another Jesuit missionary, João Daniel, asked some Tapajó people if they worshiped the only Christian God. Their answer was direct: these men declared that in truth, they worshiped mummies and various forms (*criaturas*) that were hidden in an ossuary deep in the forest, whose location only the elders knew. According to Daniel, these practices continued until the end of the missionary period among those who were born and raised in the Tapajó village.

14 The Tapajó were also distinguished by their female leader, Maria Moaçara, who had played a crucial role in leading the people in the mid-seventeenth century , alongside her male counterparts. According to Bettendorff, unlike other leaders, Maria's position was hereditary; he refers to her as *principaleza* [the principal] and *fidalga grande* [the great noble lady]. The missionary adds that Maria was an oracle, a kind of shaman, and that she was consulted by her people on all matters. Another Jesuit letter tells us that the Tapajó had another isolated ritual space, identified by a monkey-headed icon and guarded by elite women who dealt with worldly matters (Porro 2012, 771–72). It is thus likely that Maria, as well as the members of her matrilineal line, were involved in political decisions, particularly those related to the conduct of war and certain collective discussions, as evidenced by the missionary's consultation on the future of the mummified ancestors. It seems, however, that Maria had little or no direct authority over the custody of the mummies. Asking her what should be done with them was divisive and a sign of misunderstanding. In view of the ceremony described above, from which women were excluded, communication with the ancestors and the preservation of their remains were in fact the prerogative of male shaman-priests, whose authority was focused on group rituals and the maintenance of political hierarchies.

15 The Tapajó ancestors were preserved for at least three generations after the mission was established in the 1660s. Their cult must have proved difficult to suppress. According to Daniel, a hundred years of missionary work had little effect on the Tapajó people . [20] We have no information on the continued role of the shaman-priests after the mummies were moved, but we can assume that they continued to maintain the hidden structure and may have supplemented it with other leaders who became ancestors. We also do not know precisely how the leadership of the Tapajó changed. Maria died in the early 1680s and did not pass on her leadership role to her daughter, who herself succumbed to poisoning. By the end of the seventeenth century , the Tapajó suffered heavy losses from disease and had become just another indigenous ethnic group within the Jesuit mission, once the largest and most important. In this context, it is likely that shamanic leadership evolved to focus more on the needs of the community and on how to deal with external forces. We also have no clear idea of how the role of ancestors evolved, but as we will see later, communication with the dead remained essential to the collective understanding of a changing world . [21] In other words, a form of shamanism developed in relation to protecting the group from external attacks, as well as to mitigate the effects of disease and the demand for slaves. Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries , the confrontation with missionaries and colonial agents thus had the effect of transforming both shamanism and the rituals surrounding the death of elites (warriors, leaders and shamans) and the veneration of

ancestors. In the last part of this article, we will present an example of the development of shamanic work in the lower Tapajós during the 1760s.

16 The changing status of ritual and political leaders is a key piece of information for understanding changes in broader political society. Focusing on rituals surrounding death can provide new insights into Bettendorff's observations cited above. Were changes in elite mortuary practices linked to the changing status of leaders as a result of colonial struggles? The answers to this question are generally regional and far from clear-cut, particularly given the gaps in the literature. What is available, however, suggests that the use of ritual and sacred power through ancestors or mythical figures was potentially very effective in mobilizing and resisting colonial authority. In some regions, such as the northwestern Amazon, this potential was more effectively exploited than in others. In the lower Tapajos, where the colonial and missionary presence was greater, resistance may have taken less direct and conflictual forms, at least until the end of the 18th century , when the Munduruku carried out a series of attacks against all people and property associated with the Portuguese (Harris 2010; Santos 1999).

Death, dying and especially being buried

17 While the Tapajó preserved the bones and skin of their elites, other societies honored their deceased leaders differently. Gaspar Misch, a Luxembourg colleague of Bettendorff, described a funeral ritual in the Madeira River region (a few hundred kilometers west of the Tapajó) that involved burying a deceased leader with a living slave to accompany him into the afterlife. Although it is not clear how this burial took place, another source, cited later (Bettendorff 1990, 464–67), sheds some light on the matter. Misch emphasized the essential role of the shaman in indigenous societies, comparing him to a millenarian presence capable of coping with external pressures through his mystical powers. For example, the shaman could reverse aging, bring the dead back to life, and protect his people from enemies . [22] This association between shamans and powers over death and illness would be strengthened in the 18th century and play a central role in the formation of *pajelança* in the Amazon.

18 The Jesuit Miguel Antunes, who was responsible for the Amazon region in the 1690s, provided more general information on Amerindian mortuary practices in his annual letter of 1696. According to Antunes, after three days of mourning, a trumpet was sounded so that the soul of the deceased would leave the house and go to the forest . [23] This was followed by the funeral, which for some peoples did not involve endocannibalism (eating the bones of their loved ones), but a burial described by the Jesuit as follows: "they make a large grave, put the corpse in a tub and bury it, with a hammock, a tool and various things to eat, so that they do not suffer in the other world from the lack of these ." [24] Bettendorff also reported the practice of burying living people with the dead in the societies of the lower Rio Madeira. Here, leaders needed servants to look after them in the afterlife. Important figures were placed in "large trunks pierced like great barrels, and there they also buried alive their most beloved maiden and their most docile young man" (Bettendorff 1990, 466-467). Antunes declared that it was terrible to witness such a burial, implying that he had done so, or that he knew someone who had witnessed one (see also Daniel 2003 [c. 1760], 349) .

19 Although the sources do not always state it explicitly, these rites were overseen by ritual specialists, the repositories of traditional power and authority. These practices and those whose position depended on their observance were, however, targeted by missionaries and the military. It is not clear how long it took the missionaries to eliminate these types of rituals, including the burial of the living and the dead in a hollow log, but by the mid-eighteenth century there were no longer any reports of such activities on the banks of the Amazon River. It is possible, however, that these mortuary practices persisted further upstream in the forest, along the Amazon's tributaries, or that they evolved to use other materials . [26] Under the weight of constraints and pressures, individual burials in cemeteries or chapels (preceded by a confession and a baptism, if there was a priest on site) were to become the norm at the end of the 18th century .

20 However, nothing was ever a given. In the 1680s, among the Iruri people of the lower Rio Madeira, a village used a ploy to deceive a Jesuit missionary. The family of a recently deceased person made a coffin out of palm leaves, but instead of putting the deceased inside, they placed tree trunks inside. The relatives then walked around the village with the coffin, before burying it

in the cemetery. Shortly after, they buried the real body in an urn under the house where he lived. The missionary eventually discovered what had happened and demanded that the body be dug up and reburied in the cemetery. So it is possible that this type of ploy continued for some time, hidden from outside eyes. Such burial in an urn could have been followed, in a second stage, by the consumption of the bones (see Conklin 2001 on the persistence of cannibalism in contemporary times).

21 Decisions about how to bury the dead and who was allowed to conduct rituals rested with the leaders. For this reason, when missionaries came into contact with a group, they would identify them for conversion. Leaders were thus the first to be approached by missionaries for baptism or confession, and often when Aboriginal people were sick or dying .[27] In this sense, the collaboration of these leaders with the missionaries and with the colonial authorities created a tension within Aboriginal society between those who wanted closer contact with the invaders and those who did not. These conflicts led to the break-up of residential groups, with some members moving away; sometimes, a dissident group would join another. In regions along the Amazon River, this generally led to a flattening of social and political distinctions among Native Americans and the rise of short-term forms of authority, such as that of shamanic healers, who enjoyed local support for as long as the group was willing to give it to them.

22 To support this argument, let us consider what another Jesuit superior wrote about indigenous ritual and political leaders in the lower Amazon. Jacinto Carvalho wrote a long "report" in 1719 that is rich in information about the lives of the Amerindians, as well as the successes and failures of the missionaries. The original document is in Italian. In it, Jacinto Carvalho refers to indigenous leaders by the term *tubixaba* , a Tupi word meaning leader[28] . According to him, the main role of the latter was to lead warriors in conflicts with other indigenous societies and to teach men the art of war through shamanic processes. He believed that the main concern of these societies was war, often against peoples of different languages; the goal was to capture prisoners, to consume them immediately or to fatten them up to kill them later (Porro 2012, 767). Although we know that not all societies ate their prisoners, this view of warfare is consistent with ethnographic knowledge and anthropological analyses: leadership was transmitted through families, was more persuasive than coercive, and was supported by rituals such as clan conflict and revenge killings (Lévi-Strauss 1943; Carneiro da Cunha & Viveiros de Castro 1986).

23 In terms of the developments in the lower Amazon, we return to the themes of concealment and subterfuge already discussed. The Tapajó ancestor cult moved into the forests, away from colonial control. With the collapse of hereditary leadership, mummies ceased to be a key element of social continuity. Nevertheless, it is likely that these rituals evolved to take on new meanings. For example, in the 18th century , the Munduruku (a very powerful nation of the Tapajós River) carried out a series of raids targeting both their indigenous enemies and anyone associated with the colonial sphere, in order to take heads that would be transformed into mummies and become trophies (Menendez 1991; Menget 1993). In a similar vein, the burial of tree trunks in place of a body reflects the desire to perpetuate important practices while taking into account external constraints. The changes made were part of a deliberate strategy of adapting sacred elements of indigenous life, although it is difficult to gather evidence for each stage of this process.

24 With these elements in mind, we will travel to the middle of the eighteenth century , to a time when Lisbon's control over social, economic and religious life in the Amazon was stricter and tighter, including the secularization of the missions, the expulsion of the Jesuits and the sending of the Portuguese Inquisition council to Belém. Even if these representatives of the Crown, whether Portuguese or Brazilian, had wanted to wipe the slate clean and reinvent the Amazon in its image, they had to deal with the historical and cultural life mentioned above. It was impossible to do otherwise, although the Crown tried to deny the importance of the indigenous world in colonial life. Before going further, however, we must close our examination of the seventeenth century with other descriptions of the shamanic role, which show its capacities to heal.

The shaman healers of the late 17th century

25 Jesuit reports of shamanic and religious activities in the late seventeenth century contrast sharply with those of the Portuguese Inquisition. This means that there are two very different

sets of documentary records of the role of shamans. The Portuguese Inquisition never established courts in Brazil, but it did send "councils" (*mesas*) and priests with special authority (*comissários*) to investigate religious crimes in the colony (Bettencourt 2009). There are many testimonies associated with the Inquisition in the Amazon, particularly from the 1760s, that provide contemporary researchers with the voices and words of the people involved . [29] Of course, we can never be sure that those who spoke in this way were not exaggerating, lying, or distorting the facts. Furthermore, as we will see later, the Inquisition set in motion a social dynamic in which any denunciation of one person by another could trigger or stir up conflicts leading to further denunciations and confessions.

26 With these details in mind, let us move on to the end of 1692 and the beginning of 1693, when *a comissário* of the Lisbon Inquisition went to investigate non-Christian practices and beliefs in Belém, and then visited the small villages (*aldeias*) of Camutá and Parijó [30] . Of the seven denunciations made in Belém, only one concerned shamanism, while four cases of shamanic healing ceremonies were recorded in Camutá and Parijó. These rituals were intended to alleviate the suffering of sick people whose pathologies were deemed to be treatable by shamans [31] . Nothing, however, has been said about the latter's involvement in rituals linked to the cycle of life, such as those mentioned in the previous sections. The denunciations of shamanic healing in Camutá and Parijo involved an equal number of men and women, most of them indigenous. Some of the accused had been enslaved, while others had been freed (*forro*). There were also denunciations against a person of mixed race (a *cafuz*), a white man, and an enslaved Angolan. Typically, the *pajé* healed "in the manner of his or her parents ." [32] This meant that he or she would use a *maracá* (a musical instrument), sing songs, blow tobacco smoke on certain parts of the sick body, suck the evil out of the place on the body where another shaman had introduced it, and sometimes dance on the roof of a house. Some of these rituals took place in a building reserved for this purpose. In one case, the shaman had sung to his spirit helpers in a language the denouncer did not know . [33] Another person, denouncing two indigenous women and one man (the latter known as Paulo Xaugaruba, which Entradas said meant green dog), stated that these "healings of Indians and Indian women in the manner indicated above are so common in these parts, and she had seen them so often practiced on the persons she names above, that because they are so used without anyone noticing them, she admires them for that without scruple." [34] They corresponded to those described in later inquisitorial denunciations from the 18th century and would be recognizable today within both indigenous and traditional communities (Galvão 1955; Maués 1995 and 2005; Russell & Rahman 2020).

27 Among these general characteristics, some of the details mentioned in these denunciations are found in contemporary examples of shamanism. In Camutá, a male shaman, who had a special house outside the village, began his ceremonies by massaging the bodies of his clients with his hands. The denouncer then described a typical ceremony. The shaman began to sing and invoke the spirit of a snake to divine what his clients were suffering from. The *pajé* then lit his pipe and blew smoke over their bodies, then he sucked the most affected part and removed the evil, sometimes making an insect appear, and finally applied a herbal ointment to their skin. Throughout the ceremony, the shaman sang, danced, and addressed the spirit of the serpent, or sometimes the spirits of jaguars, birds, or fish, to help him see the invisible world and find the cure . [35] In Parijó, a woman of Brazilian origin denounced two free indigenous women shamans who practiced healing in the following way. In this case, which occurred six years earlier, the denouncer had been ill and had asked for help from Izabel and Luiza (or was it Francisca? see below), from the village of Parijo . [36] The *pajés* had sent their patient to the back of a garden (or courtyard) where they had built a small hut (*camarinha*), just large enough to accommodate the person to be treated. Outside the hut, a shaman shook a maraca and began to dance and sing in the general language of the Amazon (*lingua geral dos indios*), which the denouncer knew well; another shaman came to heal her with other songs and by blowing smoke and then sucking out the evil. The ceremony took place in front of the patient's mother and aunt, as well as some indigenous slaves. After the denunciation was made, the woman said that she had made a mistake when she said that Luzia was present. It was actually Francisca, not Luiza (who practiced shamanism on her own). The woman also wanted to denounce Paulo Xaugaruba, who practiced the same shamanic rituals but who, unlike the three women, did not use a small hut to perform his healings; Only his aunt had witnessed Paulo's work [37] .

28 During this brief episode, nine shamans were denounced in the vicinity of Camutá and Parijó, which suggests that shamanic activity was intense in this relatively small area. Unlike the Jesuit

reports, these denunciations, in which personal factors were likely also involved, did not contain any contextual information on leadership and social organization, or on the shamans' other activities. On the other hand, the diffuse and endemic nature of shamanic healing is evident, as is its innovative character. Although there is a defined ritual sequence, beginning with songs and ending with the aspiration of evil, it was possible to innovate: by practicing healing in pairs, using a hut, wearing special clothing and accessories, etc. In short, shamanism evolved according to the way in which each shaman elaborated his role, according to local specificities. In this colonial framework, the shamans themselves traded in their ritual power.

Has everything changed?

29 In 1751, the Portuguese Crown issued a set of instructions to more firmly integrate the Amazon region into the existing colonial system (Mendonça 1963, 67–80; Maxwell 2001). This reform aimed at what would today be called the economic and social development of the region. With the arrival in October of that year of a powerful and highly influential Portuguese administrator, Francisco Xavier Mendonça Furtado, these instructions were implemented; they focused on integrating indigenous people into colonial society and increasing commercial opportunities through the exploitation of their labor. The result was the expulsion of the Jesuit missionaries and the secularization of all missions, the prohibition of indigenous slavery, the promotion of mixed marriages, the creation of a state trading company, and even the sending to Belém of a council of the Lisbon Inquisition, which remained there for five years (1763-1768, see Lapa 1978), in order to ensure that the Christianization of the colony was on the right track.

30 Another way the Church monitored what was happening on the ground was through pastoral visits by bishops to riverside villages. Bishop José Queiroz, a Benedictine monk, was particularly active in the early 1760s and wrote with profound insight about what he saw in villages along the Amazon and some of its tributaries (Queiroz 1847). Lower-ranking officials were also sent to investigate “abuses” and “rustic” practices. Following the expulsion of the Jesuits, José Monteiro de Noronha, a priest born in Belém, was thus commissioned by Furtado to inspect the situation in villages in the districts of Xingu, Tapajós, and Amazonas. He investigated as much as he could from October 1757 to February 1758 and sent his report to Lisbon a year later. This document is a good summary of what Noronha considered to be religious abuses; the Jesuits were held responsible for many of these abuses, such as the lack of baptism of the indigenous people, who generally did not go to confession either. Except in a few villages, the deceased continued to be buried in urns, in their own homes, with their personal belongings. Dead children, however, were treated separately and were buried under the floors of the chapels, even if they had not been baptized. Shamanism is mentioned in his report, but without further details, Noronha simply indicating that he had observed such practices in Macapá and Pombal, in the Xingu.

31 In some villages, the priest observed aberrations that hindered the proper observance of Christian precepts. In Santarém and Boim, both in the Tapajós region, as well as in Óbidos, learning Christianity was a problem, due to widespread gaps in the mastery of the general language and Portuguese. In Boim, too, Noronha noted the existence of particularly severe rites of passage for boys and girls, which included scarification and long periods of fasting. In the same village in the lower Tapajós, an indigenous leader, Captain Marçal, was identified as the one to whom a mother had given her little girl for sexual relations. Marçal was also accused of concubinage. Moreover, the chief of Boim, Bento Rodrigues, had apparently committed incest with his sister and sister-in-law. Noronha insisted that a good education was the only way to ensure respect for Christian morality. If parents received proper instruction, they would pass it on to their own children and prevent "men and women from giving children" to men for sexual intercourse. In this context, Noronha believed that these "gentile rites were part of their ancient progenitors, and it was a distinctive honour not to lose them ." [38] A full knowledge of Christian doctrine would thus allow a new beginning, which he believed would be the only way to break with the past—and it was with this statement that Noronha ended his report. Only through education could Aboriginal people be put to the service of the Crown, the settlers, or their entrepreneurial village organization. In other words, it was just as important to exploit Aboriginal labour as it was to capture their souls.

Figure 2 – Lieutenent Ignácio Antônio da Silva, “ Prospectica da Cidade de Santa Maria de Belém do Grão Pará”, nd, [half of the 18th century].

Historical Archives of the Army, Rio de Janeiro, AHEx 2353.

The formation of shamanism in a colonial context: Inquisition and witchcraft

32 The mode of operation of the Inquisition in Brazil differed from that established at the center of colonial power. To summarize this difference, Laura de Mello e Souza emphasizes that the inquisitorial visits to Brazil were intended to understand the singular, multifaceted, and syncretic religiosity of the colony, rather than to identify deviations from the Catholic doctrine expressed in Portugal (Mello e Souza 1986, 373-374). In the mid-eighteenth century , the object of the Inquisition was thus evolving with the intellectual and cultural context of the Iberian Enlightenment . [39] The visit to Belém by the Council of Lisbon made it possible to investigate popular religiosity in all its forms and among all kinds of individuals (Sommer 2003, 421). However, according to scholars, the objectives of this visit were never clearly stated and its work proved relatively slow and ineffective. Historiography shows that this visit must be seen within a broader set of reforms aimed at developing the Amazon, which was considered a key geopolitical and commercial region of the Portuguese empire. At the local level, however, by investigating what it perceived as deviant and superstitious practices and beliefs, the Inquisition had the effect of highlighting certain individuals and their actions. It is difficult to know what the long-term effects of this identification were, or even if they existed. Nevertheless, shamanism, called *feitiçaria* [witchcraft] by the Inquisition, was the most targeted activity; it was mainly associated with indigenous people, and sometimes with the Portuguese and people of African or mixed descent.

33 As we have already indicated, the type of shamanism presented in the inquisitorial documents would be recognizable by contemporary societies in the Portuguese-speaking Amazon. The Inquisition did not create this new shamanism, but it made it visible through its trials, denunciations, and confessions. A diverse set of practices and beliefs was thus qualified, within which people who healed and controlled spirits enjoyed an important status. *Feitiçaria* was the category then used by the Church, which considered shamanism as a pact with demons. Other aspects of shamanic activity, examined above, did not have the same visibility.

34 An additional element that played an important role in the formation of shamanism was the increased presence of Africans from the west and southwest of the continent as slaves in the 1750s. With the Pombaline Reforms, the slavery of Native Americans was in fact made illegal. In order to replace this workforce, the Crown then created a company to import men, women, and children from the west coast of Africa to become slaves for plantation owners. Although relatively fewer in number than in the rest of Brazil, people of African origin had already been part of the history of the Amazon since at least the mid-seventeenth century , some having fled from other

parts of South America, particularly northeastern Brazil, before being enslaved by the elite of Belém and its environs (Gomes 2002; Hawthorne 2010). These Africans living along the Amazon made significant contributions to the cultural, ritual and social life of the region: from food to music, from agricultural knowledge to healing and care, this African influence was deep and widespread (Salles 2005 and 2015, see also Leacock & Leacock 1975).

35 All this is to say that rather than being a relic of the past, shamanism was actively recreated, in specific contexts, by people seeking to assume new roles. Shamanism was thus not only elaborated by various individuals, but also shaped the colonial context itself. The denunciations of the Inquisition in the eighteenth century tell us that all segments of the Pará population had recourse to shamans, including the elite trained by plantation owners, and at least one Portuguese governor. Thus, shamanism, as a system of healing and harming others, had adapted to the daily life of the colonial world (see also Behar 1987 on Mexico). Mello e Souza's work, focusing on Brazilian colonial life rather than on the indigenous worlds of the time, has been invaluable in understanding the popular motivations and emotions that underpinned religious practices and beliefs in the colonial period. She argues that witchcraft and magic were widespread and powerful strategies for coping with the precariousness of life. Furthermore, there was a "tremendous gap" (Mello e Souza 1986, 149) between popular religious beliefs and practices and official Catholicism, particularly that of the Inquisition. The elite could not understand the dynamism and powerful appeal of witchcraft and magic as practiced by indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans.

36 Mello e Souza's work has inspired several studies in the Amazon, two of which provide excellent historical and ethnographic insights. Barbara Sommer's study of sexual witchcraft superbly unveils the "heterogeneous world" of the lower Amazon in the mid-eighteenth century and shows that it did not conform to the patterns established elsewhere in the colony and in Portugal. Although the region had received a thin veneer of Portuguese cultural values, indigenous rituals and beliefs persisted. Indigenous peoples thus sought to advance their own interests in the colonial world and adapted its symbols and practices to achieve their own ends (Sommer 2003, 417). Similarly, in highlighting the lost and marginalized lives of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Amazonia , Almir Diniz de Carvalho examines how indigenous peoples appropriated the imposed rituals and symbols of Christianity. According to Carvalho, indigenous populations then created their own forms of religiosity, operating new semantic associations. Carvalho sees this as a deliberate process of mixing traditions that testifies to the active participation of indigenous people in colonial life, rather than their submission to it (Carvalho 2013). It is in this spirit and in the lineage of Mello e Souza that we will look at the lives of two shamans of the Tapajó, to show the diversified character of shamanism. If, on the one hand, the shamans improvised and were inspired by powerful external symbols, on the other hand, they translated and connected different invisible and visible, internal and external, indigenous and colonial worlds.

Politics and Religion in the Villages of Pinhel and Boim in the Early 1760s

37 Let us now return to Tapajós, to deepen our understanding of shamanism in this region and examine how it developed in this colonial context. The network of interactions in the lower Tapajós region was distinct from that of Belém and the Amazon estuarine area. However, Belém and Tapajós belonged to a similar cultural and symbolic universe, resulting from the colonial presence. And one of their most powerful links was the development of innovative forms of healing and ritualized care, based on shamanic encounters. Furthermore, the documentary record attests to the importance of the veneration of the bodies of ancestors in the villages located along the Amazon. It is impossible to know where the mummies were transported and how long they lasted. They may have been placed in villages south of the mission, in the highlands, as recent archaeology has shown the close links between them (see for example Schaan & Lima 2012; Gomes & Rodrigues 2018). In this context, let us focus on two shamans from a village in the lower Tapajós. While there were continuities in the regional cultural meaning of connection with the dead, at the same time, changes in leadership, shamanic practices, and ritual life are evident here.

38 The neighboring villages of Boim and Pinhel, on the west bank of the Tapajós River, were separated by a few hours of canoe and land trail travel. These two relatively small villages each had about four hundred inhabitants (Queiroz 1847, 181 and 191). Pinhel was populated by the Mawé (Maués), while the Abacaxi, Curiato, and Andira had settled in Boim. These peoples had their own languages and, as mentioned above, few spoke the general language or Portuguese (Queiroz 1847, 104). While it is not certain whether there were kinship relations between the members of the two villages, both experienced conflicts between their indigenous leaders and the local colonial authorities. The most striking element here is the growing importance of indigenous leaders in the organization of these villages, in a move to defy the Portuguese-appointed administrators and establish alternative forms of leadership.

39 Historical knowledge of the indigenous peoples living in the lower Tapajós, particularly the Mawé, is limited (see Daniel 2003 [c. 1760], 362–363; Queiroz 1847). Endocannibalism—the grinding of the bones of a deceased relative after a primary burial and their consumption as a drink—was common. Both boys and girls were subjected to rigorous forms of initiation. After their first menstruation, young girls were required to fast for fifteen days. Young men, before marriage, were required to prove their courage by placing an arm in an anthill and enduring bites for a sufficient period of time. These life-cycle rituals are mentioned in the shaman denunciations presented below, and thus correspond to culturally appropriate forms of behavior rather than arbitrarily imposed by shamans.

40 Abortions were also regularly practiced in this region. According to Bishop Queiroz, infanticide was justified by the fact that women did not want their breasts to develop (1847, 188). A recent historian of colonial Amazonia suggests another reason: abortion and contraceptive practices were one of the most enduring forms of resistance by indigenous peoples. Women resorted to traditional medicines to abort unwanted pregnancies, in defiance of Christian doctrine (Domingues 2000, 197).

41 After the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Portuguese administration began appointing a director and a priest to oversee each of the colonial villages in the Amazon. In Boim, the first director was Antonio Luiz de Amorim, and the first priest was Acacio da Cunha de Oliveira; their relations were poor. Amorim was a Brazilian military man of mixed-race origin. The village had two indigenous leaders, Belchior de Ornellas and Bento Rodrigues. Letters written by Amorim to the governor in the early 1760s reveal his disputes with the villagers over the planting of gardens, the organization of canoe trips to extract forest products, and absenteeism, that is, those who left the village without permission .[40] In return, Amorim was accused of being extremely violent, verbally harassing the villagers, and sexually exploiting indigenous women. In general, he was criticized for not promoting Portuguese morality and rules of good conduct in the region[41] .

42 When José Queiroz visited Boim in late 1762, he also painted a scathing portrait of Amorim and refused to even write his name, so odious were his actions. Amorim behaved like a "ravenous wolf" and believed he could do anything, especially towards women, punishing their refusals with great violence. Queiroz even saw a young indigenous woman run out of Amorim's house, covered in blood, after being beaten by him (Queiroz 1847, 186; see also Roller 2014, 120-122). By early 1763, Amorim had been replaced by another director, Giraldo Correya Lima, originally from northeastern Brazil. It was he who, in September 1764, alerted the Inquisition to the activities of the shamans in Boim.

43 Meanwhile, in Pinhel, relations between indigenous leaders and colonial authorities had also deteriorated, even more than in Boim. The village director had been assassinated in early 1762 by a Mawé man from a group that had settled in Pinhel (Daniel 2003 [c. 1760], 398; Queiroz 1847, 101). An indigenous leader, Marcelo Alfaia, was thought to be involved in the murder. Prior to the assassination, Alfaia had been dismissed from his position and labeled the “principal enemy of the whites,” and replaced by his nephew .[42] The former leader had then fled the village (perhaps to avoid detection) with many of his group, leaving behind an ominous warning for anyone who might try to catch them: human figures made of straw, riddled with arrows. Some time later, his nephew also turned against the colonial order and followed his uncle into the forest, taking with him some of the stock of gifts intended to attract indigenous people from remote areas to settle in the village. He in turn used these objects to gain allies against the Portuguese. Thus, the uncle and nephew actively participated in the resistance to colonial authority and in the construction of an anti-colonial alliance with independent indigenous groups.

44 It was in this violent, confused and tense context that two colonial officials (the director and the priest) filed a complaint against two men from the village. The denunciation is notable for

being one of the few to come from outside the estuarine area surrounding Belém, hence its significance and high visibility for the colonial and religious authorities. It states that Marçal Agostinho and Pedro Rodrigues were " *feiticeiros* " [sorcerers] who summoned men and women to their nightly ceremonies, during which the spirits of the dead addressed the assembly on various subjects, including the shamans' understanding of the Christian faith. Marçal had already attracted the attention of the colonial authorities because of his taste for women (see Monteiro's report mentioned above). It is very likely that there was a connection between the shamanic work of these men, the resistance to colonial power described above, and the changes in ancestor worship. This development probably marked a turning point for the shamans, who were called upon to use their powers and their mediation with the invisible world to provide new leadership and address the concerns and suffering of other villagers. Of course, the denunciation and associated material made no reference to the political situation in these villages, for that would have amounted to admitting that, more than a simple heresy, shamanism represented a form of leadership unrecognized and unwanted by the Portuguese. Were Marçal and Pedro working with or against other indigenous political leaders? It is frustrating that this question can only be answered partially.

Marçal: a shaman in the lower Tapajós in the early 1760s

45 On a visit to Belém at the end of the rainy season in mid-1764, the new director of Boim, Giraldo Correia Lima, went to the council of the Inquisition and denounced the activities of Pedro and Marçal. Some of the information he had came from the village priest, Acacio da Cunha, but he had enough experience to verify it himself. In his denunciation, the director presented Pedro as a *mameluco* [indigenous/white mestizo] and described him as the main person involved. Marçal, an indigenous person, was Pedro's disciple, who had taught him the practice of shamanism. This connection between the two men would be confirmed a few months later by Marçal when he appeared before the Inquisition (Lapa 1978, 224–228). Marçal was then in his forties and married to Andrea Cardozo, an indigenous woman from the *sertão* , as the forests of the hinterland were called. One of their children was the godson of Acacio, the priest of Boim. The council was informed in detail about the behavior of the two men who, according to Giraldo Correia Lima, practiced both ritual healing and sexual predation on young women, as well as abuse and violence.

46 Following this denunciation, the Council of Visitors decided to send a commissioner to investigate these allegations. In December 1764, a priest from Belém went to question the villagers, who confirmed their content. In May 1765, Marçal went to Belém, apparently of his own free will, and presented himself before the council to be questioned. What followed was called a confession, and Marçal's testimony is indeed extraordinary, since he admitted to having passed himself off as a shaman, because that is what Pedro had taught him to do. Before discussing this testimony, it is appropriate to examine the information gathered by the commissioner who went to Boim . [43]

47 When the commission of inquiry arrived in Boim at the end of 1764, Pedro must have disappeared or died, since he never presented himself before the Inquisition, either willingly or by force. The witnesses were questioned only about Marçal's activities. According to them, Marçal was "authorized to be a *pajé* ", that is, he had been subjected to certain rituals and was considered a shaman by his community. In the eyes of his peers, he also assumed the functions of *assoprador* [blower] and *curador* [healer], in other words, a shaman who blows incantations. One person was questioned about the performance of the rituals. She replied that Marçal used to hold nocturnal meetings during which he sang, spoke in strange voices and danced. He also climbed onto the roof of the house where the ceremony was taking place and made loud noises there. When questioned about the sexual abuse, another person claimed that Marçal had persuaded a woman, Eugenia, to give him her baby daughter so that he could have sexual relations with her. The woman had complied because her father's soul had spoken to Marçal during a ritual, telling him that she and her daughter should have intimate relations with him. According to this person, the family feared Marçal's vengeful power if they refused . [44] But when a certain Eugenia was questioned, she declared that she knew nothing about it. Similarly,

Claudina made no admission of the accusations of sexual abuse that Marçal had allegedly committed. The commissioner, however, gave no credence to their testimonies.

48 When Marçal confessed in Belém about six months later, the council did not question him about the accusations of sexual predation against young women; perhaps they had decided that this part of the case did not merit further investigation. Marçal was questioned, however, about his powers as a shaman. In response, he spoke of his experience as a shaman and how he tried to use his powers responsibly. Marçal said that he admired Pedro's talent and prestige so much that he had asked to be his apprentice. He then began working with Pedro and underwent the rites of passage to become a shaman. Some time later, Pedro confided in Marçal:

> He then declared that all he had seen him do were pretenses, with which he deceived those around him so that they would respect him; for no soul from the other world came to attend the assemblies, nor did he go up to call them on the roofs of the houses [...] but that the confessor should not reveal this secret to anyone, if he wanted the Indians to respect him. [45]

49 According to this story, after supposedly revealing his secret, Pedro continued to teach Marçal, in a second phase of his apprenticeship. Although he knew that this was "false" shamanic work, Marçal retained his enthusiasm, because he wanted to do what he thought was good for the village and the neighboring communities. Like Pedro, he danced on the roof of his house and invoked the souls of the dead with great noise. He called the spirits with tobacco smoke and healed the sick, sometimes by sucking the evil from their bodies. Marçal declared that he wanted to be *pajé* and earn the respect of his people through his healing power. When he felt sufficiently confident, he held his first nightly seance, inviting others into his house, then danced, sang, and climbed onto the roof to bring the souls of the dead into his body, one by one:

> And after pretending that the souls with whom those of the assembly wished to speak had entered, [...] pretending for some that it was the soul of their father or mother, for others that it was the soul of their son or daughter, for others that it was the soul of a particular relative or friend. All keeping silence as long as these simulacra lasted, and only that person spoke, asking what was the place occupied by the soul in the other world, to which the confessor replied by telling some that it was in heaven and others that it was in hell. [46]

50 At the end of his confession, Marçal declared that he deeply regretted his behavior and asked for forgiveness for his sins. He was then sent back for the council to examine his case. The council acknowledged the truth of his words and listed the sins for which he was to be punished. It seems that he then settled in Belém, although it is not known how he earned his living. Whatever his intentions, he was unable to carry them out. The last note in his file, written on August 28, 1766, states that Marçal died in a house in the city of Belém, around Easter time, and that he was buried in the church of Saint John about sixteen months after his confession . [47] The cause of death is not specified. Was he murdered by another shaman for his confession before the Inquisition, or did he die of natural causes? Suicide can be ruled out, as he was buried on the grounds of church [48] .

51 Marçal's confession is exceptional in more than one way. Was he trying to clear his name before the colonial authorities in order to make a fresh start? The terms of his confession echo the classic Inquisition view that shamanism is a pact with the devil. He described the invocations of spirits as the descent of demons and portrayed himself as a charlatan seeking to enrich himself. In other words, he realized that, in his current situation, the best way to present himself was with complete humility and regret. It was better to be an impostor who claimed to be reunited with the devil than to continue to claim to be a shaman who could heal with spirits and tobacco. And it was better to have followed someone else's teachings than to be the instigator of the whole affair. My hypothesis is that this posture corresponds to a deliberate strategy and reveals that Marçal was a skilled negotiator, capable of adopting a colonial point of view when it suited him. Yet, for reasons unknown to us, this new departure did not last long.

52 Nevertheless, in the village, Marçal sought to put his shamanic gifts at the service of the community. Witnesses testified that Marçal and Pedro could speak to "dead souls." This power must be interpreted in the context of the ancestor cult practiced in the Tapajó region, as mentioned above, where the latter were consulted as oracles. Here we can observe that the mediating role of shamans in contact with the dead has changed over time. With the evolution of the political context, shamanic work focused on consulting the dead to understand the problems and answer the questions of the present. Before Christianization, the dead were kept close to the

living; they could be contacted by ritual means and were supposed to bring good fortune. Under the influence of this new religion, the villagers began to doubt the place of the dead. They wanted to know whether the dead, baptized and made Christians, enjoyed eternal life in heaven as souls, and what heaven, purgatory or hell were like.

53 Before leaving for Belém in 1765, Marçal was highly respected by the other villagers. Together with Pedro, he addressed, giving them a definitively local meaning and character, issues that were at the heart of their experiences, such as building a community, authorizing abortion, curing illnesses or accessing the dead through their rituals. Through the function of shaman, these men thus proposed an alternative form of leadership within the village, outside the world of the Whites. The mystical and the political were here merged as effective means of managing relations with the colonial world and seeking ethnic advantage. With the death of Marçal and the apparent disappearance of Pedro, it is impossible to know what became of the specific ideas and practices that they developed. But others may have drawn inspiration from them without leaving any documentary traces. Thus Marçal and Pedro oriented collective engagement with the invading society through a new indigenous cosmopolitics (Albert & Ramos 2002) that became an integral part of the *pajelança* of lower Amazonia.

Conclusion

54 In this article, I have examined how shamanism transformed over a period of about a century in the cities, towns, and rural districts of the lower Amazon. In areas with a stronger colonial presence, on the banks of the lower Amazon, a form of shamanism, *pajelança* , developed and attracted people of all ethnic and social backgrounds. This shamanism drew on indigenous shamanism while absorbing aspects of European Catholicism and Iberian folklore and, later, African religious life. Indigenous shamans of different ethnic and gender identities thus created *pajelança* . The fragmentary documentation we have does not allow us to trace the precise genealogy of these practices. There is no formula or recipe that led to a finished product; pajelança continues to be elaborated in the present, and it continues *to* shape the present by giving leadership in political struggles, for example [49] .

55 Although the Portuguese colonial authorities attempted to suppress the activities of shamans, shamanism proved to be a remarkable terrain for innovation and the creation of cultural connections. In this case, the shamans not only found themselves in a new world, but they also shaped it, allowing for new expressions of the experience and understanding of death and illness, as well as of healing through a myriad of resources. At first glance, these two shamans were working in different contexts. However, many others also played their part within their communities, perhaps less visible, but equally locally known and aware of each other's existence. Together, they gradually created a new cultural and ritual landscape that became the *pajelança* . They provided advice, interpretations, and explanations for the problems and crises that were presented to them. Given more space and time, we could extend this analysis to other shamans of the time who acted similarly.

56 Finally, let us return to the broader context of shamanism. Shamanism is nourished not only by the political context of the moment, but also by the fact that shamans learn from each other. As we saw at the beginning of this article, there were many types of shamanism in the Amazon, mainly associated with ethnic identities and language families (for example, Tupi, Arawak, and Carib, for the riverine areas discussed here). The *pajelança* of the lower Amazon did not remain isolated from other forms of shamanism. Marçal practiced in the lower Tapajós, where various Tupi and Carib peoples lived, many of whom had only indirect contact with the colonial world. Social connections were intense across the region, whether through kinship ties, marriages, exchanges, or visits for ritual celebrations. The people interviewed by the priest who visited Tapajós thus mentioned several groups living in the hinterland. Until recently, in this same region, the Munduruku used fire to mummify the heads of enemies and their families killed in attacks, while the Mawé dried out their corpses by subjecting them to extreme heat [50] . It is also known that shamans followed sacred routes over great distances, like the shaman-warrior leaders who followed the Kuwé Duwákalumi in the Rio Negro and Orinoco region [51] . The *pajelança* was therefore part of a regional, even continental, network of shamanic activities that took place in different spaces and diverse cultural situations. Although the sacred geographies

that unfolded in the lower Amazon during the colonial period are unknown to us (see Schaan 2013 for the ancient lower Amazon), shamans provided cultural and political leadership to the nascent societies and cultures of its riverside villages.

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Notes

2 On the use of the term *pajelança* , see Maués (1995), Figueiredo (2008) and Lima (2019). On the historical origin of the term *pajé* , see Cunha (1999, 227).

3 On the link established between shamanism and witchcraft in indigenous cosmologies, see Whitehead & Wright (2004).

4 See Salomon (1983), Taussig (1987), Thomas and Humphrey (1994, especially the chapters by Gow and Hugh Jones), and Fausto (215). For a historical approach, see Clastres (1975) and Sztutzman (2012).

5 See Fausto (2004).

6 As studied by Whitehead and Wright (2004).

7 For example, a Jesuit reported the punishment inflicted on a young Arawak shaman who had predicted the end of the world: he had been sold into slavery in Belém (Bettendorff 1990 [1694-1698], 494). On the Jesuits' general approach to indigenous peoples in Brazil and the Amazon, see Arenz (2007) and Castelnau-l'Estoile (2019).

8 See Chaumeil (2007), Fausto (2015, 210) and, more generally, Hill & Chaumeil (2011).

9 See Conklin (2001), Fausto (2015) and Vilaça (2010) for studies of other regions of the Amazon in more recent times.

10 For example, Scheper Hughes (2021) has examined how the Mexican Catholic Church has been influenced by indigenous experiences of death and illness.

11 Archivo Romanum Societatis Iesu [ARSI], Brasiliana 9, João Felipe Bettendorff to the Superior in Rome, August 28, 1672 [284r-291v] f. 290r, in Latin and translated by Peter Maxwell-Stuart.

12 Such burial chambers, where bones were kept before being buried, were widespread throughout the American continent.

13] This is what emerges from the writings of João Daniel (2003 [c.1760], 323), about 70 years after Bettendorff, although a different interpretation of these mummies is given by another Jesuit, Jacinto de Carvalho, superior in charge of the Amazon in the 1710s, see Porro (2012, 771 [f. 203v]). The original reference is in Italian: ARSI, Brasiliana 10, 1, Lisbon, March 21, 1719, 180-208v.

14 Heriarte (1874 [1662], 35-36). Hill and Chaumeil (2011) have studied the importance of music and musical instruments in contemporary indigenous societies. Their work shows that musical sounds, breath, and exhaled smoke are forms of mediation between the spirit world and the human world, making the invisible visible. See in particular his Ouverture, 21.

15 Many contemporary ethnographers of indigenous Amazonia tell us that the dead lose their personal identity. Among the Jivaro, the living strive at all costs to sever ties with their deceased relatives, see for example Taylor (1993). However, Chaumeil (2007) has shown that this treatment is far from universal among indigenous peoples of the South American lowlands. Like the Tapajó at that time, a number of societies keep their dead within the sphere of the living by connecting them to the landscape or to objects.

16 See ARSI, Brasiliana 9, 426r-431r. Annual letter of 1696, Maranhão.

17 ARSI, Brasiliana 9, João Felipe Bettendorff to the Superior in Rome, August 28, 1672 [284r-291v] f. 290r, in Latin and translated by Peter Maxwell-Stuart.

18 The number of dried bodies differs from one reference to another. See Biblioteca Pública de Évora [BPE], CXV/2-15 a n.° 7, fol. 51r-54r, 1753 *;* and Daniel (2003 [c. 1760], 323). See also BPE, CXV/2-13, fol. 365r-374v, João Felipe Bettendorff to his Superior General.

19 See BPE, CXV/2-15 a nº 7, fol. 51r-54r, 1753, and Leite (1943, 304-305).

20 Which reminds us of the importance and strength of ritual in supporting ethnic resistance, as has been demonstrated in the northwest of the Amazon (Vidal 2000).

21 Were Christian symbols and practices incorporated into these rituals dedicated to the ancestors (compare, for example, with the *santidades* of the Indians of Bahia, Vainfas 2005)?

22 Royal Library of Brussels-CM, cod. 6828-69, Gaspar Misch to Gottfried Otterstedt, July 29, 1665, p. 443.

23 ARSI, Brasiliana 9, Antunes, (426r-431r), fol. 429r.

24 In transliterated Portuguese: “ *fazem huma grande cova e metido o cadaver em huma tina o burialram, e com elhe huma rede e ferramenta e varias couzas de comer, para que não padeçam no outro mundo pelha falta destas* . » ARSI, Brasiliana 9, Antunes, 1696, fol. 427r.

25 In transliterated Portuguese: “ *uns grandes paus furados a modo de grandes pipas, e ali também enterram viva a sua manceba mais querida eo seu mais mimoso rapaz”.*

26 Chaumeil (2007, 261) describes for example how the dead are represented by trees or wooden trunks in Gê societies and in the upper Xingu.

27 ARSI, Brasiliana 9, Bettendorff to the Superior in Rome, August 28, 1672 [284r-291v], and Arenz (2007, 497).

28 *Morubixaba* designates the supreme leader, see Ibanez Bonillo (2016, 170).

29 See Carlo Ginzburg (1990) on the importance of these testimonies.

30 National Archives Torre do Tombo [ANTT], Caderno do Promotor, Book 263 (1683-1697).

31 White people referred to these shamanic roles by the same word, whether it was a priest or a healer. This does not mean that the term used by indigenous people was the same, nor that the same person conducted both rituals.

32 “ *no modo de seus parentes* ”, ANTT, Caderno do Promotor, Book 263, “Paulo feitis.as e Izabel Uzu”, March 20, 1693, f. 270. Camutá, Denunciation of Bento [Frz], native of Camutá, against Paulo .

33 ANTT, Caderno do Promotor, Livro 263, “Paulo feitis.as e Izabel Uzu”, March 20, 1693, f. 270. Camutá, “he sang and danced, calling in his language, which he does not understand because it is the language of the Black, and pretending that other people he had called were coming to talk to him.” (“ *she cantava e bailhava chamando na sua lingua q.’ por ser lingua do negro travada o não entende, e fingindo q.* ᵉ *vinhão outras pessoas a quem chamou falar com elle* ”).

34 In Portuguese, “ *curas de indios e indias na forma asima dita são tão usuais nestas partes, e as tinha ella visto fairer tantos vezes aos mesmas que acima nomea, que por serem tam usados sem que alguem tivesse reparado nellas por isso as admiro sem escrupolo”.* ANTT, Cadernos do Promotor, Book 263, “Denunciation against Isabel, Francisca and Paulo Xaugaruba”, March 26, 1693, Book 263, ff. 272-272v. Camutá.

35 ANTT, Cadernos do Promotor, Book 263, “Barbara e Luiza feitis.as”. March 25, 1693, Book 263, ff. 270v-271, Camutá.

36 On Parijó, see Leite 1943, 314-5. In 1690 it was the main village of the captaincy of Camutá.

37 ANTT, Cadernos do Promotor, Book 263, March 1693, Book 263, ff. 272-272v, Camutá.

38 " *ritos gentilicos que participarao dos seus antigos progenitores, tendo por distincto brazão o não os perder* ", Archives historique d'Outre-mer, AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 44, D. 4033, Miguel de Bulhões, Bishop of Pará, to Tomé Joaquim da Costa, Minister of the Navy and Overseas, Belém, February 16, 1759.

39 On the context of the Inquisition of Pará, see Mattos (2009).

40 Public Archives of the State of Pará [APEP], Cod. 115, Doc. 54, Boim, Dec. 9 1762, Director Antonio Luiz de Amorim to governor; and Code. 117, Doc. 33, Boim, August 1 , 1762, Director Antonio Luiz de Amorim to the governor.

41 AHU_ACL_CU_013, Cx. 53, D. 4839, Luis Gomes de Faria to Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, Belém, September 15, 1762.

42 All the information contained in this paragraph can be found in APEP, Cod. 235, Doc. 38, Director Belchior Henrique Weinholtz to Governor Pinhel, August 29, 1771, and APEP, Cod. 408. Doc. 110, Director Francisco da Costa, November 24, 1784.

43 ANTT, INLX trial 2701, Marçal Agostinho, and INLX trial 12895, Pedro Rodrigues.

44 ANTT, INLX trial 2701, fol. 16v/5v, 17v and 6v.

45 " *He declares that you always have the slightest vista when it comes to things, as it arises from the circumstances for this terem respeito; porque não vinham almas do outro mundo a estar nos congressos, nem ele submita a chamá-los do teto das casas [...] porém que ele confitente não revelasse a pessoa alguma este segredo, se queria ser dos índios respeitado* ", ANTT, INLx trial 2701; Mello e Souza (1986, 272).

46 " *E que depois de fingir que tinham entrado as almas com quem queriam falar os do congresso, [...] simulando a unos que era alma de seu pai, ou mãe, a outros que era alma de seu filho, ou filha, a outros que era alma de seu parente ou particular amigo. Estando allos em silencio enquanto duravam estes fingimentos, e só falava aquela pessoa, que perguntava pelo lugar, que a alma no outro mundo tinha, ao que tudo ele confitente respondia dizendo a uns, que estava no céu, a outros, que estava no inferno",* ANTT, INLx trial 2701; Mello e Souza (1986, 272).

47 ANTT, INLx Trial 2702; Mello e Souza (1986, 272-273).

48 Mello e Souza assumes that he was killed for revealing the secrets of shamanic ritual healing. In my opinion, it is unlikely that Marçal was killed deliberately, because that would imply that there is some truth in the idea that shamanism is a hoax and that someone wanted to maintain this deception. However, following Lévi-Strauss, an anthropological perspective is to consider that the healing power of the shaman is given by the community in which he manifests himself.

49 For example, in the Lower Tapajós, it was shamans who led the movement for the demarcation of indigenous territories (see Vaz Filho 2010; Lima 2019).

50 Chaumeil (2007, 255).

51 See Vidal (2000). In this context, the Tupi-Guarani shaman prophets also deserve mention as leaders of long-distance migrations in search of the "land without evil" (see Clastres 1975; Hill 2013). Taussig (1987) also mentions the Putumayo shamans who travel to the Andes to develop their knowledge.

List of illustrations

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Mark Harris , "The Formation of Amazonian Shamanism in Brazil: Healers, Leadership and Ritual Power" , *Brésil(s)* [Online], 26 | 2024, Online since 30 November 2024 , connection on 10 March 2025 . URL : http://journals.openedition.org/bresils/18340; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/12t9p

About the author

Mark Harris
Mark Harris is a Professor at Monash University, Melbourne and a Visiting Professor at the University of St Andrews, Scotland.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1124-5217.

Translator

Laure Schalchli

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