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Maloca-Escola: Transformations of the Tukanoan House

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To the Hausirō Porã and Ñahuri Porã companions:
Miguel Azevedo and Feliciano Azevedo (*in memoriam*) and
Antenor Azevedo and Vicente Azevedo
And to Higino Tenório, Tuyuka leader (*in memoriam*)

This article focuses on the process of appropriating the school by Tukano¹ groups living in an indigenous territory along the middle stretch of the Tiquié River within the upper Rio Negro region in the northwest of Brazilian Amazonia. The history of contact in this region is marked by the presence of Salesian missionaries, who upon their arrival simultaneously persecuted traditional longhouses called “houses of dance” (*babsarivii*)² and the forms of ancestral knowledge reproduced in them and established schools, or “houses of study” (*buerivii*). This resulted in a conceptual distinction between forms of knowledge specific to each house: “knowledge” (*mahsise*) and “study” (*bues*). However, in recent decades, Tukano of the Hausirō Porã and Ñahuri Porã³ clans have combined the construction of a longhouse and the establishment of an indigenous school, founding the *maloca-escola* (longhouse-school). This act of cultural creativity is part of a broader process of synthesizing forms of knowledge previously seen as irreconcilable. Today, the school-longhouse is the main site for the production of social relations proper to Tukanoan house societies, which are at once hierarchical (based on subdivisions of clan, age, and gender) and horizontal (based on clans’ interdependence with one another and with neighboring Indigenous groups and White peoples).⁴

More than a conventional school, the *maloca-escola* is a central place in community life. It holds the “community meal” (*biat#*),⁵ where people strengthen commensality and food-related etiquette rules, gossip, joke, and discuss the community schedule with the leaders. It is home to the meetings and parties that “animate” (*ekati*) community life and also the “manioc beer” (*peru*, [Tukano]; *caxiri*, [Nheengatu]) parties that accompany collective work events. Festive events of the national calendar such as Children’s Day and Teacher’s Day, during which contemporary rites of food exchange (*dabucuri*) are practiced, are also celebrated in the *maloca-escola*. In addition, it hosts Catholic religious activities such as mass and Saints’ Day feasts. With the increase of the local indigenous association’s political power,⁶ it also hosts public health and indigenous educational events. These can bring together hundreds of people coming from several communities along Tiquié river and staff from governmental and non-governmental organizations based in the regional urban center of São Gabriel da Cachoeira. Finally, the *maloca* holds many of the school’s activities: some classes, the planning of activities, production of teaching materials, educational workshops, association assemblies and meetings, contemporary rites of food exchange for teachers and mothers, graduation parties, and the production, presentation, and evaluation of indigenous students’ research.

Addressing the objectification and patrimonialization of culture in Northwest Amazonia, Hugh-Jones (2019b:128; see also 2010) argues that “a combination of historical and cultural factors has created a peculiar elective affinity or fit between the Upper Rio Negro peoples’ cultural emphasis on esoteric knowledge and verbal narrative and their current interest in [producing] books.” Thus, the books produced by Rio Negro indigenous peoples can be understood as “valuables” or “wealth” and in some sense as “hybrid forms, at once heirlooms from the past and newly appropriated objects of foreign Power” (*ibid.*). The recent objectification and patrimonialization of culture by the Tukano stems from the intellectual and sacerdotal nature of these peoples’ knowledge systems and precedes contact. They were thus predisposed to collaborations with missionaries and anthropologists and toward the production of books, which were understood as valuables. I argue that their interest in

constructing an indigenous school, which also serves as a setting in which to conduct research and publish books, must be read in the same key. This occurs due to a similarity between the horizons of “knowledge” and “study,” especially their reference to a corpus of canonic knowledge transmitted by a master. Stephen Hugh-Jones’s (1994) now-famous distinction between two forms of shamanic knowledge transmission, vertical and horizontal, is useful in characterizing the school setting. Student-conducted research tends to reinforce the vertical aspects of knowledge transmission at the expense of the horizontal. Patrilineal transmission within the home and the learning of an esoteric canon is emphasized while downplayed are the nonhereditary transmission practices such as the bodily processes through which powers in the forest or ecstatic personal experience are acquired.

The development of contemporary schooling must be understood in the historical context of Salesian missionary activity. The Salesian mission on the Tiquié River was established in the 1940s at Pari-Cachoeira, the site of a large Tukano longhouse that was central to the region (Cabalzar 1999:368).⁷ During the first decades of the mission there was a clear separation between the types of knowledge and people being produced in mission schools and in villages, respectively. Mission schools trained Western “students” (*buerã*) whereas the village formed “knowledgeable persons” ([Tukano] *mabsirã*). By contrast, the contemporary longhouse-school seeks to create hybrid persons who are both “students” and “knowledgeable persons.” The two domains, once separate, are now twisted together, although mechanisms exist to control the flows and powers of people and knowledge.

The headquarters of the indigenous school I discuss in most depth in this paper, the Yupuri School, is located in Sopori Bua, a settlement that lies two hours (by 15-horsepower motorboat) from the now abandoned old site of the mission. Many adults that live on the middle Tiquié river and are teachers at the school and/or are parents or grandparents of Yupuri School students studied at the mission in their youth. Describing the operation of the first Salesian missionaries, Tukanoan men and women often highlight the destruction of longhouses and the separation of children from their parents. The destruction of longhouses contributed to the Salesian missionaries’ goal of establishing communities composed of nuclear family residences. Its aim was to dismantle the ritual cycle associated with the longhouse. This entailed the demonization of the *Yuruparí* ritual instruments, the theft of palm-leaf ornament boxes, and the breaking of wooden troughs. All these objects are central elements of Tukano longhouses (Hugh-Jones 1995:228). So, while they educated the “generation of those who study,” the Salesians also undermined the material basis for the performance of rituals that were fundamental for the fabrication of persons, the reproduction of groups, and the circulation of knowledge. Today’s indigenous school is a creative response to this history.

House, People, Knowledge

This short section’s aim is to provide an overview of the Tukanoan conception of knowledge. It is important to keep in mind that knowledge is related to houses and that distinctions between kinds of knowledge produce hierarchies among persons, genders, generations, and groups.

Among Tukanoans, the production and transmission of knowledge is central to a broader politics of continuous reproduction of people and social groups. In the Tukano language, “people” (*mabsã*), “knowledge” (*mabsãve*), and “clan” or “group of people” (*mabsã kurupa*) are cognates. This linguistic evidence is bolstered by ethnographic evidence that knowledge, persons, and groups are mutually constituted. In turn, the house is the site for the reproduction of all three.

The interconnections between house, clan, people, and knowledge can be inferred from arguments developed by Stephen Hugh-Jones (1993, 1995, 2010, 2019b). According to this author, among Tukanoan groups the longhouse (*wii*) stands for the cosmos; it is the house of the community group, consisting of an older man and his brothers together with their wives, children and unmarried sisters. It is home to the male initiation festivities that reinforce the descent group while it also organizes rites of food exchange that promote unity among different descent groups. In its androgynous character the house condenses different aspects of Tukanoan social structure: an egalitarian, endogamous, female side, and a hierarchical, agnatic, male side. The ownership and linear transmission of names, titles, and other ritual

prerogatives are integral to Tukanoan societies as Lévi-Strauss (1983, 1987) defined them. Each Tukanoan group has prerogatives and items of wealth that represent their identity and ancestral powers over their house (Hugh-Jones 1993, 1995). Stephen Hugh-Jones (2019b:144, see also 2010) stresses that these items of ritual property, “valuables, wealth” (*gabeuni*), as well as the Kayapó category of *nekrétch*, are a “tangible, material manifestation of specific immaterial knowledge, attributes, capacities, and powers transmitted across generations and serving to define specific kinds of people.” That is, valuable wealth always implies knowledge, which is often transmitted in the form of “narratives” (*keti o ka*).

Hugh-Jones (2012:143) establishes a relation between the Barasana *keti o ka* and the Tuyuka *nirō makañe*.⁸ The latter, according to Flora Cabalzar (2010), refers to higher-value knowledge. This is knowledge that, in this highly specialized and hierarchical society, confers distinctions of status between older and younger clans and siblings, males and females, and elders and youth. Cabalzar states that “Tuyuka often say that knowledgeable (*masig#*) or important people (*niromak#*) have knowledge or important speech (*niromakañe*) that an ‘ordinary’ (*b#ri nig#*) or common person would not have” (F. Cabalzar 2010:76).⁹

From *Bahsariwii* to *Bueriwii*

The arrival of the Salesians, in the 1920s along the Uaupés River and the 1940s to the Tiquié River, destabilized and replaced the interdependence of longhouse, knowledge, and personhood. Salesians erected churches, stopped people from living and conducting feasts and ritual practices in the longhouses, appropriated ritual objects, promoted the formation houses containing nuclear families, and, finally, established a new type of house, the “school” (*bueriwii*: *bue*, to teach, to learn/study; *wii*, house). This house was linked to a new way of teaching and learning referred to as “study” (*buese*) and the formation of a new kind of person, the “student” (*buerã*). Despite their criticism of the Salesians, the Tukano refer to them as “respected people” (*heõrã mahsã*) who brought civilization (see Rezende 2007 on Tuyuka). Thus the concept of respect,¹⁰ previously applied to major clans and wise people, was also transposed to these new relations.

The Tukanoan concept of *bue*, glossed in Portuguese as *estudo* (study), and *masã*, glossed as *conhecimento* (knowledge), marks a new distinction between, at once, two types of knowledge and two modes of production and circulation of knowledge. This contrast stresses the new potentials introduced by schooling. Unlike the Tukano term *masã*, *bue* probably has an exogenous Nheengatu origin.¹¹

Salesian missionaries undertook an extreme effort to subjectify and produce modern individuals with docile bodies through the exercise of spatial and disciplinary power and a mechanism of vigilance typical of the Foucauldian panopticon device (Albuquerque 2007). The day-to-day in the boarding school at the Pari-Cachoeira mission was marked by the obligation to speak in Portuguese and wear clothes, along with the strict separation between boys and girls. A rigid and repetitive routine and schedule for studies (writing, reading, counting, drawing) was imposed. In addition, students had to eat White peoples food, pray, farm, and perform manual labor. They also had set times to play games and walk around. A monitor observed the students, and there was punishment for those who did not follow the rules (Rezende 2007; Azevedo J. 2013, pers. com.).

For the first Tukanoan pupils, this student life did not make much sense; it was aimless, as is revealed by a recurrent expression in some former students’ narratives referring to the time they began to study at boarding school: “The time when we played at studying” (*bueapekaterop#ma*).¹² However, as time went on, accessing the skills and knowledge of White people became a common aspiration among Tukano. Parents therefore encouraged children and young people to adopt typical student behaviors: attending school, wearing clothes, eating White peoples food, speaking Portuguese, reading, writing, and manipulating notebooks, pencils, and pens. Through these behaviors they aimed to make White bodies, capable of accessing such knowledge. Geraldo Andrelo (2004, 2006) relates the movement toward becoming White people to the transformations surrounding naming and initiation and argues that the Indigenous peoples of the Uaupés appropriate the civilization of White people by capturing their powers in the form of papers, names, and clothing. The incorporation of new knowledge and goods is seen as an incorporation of White peoples’ attributes.

In order to construct people and bodies able to access the White peoples' knowledge, in addition to sending children to school, elders engaged in a creative transformation of shamanic spells to meet the needs of changed circumstances. Among Tukanoans, when a child is born the father's father (or other agnatic kin) will perform the naming rite, and through shamanic spells will produce a soul-body able to access knowledge, powers, substances, plants, and artifacts or objects proper to the child's gender. These will be potentialized over time through incantations performed at menarche and male initiation, the initiates' following of behavioral and dietary restrictions (*betise*), and "advice" (*werese*) given by the elders (C. Hugh-Jones 1979; S. Hugh-Jones 2002; Mahecha Rubio 2004; F. Cabalzar 2010; Pereira 2013; Oliveira 2016). While the Salesians' influence led to the abandonment of male initiation, shamanic incantations carried out at birth were provisionally abandoned and then reinstated, and female puberty rites were modified and extended to construct persons composed by bodies and thoughts directed toward the acquisition of increasing new abilities related the way of life of the White people, including their kind of knowledge.

Among the Tukuya, Flora Cabalzar (2010:185–6) draws attention to shamans' avoidance of the most dangerous forms of naming and their oversight of dietary and sexual restrictions after naming, childbirth, initiation and menstruation, acts intended to decrease the bodily and spiritual dangers involved in the acquisition of "important knowledge" (*nirõ makañe*). In a similar way, the shamans (*kumua*) of the middle Tiquié refers to incantations in which they "lower the bar" to acquire virtues that were previously required of great ritual specialists such as the ability to recite or sing (*baya*) or to acquire common work skills like being a successful female garden worker.

Before sending their sons/daughters or grandsons/granddaughters to school some shamans recite spells in order to enable them to acquire White peoples' knowledge and to attend school without any harm. As Rafael Azevedo, a Ñahuri shaman, explained to me, shamanic proceedings aim to develop an intention (lit. a thought forward) in the child to study and to not think about doing another kind of work, such as fishing or gardening. The spell specifies that the child must exchange his/her body-soul for a White peoples' body-soul, so that he/she will be able to feed on White peoples' foods without becoming ill. During the shamanic procedure the child is dressed in White student clothes and offered books, pencils, notebooks, and a study desk, objects they will need to manipulate as students. Similarly, Mahecha Rubio (2004:300–301) states that Makuna recited spells for children before they left for educational centers outside the region to enhance their learning of Spanish reading and writing skills and to protect them from dangers associated with this learning. My Tukano interlocutors report that some parents also provide doses of herbal remedies to help their children develop reading and writing abilities. Because only certain families own these plants, their ownership is taken as an explanation for these families' children learning with greater ease.

It is clear that, while the effort to constitute students implies a positive attitude of constructing a different type of body-soul and thought that enables the development of certain abilities, it also implies a negative attitude—that of deconstructing, relaxing of training rigor, and ultimately abandoning a characteristic type of body endowed with distinctive virtues. This implies a certain incompatibility between these two kinds of persons, bodies, thoughts, and knowledge; if one kind of personhood is to be developed to its fullest, it will necessarily be at the expense of the other. This is a dilemma I return to in the conclusion.

The Will to School

At the end of the 1970s missionary activity began to decline with the extinction of boarding schools and primary schools began to proliferate in communities, even if these were initially under the direction of Filhas de Maria Auxiliadora nuns (Congregation of Salesian Sisters). Other factors contributing to the decline in missionary influence included the Federal Government's increased presence and offering of competing services, the emergence of indigenous organizations, and the critical questioning of several former students of the mission in relation to the Salesians (Cabalzar 1999:371).¹³

Though schooling was imposed by the Salesians, indigenous people gradually developed a great interest in school education. In schools run by nuns in indigenous communities the Portuguese language and the Brazilian national curriculum were adopted. However, the first

teachers were indigenous people who had been trained by the Salesians and part of the lesson content was explained in Tukano.

Under the missionaries the schools were named after saints or government officials and became one important house among several kinds of houses that, after the destruction of longhouses, came to compose Tukanoan communities. These included nuclear family houses (owner's name plus *yavii*, "house of x"), with annexed kitchen-houses (*doarivii*) and circular huts (*mahsã bearivii*, lit. "house where people come") whose design, according to Cabalzar (1999), they had imported from the nearby Arawakan Baré people to substitute for the longhouse as a place where people gathered. Chapels (*ñubuevii*, "house of prayer"), along with cemeteries, were also located in communities.

A Hausirõ Porã man's narrative about the creation of a school in a Tukano community of the middle Tiquié in the early 1980s reveals that people developed a strong desire for a proper school and that the desire was strong enough to fuel conflicts between different groups. He recounts that the children of the inhabitants of a Tukano community and some of the children of their Desana brothers-in-law, who lived in a community alongside, were studying in another Desana community. They grew tired of having to walk for over an hour every day to school, and the Tukano decided to found one of their own. But the Desana who held the current school disagreed. Outraged by this situation, the Tukano allied with their Desana brothers-in-law, went to the Desana community that hosted the school to appropriate school desks, tables, books, and other materials for the new school. This led to the breakdown of relations between men of the groups involved, affecting even issues related to the shared access to fishing territories. Priests ceased their visits to the Tukano community, calling its inhabitants sinners. Some years later, relations between both groups resumed, the missionaries returned, and a school was officially founded in the Tukano community.

This narrative resembles others about warrior raids between Tukanoan groups in former times that aimed to capture body ornaments used for dances (Bidou 1976). Indeed, it is interesting to think about the genesis of a school as a house composed of certain valuable objects that gradually become part of a clan's wealth. As argued by Stephen Hugh-Jones (2010, 2019b:139), although Tukanoan wealth constitutes a heritage passed down within the group through generations, and are heirlooms, that, to some extent, take the form of ritual sacred objects (gaheuni, valuables, wealth), old axes, guns, weapons, and other foreign potent objects acquired by previous generations were also assimilated into this category. This argument regarding gaheuni is in line with Andrello's (2010:18) discussion of the Tukano category *ahpeká* (lit., "other things") as an index of social differences among groups that is both used in reference to ceremonial wealth and to merchandise (*ahpeká* of White people), including paper and metallic money.

Between the mission-school era and the beginning of the indigenous movement, many men and women worked in faraway villages and towns, allowing them access unmediated by schooling to the goods and knowledge of White people. Although previous work for merchants and in rubber and palm fiber extraction had entailed considerable travel, many justify this phase of wandering by reference to their inability to continue their studies past elementary school. They comment that the priests took only good, well-behaved students to continue their studies in the city. Shut out of education, young people sought "adventure" working for bosses on travelling merchant boats, piassava palm (*Leopoldinia piassaba*) fiber extraction, agriculture, cattle farming, or even with Salesians as boatmen, cooks, or washerwomen. At the end of the 1980s, with the opening of a gold prospecting site called "Garimpo Tukano" on the Castanha River, a tributary of the Tiquié, communities were temporarily emptied, as many people went to work as garimpeiros.

It was when mining activities declined, in the mid-1990s that the indigenous movement on the Rio Negro grew in importance and the founding of indigenous associations became the hot trend in the Alto Rio Negro communities. In 1987 the Federação das Organizações Indígenas do Rio Negro (FOIRN) was founded in São Gabriel da Cachoeira and over the years became the main umbrella organization in the region, incorporating the several new indigenous associations. After the demarcation of the Alto Rio Negro Indigenous Territory in 1998, the main focus of the indigenous movement was cultural valorization, sustainable development and educational reform. All these priorities were supported by Brazilian constitutional changes made a decade earlier. The educational claims were further strengthened by the Education Law of 1996 and by subsequent decrees that guarantee rights

to culturally specific education. At that time, the Municipal Office of Education, headed by Gersen Baniwa, an indigenous man, offered training courses for indigenous teachers, and the Association of Indigenous Teachers of the Upper Rio Negro (APIARN) was born. Soon after, the FOIRN, together with Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), a socio-environmental Brazilian NGO and main FOIRN partner, implemented an indigenous education project with funds from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (ISA 2000). One of the fruits of this series of reforms and initiatives was the founding of indigenous schools like the Yupuri School.

Maloca-Escola: Tukano Appropriation of the School

In the early 2000s, Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã men jointly produced volume 5 of *Narradores Indígenas do Rio Negro* (NIRN), organized by ISA anthropologist Aloisio Cabalzar. This volume, edited by anthropologists with lengthy research experience in the Upper Rio Negro region, was part of a series that gathered clan origin stories narrated from father to his son.¹⁴ Between the years 2000 and 2003, men of the clans that produced NIRN volume 5 also constructed a longhouse in Sopori Bua (Hausirõ Porã) and founded an indigenous school and the Associação da Escola Indígena Tukano Yupuri (AEITY), an indigenous association with headquarters in the community of Bote Puri Bua (Ñahuri Porã). These joint activities renewed a “companionship” (*bahpatise*)¹⁵ that dated from the time when these clans’ ancestors lived together at the Tukano origin place on the Papuri River. The story goes that the Hausirõ’s ancestor decided to leave and occupy a spot along the Tiquié River instead, sending an enchanted cigarette to his younger brother, the Ñahuri’s ancestor, inviting the latter to join him there.

In order to accomplish the founding of the school and the association, men from these clans sought out FOIRN leaders and ISA anthropologists who were already developing projects with other Tukanoan communities along the upper Tiquié River. The resulting partnership between clans enhanced their ability to accumulate knowledge, boosted their cultural project execution skills and their potential to attract financial support.

The Yupuri School and its association, AEITY, gradually came to include a school headquarters that in 2005 moved to its own longhouse site in Sopori Bua, along with eight smaller schools established through agreements with dwellers of fifteen neighboring communities of the middle Tiquié and Castanha Rivers, including Tukano, Desana, Siriana, Tuyuka, Miriti-Tapuya (Tukanoan), Hupdë and Yuhupdë (Nadahup) peoples. This expansion was spearheaded by the coordinator, Vicente Azevedo, a Ñahuri Porã man and a local teacher, who had attended the Indigenous Teacher Training Course (*Magistério Indígena*) offered by the municipal government of São Gabriel da Cachoeira and had taken an active role in some of the indigenous associations along the Tiquié River. The school formation process followed the flow of the relations established by the Hausirõ Porã and Ñahuri Porã with other Tukano clans and exogamous groups. Vicente enumerates these as consisting of the following groups: his clan mates (Ñahuri Porã), their major partner clan (Hausirõ Porã), and Hausirõ and Ñahuri’s major Tukano clans (Doe Porã and Uremiri Porã, respectively), their brothers-in-law from other exogamous groups (Desana, Miriti-Tapuya, Tuyuka, Siriana) and those groups with whom the Tukanoan did not marry formerly, although they might nowadays (Hupdë and Yuhupdë, both Nadahup groups).

The problems concerning the Nadahup’s inclusion in the Yupuri School reveals the limited ability of this institution to neutralize differences and gaps between groups. The Nadahup are seen as lower status groups by the Tukanoans. As an interlocutor said, it was difficult to engage with the Hupdë and Yuhupdë when they went to school headquarters because they were ashamed to speak, ask questions, and exhibit their research in Tukano or Portuguese. According to him, they remained isolated and silent before finally dropping out. In contrast, the same interlocutor felt that Yuhupdë students had been successfully integrated into a Desana school in the Duhtura community along the Castanha River since Desana men have long married Yuhupdë women and it is usual for inhabitants to communicate in Yuhupdë (as well as Desana and Tukano), even in the school.

Nonetheless, despite gathering a variety of clans and exogamous groups, the school, as its name implies, is considered Tukano. Indeed, the school association was formed and managed by Hausirõ and Ñahuri men who, despite their middle-low position in the Tukano clan system

of the middle stretch of Tiquié, have a history of interclan relations as well as relations with Whites. They describe how their ancestors pioneered the occupation of the Tiquié and how they had worked to delimit the territories of the clans/groups who became involved in the school. Later they managed Tiquié regatão trade and got involved in the regional indigenous movement. As a result they had acquired “respect,” prestige, and voice in the local context. The prominence of the Hausirõ and Ñahuri clans accords well with Stephen Hugh-Jones’s (2013) description of the historical and political dimensions of Rio Negro style.

As in the case of FOIRN and related associations (see Andrello and Ferreira 2014:30), the formation of an indigenous school and organization took place in parallel with the construction of a longhouse. The association between the founding of the school and the construction of the longhouse reinforces my argument about the enduring imaginary force of the *house* in Tukanoan societies. The longhouse construction in Soporí Bua was coordinated by “chiefs” (*wiorã*), understood in the wider contemporary sense of the term. Previously, this term strictly designated the father, or elder of a group of brothers, who directed longhouse construction and became its owner. Thus its literal meaning is “one who gives the longhouse” (Hugh-Jones 2014, pers.com.). However, the practice and function of leadership has evolved along with the meaning of longhouse (Hugh-Jones 1997; Arhem 2000). In the late nineteenth century Imperial officials appointed indigenous leaders recognized by the Crown, *tushauas*, to serve as intermediaries between indigenous groups and the government and traders (Andrello 2010a:120–1). In the following century, Brazilian agencies dealing with the indigenous population appointed “captains” to mediate between the community and their representatives, a role reinforced in the Brazilian Northwest Amazon by rubber bosses, merchants and the Salesians.

As Stephen Hugh-Jones (1997:111) describes for the Pira Paraná region, in Tiquié, captains are men who speak the White’s language and gain outside knowledge through their experience of work. They become able to act as intermediaries between White and Indigenous peoples. In contemporary communities composed of several houses, the term *wiorã* is once again extended to include a variety of leaders related to the diverse houses that make up a community: teachers, catechists, health agents, and indigenous association directors.

Miguel Azevedo, an old Hausirõ Porã man, led the construction of the longhouse in association with new leaders. He moved with his wife and sons from the community of Pirõ Sekarõ to Soporí Bua, where a new community was formed and where the school would be installed. This involved very hard work: opening up the dense forest, building houses, clearing gardens, and reopening a path to the community of Bote Purí Bua, where some Ñahuri Porã lived with their children.¹⁶ Due to his long history of relationships with nonindigenous people and fluency in Portuguese, Miguel was elected captain of the community, a role for which he fulfilled all the requirements. He had studied in the mission and travelled, working as a cook and boat driver for the missionaries, river traders, and as a timber cutter in Colombia. Miguel and his son, Antenor Azevedo, along with Vicente and his brother Angelo (all Ñahuri Porã men), acquired resources for the construction of new houses through relations and projects developed with ISA and government representatives. These resources eventually included building supplies used for the construction of classrooms school offices, a student dormitory, library, and radio station, along with necessary equipment and materials for the school-house: a computer, printers, voice recorders, photo and video cameras, radios, books, work tools, and a motorboat. All of these became wealth items of the indigenous association and, consequently, of the clans involved (See Rocha 2012 for a similar case among the Wanano).

Although there is a link between the two domains—maloca and school, the community and the school environment, the community leader (captain) and the heads of the school (coordinators and teachers)—the confusion between them can trigger conflicts. In a community where two teachers were assigned to serve as captain and deputy captain, because, as a resident explained contemptuously, “When White people visit the village, it was they who knew how to talk to them,” residents complained about the way community work and feasts were organized and that no one oversaw the teachers’ work in the community since they were also the captains.

As Tukano themselves began to take over rural schools and administer and transform them, schools named for saints, priests, or government officials were renamed for ancestors, clans, and/or founders of places and communities related to the school. For example, Santa

Luzia School became Uremiri School which, “is a sacred name of the life force” of the “ancestor of the people that now live at the place Uremiri once founded (AEITY n.d.).

Yupuri was chosen as the name for the maloca-escola, the school’s headquarters. It is the first name in the Tukano repertoire of male names, but due to the naming convention that ensures the repetition of names in alternate generations (C. Hugh-Jones 1979:133) it allows multiple interpretations. The ambiguity regarding the mytho-historic personages associated with the name may reveal an intention to encompass all of the following as possible referents: 1) a Nahuri Porã wise man who was the eldest living man of the village when the school was built; 2) a Hausirõ Porã ancestor central to the occupation of the middle stretch of Tiquié; 3) the elder brother shared by ancestors of several of the clans involved in the school’s founding who taught important knowledge to his younger brothers when they still resided on the Papuri River and who is also related to White people because, after winning a fight against his younger brother, he is said to have gone to Manaus (Nahuri and Kumaro 2003; Andreello 2016).

In any case, it is an inclusive name for the Tukano clans that compose the school, as it is mentioned in all these clans’ narratives and is part of their repertoire of male names. By virtue of its association with the narrative of the founding clans, the name underlines the contrast between these and their brothers-in-law groups (Desana, Siriana, Tuyuka, Miriti-Tapuya and, nowadays, Yuhupdë) whose children also attend the school, as well as with the Tuyuka group of the upper Tiquié, who have their own school (the Utapinopona -Tuyuka School).

Parallel to the naming of schools and their explanation on plaques affixed to their buildings, and following the trend of the Upper Rio Negro indigenous movement, people began to abandon the use of their White and Christian personal names in favor of Tukanoan ancestral names. Tukanoan place names began to be used exclusively at meetings, in classrooms, and appeared in research documents and publications. Tukanoan personal names were also used in the same way, although in the classroom and at meetings they were used exclusively for self-presentation rather than in reference or address.¹⁷

Tukanoan spirit names are the names of clan ancestors owned by exogamous groups that serve to perpetuate the existence of the group. For the continued wellbeing of the group they are safeguarded in secret (Hugh-Jones 2002:53–4). However, as “vitality, essence, and identity,” something of the personal and group names are revealed during occasions such as male initiation and exchange rituals (ibid.:61). By making names visible and audible Tukano could be attempting to turn the school into a person/clan-house and point to the ritual aspect of some school events. Drawing on generic, particular, and contrastive names (Andreello 2016) in the indigenous school context reaffirms patrilineal descent lines and stakes out positions and differences within and between clans and exogamous groups, and between Whites and Indigenous peoples.

Looking for Knowledge: To Request/Ask, To Listen, To Record

Indigenous school education in the upper Rio Negro has been based on the principle of learning through research, focusing mainly on the recording, systematization, and presentation of indigenous knowledge. Since the first meetings and teacher-training courses Rio Negro, indigenous schools have been inspired by alternative pedagogical approaches such as critical pedagogy (Freire 1970), democratic schooling (Alves 2001), and by educators’ own previous experience in indigenous schools (Muller 2004; Albuquerque and Azevedo 2012). Hence student research into his or her own cultural traditions constitutes one of the pillars of school activities.

In her discussion of traditional knowledge and its modes of transmission, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2014:14–5, my translation) mentions the Rio Negro context and asks: “A man used to pass his knowledge exclusively to his son or his grandson. How can he be asked to go and teach others’ children in school?” This is certainly a good question. Along the same lines, Clarice Cohn (2014) and Tassinari and Cohn (2009) have proposed that the way knowledge is actually transmitted, accessed, and circulated in a school universe should be framed as an ethnographic question.

Among Tukanoan groups the methodology of teaching through research is referred to as *seritiña masise*, an expression that is often translated as “knowledge reached through inquiry.” But the expression points to wider meanings. Henri Ramirez (1997:168) describes the use of

the phrase *sērítí'yā'a*, which means “to try to ask for, to attempt to find out, to ask,” where *serĩ* means to ask (for); *yā'a* means “to try, try to do something” (ibid.: 232); and *masĩ* means “to get to know, to know, know how to do something (ibid.: 96).” This translation reveals the creativity of Tukanoan people in appropriating a pedagogical method that at once reproduces and transforms their modes of knowledge transmission.

Stephen Hugh-Jones (1997) argues that with the recent renewed emphasis on traditional culture and the growing importance of education and literacy captains in the Pirá Paraná need to maintain alliances with young people who have a school education. Conversely, those who lack an in-depth knowledge of tradition need to enlist the support of shamans. For this reason research at Yupuri School required captains, shamans, teachers, and association leaders to collaborate, although there are also captains who are shamans, and many of the shamans are also literate men who attended missionary schools in their youth.

Vicente made an analogy between how a student should behave and what he had been told by his father toward the end of the latter’s life about how a son should behave: “the wise man does not go after his son to explain to him about shamanic spells and stories; it is the younger who should seek the elder, approaching him to listen when he is speaking.” However, this approach requires proper behavior on the part of the student since, as Maximiliano Makuna, an indigenous intellectual from Pirá Paraná, pointed out during a seminar on traditional knowledge at FOIRN’s headquarters, current research in indigenous schools essentially focuses on asking questions. In the old days to avoid sounding like a fool a novice did not ask many questions. Asking requires a certain level of maturity. Similarly, Joana Cabral Oliveira and Lucas Keese Santos (2014:117) report on a training project for young Mbya researchers during which they were reprimanded by a wise grandfather (*xeramōi*) who complained that White people ask too many questions.

When choosing a topic of interest, the indigenous student often performs the research sitting in front of the house or at night, questioning a relative while the latter is already in a hammock reclining for the night. When the respondent is an uncle, aunt, or grandparent who lives in another house, they arrange a suitable time for this conversation. But the students’ ambitions, awakened by the school, run counter to the kinship and generational norms that guide Tukanoan knowledge transmission. Even if the student has elaborated several questions on a subject, he will be quickly pushed back into his role as novice, grandson, or son by the old specialist and submitted to the older discursive regime that discourages the asking of questions. Instead, the novice can be subjected to a session of listening to long comments without interruptions. This is often considered tedious by young people. School research is a transformation of the dialogical character of male knowledge transmission, which used to occur in the longhouse, when men gathered in early-evening conversation sessions that they used to call circles of “*ipadu*”[Nheengatu] (in Tukano, *patu*: pounded and pulverized *Erythroxylum coca* leaves) during ritual feasts. Nowadays, these sessions occur in family homes or even in the middle of manioc beer parties when an old man is eager to teach sons, grandsons, and nephews interested in learning.

“Conversation or speech” (*ukēise*; see Barreto 2012:65) is modeled on a dialogue that takes place between a person of the senior generation or superior status who speaks and a junior who responds, even if only by emitting an *h̄h̄* expression of acknowledgement. In school research, there is therefore a conflict between an academic tradition that conceives of the learner as cognizer-subject and the subject being inquired into as a mere content-bearing object and the Tukanoan conception of learning as an act of knowing that occurs between two subjects who are entangled in kinship relations. For Tukano, adjustments between the interlocutors define the character of the dialogue and the quality of knowledge transmission.

The topics of the research reports written by Yupuri high school students show the perpetuation of gender distinctions that characterizes the Tukanoan system of knowledge. Young men investigate shamanic spells, origin stories, and male ceremonial chants; young women investigate cultivated plants and wild fruits, pottery, body paintings, and female singing. These topics conform to complementary gender specializations. Both males and females research homemade remedies, which are regularly accessed by both men and women. “Knowledgeable people” interviewed by male students are mostly the elder men of their own clan (grandparents, parents, uncles). This is in keeping with the tendency of male knowledge to be transmitted vertically within the clan. Girls interview their mothers and paternal grandmothers who are from other exogamous groups, reinforcing an alternative female

pattern of intergenerational transmission that has a more horizontal and open circulation (C. Hugh-Jones 1979; Emperaire 2014; Strapazzon 2013).

There are a few cases of male students who have left their communities to study or who have identified a specialist in their subject matter outside their clan and left to consult with experts of other clans or exogamous groups. But this requires negotiation; as Vicente explained to me, even though he had tried to make the elders aware of this possibility so that they would accept students of other clans, some were considered “stingy” and imposed limits on knowledge transmission. Finally, there are some girls who research the knowledge of their own fathers.

But less-typical cases of knowledge transmission are not induced by the indigenous school. It is also important to emphasize that flexibility is a feature of Tukanoan knowledge transmission. Despite the tendency toward verticality regarding the most important knowledge, men are always comparing and complementing their knowledge in conversations with men of other clans and their in-laws, and adding to their arsenal during visits or wanderings in other communities or even in the city. Such access to external knowledge entails the establishment of a relation of respect between the learner and the knower. In relation to cross-sex knowledge transmission, there are some kinds of knowledge considered both male and female, such as herbal remedies, even if there are some gendered specificities inside this wide domain. There is also male knowledge accessible by women (such as some histories and shamanic spells) and vice versa (such as recipes or farm techniques), but the opportunity to not only access this knowledge and to put it into practice can be quite rare.

My interlocutors usually say that there is a certain “openness” of knowledge in the indigenous school, especially in the case of pedagogical workshops that can bring together residents of several communities and members of local indigenous associations around the discussion of a common theme presented by “knowledgeable people.” The gatherings I attended or heard about include ISA staffpersons (e.g., anthropologists, agronomists, ecologists), IPOL (Instituto de Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Política Linguística) staffpersons (e.g., a linguist, an educator, and a mathematician), along with other academic experts, such as historians or physicists. A workshop attended by experts from a number of Tukano clans as well as from others groups such as the Desana and Siriana can be cited by of example. At this workshop Vicente affirmed that each of the experts told his version of the origin of the tucum palm tree (*Astrocaryum vulgare*) to discover whether there were differences between them. They discovered that the groups’ versions differed only in some details (e.g., the specific shamanic spell referred to in the myth). Vicente concluded that through this type of meeting “knowledgeable people begin to communicate more and integrate the knowledge, contrary to the ancestors who did not understand that knowledge ‘communicated’.”

Vicente’s comment seems similar to standard occidental intercultural discourse that assumes horizontal interaction between cultures without hierarchies, and that is respectful of diversity and directed toward the resolution of conflicts through dialogue. But these meetings between different clans occur in a universe ruled by exogamy and patrilineal descent that is different from that of a multicultural model dialog. According to Stephen Hugh-Jones (2013:62) inter-clan meetings presents a paradox: “To reproduce themselves, groups must meet and fuse but for this to happen they must also remain separate and distinct.” Pointing to a similarity between the Melanesian and Barasana universes, Hugh-Jones (2013:82–83) affirms: “Ceremonial exchanges are ‘tournaments of value,’ mutual displays where individuals and collectivities activate their names, their wealth and their capacities to impress and influence others who consume and evaluate these performances whilst simultaneously staging their own.” I suggest that school-hosted workshops create new conditions for the reaffirmation of differences between clans in contexts where the ritual practices that created opportunities to reiterate these differences no longer exist. Similar arguments have been made by Cabalzar (2003), Andrello (2010b), and Hugh-Jones (2010, 2019b) in relation to the production of books by Northwest Amazonian clans. In sum, as a specific kind of intercultural exercise, these encounters perpetuate both Tukanoan ways of knowing and relating.

The interest in difference and comparison reflected in the Tukano school’s research activities also extends to research with nonindigenous experts regarding their knowledge. In his recounting of his sponsorship of an astronomy workshop to me, Vicente said that when asked to agree to the presence of a nonindigenous astronomer in the school, he wanted to know whether astronomers were aware that rainfall is the effect of constellations, as his own

father had known to be the case. He said that, for the Tukanoans, constellations have histories of origin. Constellations were beings that lived on earth at the time when the demiurges were creating the conditions for human life and were subsequently, after some conflict, thrown into the sky (see Oliveira 2017). As Vicente explained in a co-authored article (Azevedo et al. 2012:180) he came to understand through comparison with non-Tukano knowledge that “the astronomy of Brazilians is different. I think it’s from Greece, it doesn’t belong to Brazilians, they would have to do research there to understand it better . . . We respect the White astronomy consultant and our elders as knowledgeable teachers. It is an issue of comparing understandings.”

While elders were publicly telling constellation origin stories to the workshop participants, old Feliciano Azevedo told only Jovino Azevedo, his clan mate, the story of the origin of the Tukano and the trajectory of Nahuri Porã clan. Jovino’s father had told him this story when he was close to death, before his son was mature enough to hear it. In front of the women, old men refused to point out the stars that composed the Armadillo (*Pamo*) constellation, since its shape corresponds to the Yuruparí flute, an object prohibited to women. José Azevedo, a shaman with wide knowledge of constellations, later confided the information privately to a male consultant.

As in the case of this astronomy workshop, the majority of the themes covered in thematic workshops were masculine and presented by knowledgeable male elders called to speak before the audience and offering long narratives. Their mouths were full of coca powder, and they drew deeply on cigarettes. These are male substances related to knowledge and learning that circulate among mature, older men, and sometimes among older students.

Janet Chernela (1997:90) points out that the dominant male Wanano ideology associates intellect, leadership, authority to speak in public, and ability to make formal speeches with men. Women, on the other hand, are associated with the body, the senses, speech in intimate environments, and uncontrolled gossip. Despite the predominantly masculine topics, women were attentive at the workshops and expressed themselves in their own discursive forms. Mature women were more engaged during the first days of a workshop, because later they had to continue their work in manioc gardens and prepare manioc bread, pepper and fish stock, as well as White peoples foods, manioc beer, and black and red vegetable dyes to adorn the face and body in preparation for the festivities that mark the termination of the event. However, at a history workshop, women, despite not having made public speeches, burst into ritual tears at the closing party, lamenting the death of the ancients and the persecution that their ancestors suffered at the hands of the Salesians. At another workshop on female and male artifacts, a female specialist showed other women and girls how to produce ceramics, independently of the men, who were working on basketry. And while women lay in their hammocks at night a female specialist recounted for them a version of the origin myth of pottery that differed from a public version narrated earlier by an old man.

Female students participated in the workshops where they took notes of the proceedings, made drawings and presented their research results, albeit timidly. In closing parties, women performed *hadek#* songs, female solidarity greeting lamentations that, in the context of virilocality and linguistic exogamy, mark their status as “other people” (Chernela 2003). Students usually composed these laments by writing them on paper. These performances constituted moments of feminine public exposure and evaluation by the audience, who usually made comments about their voice quality, rhythm, and their song compositions. During manioc feasts I witnessed, women suddenly sang these laments, addressing their sisters-in-law, or even me, making an analogy between their condition and mine, as a White woman who was far from family, and asking me to teach the knowledge of the White people.

Thus, in spite of its apparently homogeneously public character different levels of knowledge circulated through distinct logics in these workshops: clan knowledge revealed from the elder to the younger, gender-restricted knowledge, and open knowledge compared by experts from different exogamous groups, as well as with White peoples’ experts. The experience of transmission and circulation of knowledge in indigenous schools thus represents a renewal of the complex interplay between Tukanoan secrecy and revelation, cover-up and exhibition, which applies to wealth, names, objects, and knowledge (Hugh-Jones 2002; F. Cabalzar 2010).

There are important rules regarding the registration and publication of knowledge. Certain kinds of knowledge are considered powerful or malevolent and are thus carefully guarded.

This point became clear when Vicente explained that each group's versions of the spells performed at childbirth are identical and that such knowledge should be recorded and published. On the other hand, it is forbidden to publish evil and/or strong spells or recipes for herbal medicine. These should remain only in the minds of wise men to be passed on to their sons.

In fact, even when knowledge is recorded it does not circulate very much, usually staying in the student's own house or in some improvised library in the community that is sparsely consulted. Leaders will even attempt to control the circulation of the registered knowledge in Tukano language once it takes the form of books produced with the support of FOIRN and ISA distributing the volumes that arrive in their communities preferentially to their own kin and to a select circle of others who they respect and trust.

In any case, that knowledge is recorded and available does not guarantee that it will be effective, since this requires a bodily incorporation process (Carneiro da Cunha 2014:14). As George Mentore and Fernando Santos-Granero (2006:4) state with regards to indigenous Amazonian knowledge more generally, "This is true even in those cases in which meaningful knowledge is conceived of as being attainable only through the agency of noncorporeal dimensions of self." For Tukanoans, beyond its recitation or practice knowledge can only be experienced with a body prepared through shamanism, sexual abstinence, dietary restrictions, and in some cases, with the application of face and body paintings and the use of ritual substances like tobacco, coca powder, and a hallucinogenic beverage (*kałpi*, made from *Banisteriopsis caapi*).

So if the Western school, in its democratic appeal to a universal and equal circulation of knowledge, treats different people as equals, reproducing in this way economic and social inequalities (Bourdieu 1999), in the Tukanoan indigenous school mechanisms of hierarchical differentiation are kept in place, therefore controlling the transmission of knowledge within and between clans and genders, and preventing the open circulation of powerful and dangerous knowledge.

Bue and Mahsĩ

Flora Cabalzar (2010:80, my translation) writes of how the old Tuyuka Mandu affirms that "children and grandchildren know only parts, only half of what their grandparents knew." According to Flora Cabalzar, this reveals a "conception of the power of knowledge that becomes relatively smaller in each successive generation." Additionally, she writes that the Tuyuka usually say: "In the future we will all be *buri nirã* [ordinary people, without knowledge/important values, possibly despised for it] There will be no knowledgeable people (*masirã*) left, the last in existence will die." The author also presents the speech of Higino Tenório, the founder of the Tukuya School: "Soon we will be only *buerapona*, children of the ones that have studied." Higino goes on to predict that in the future, membership (*ponã*) or lines will be connected to the circulation of knowledge between students' children (*buerapona*) instead of children of knowledgeable people. My assessment is that Higino's words point out that knowledge is being transmitted and accessed nowadays through "study" (*buese*) rather than "knowledge" (*mahsĩse*) processes. This implies that the kind of persons being formed are "students" rather than "knowledgeable people."

If "students," people who know how to read and speak Portuguese, have more chance of becoming professors and leaders, and in a new sense, become "respected people," in the strict sense—when compared to knowledgeable people—most students would be treated as just ordinary people. This does not exclude the possibility that some students also become "knowledgeable," like one old shaman who attended boarding school; the tendency is that the more one specializes in and devotes time to the activity of study, becoming a teacher or even a university student, the less time is devoted to capturing "important knowledge," and the less likely a person is to be "respected" as "knowledgeable." If at times the categories overlap, in the end they represent divergent paths. Many men who have acted as teachers for decades have decided to move away from the profession, desiring time to devote themselves to farming, fishing, and spells.

However, Andreello and Tatiana Amaral Ferreira (2014:55) point to affinities between the effects of recent knowledge and the patrimonialization of intangible goods, and the effects of the use of ceremonial ornaments, stating that both have the potential to trigger knowledge

processes. As we have seen, many Tukanoan knowledge practices are perpetuated in the research carried out at indigenous schools. This is clear in the introduction to the senior paper of a Yupuri student, where he affirms that students (*buerã*) are those who approach knowledgeable elders ([Tukano] *mahsirã*), look (*iña*), ask (*seritiña*), listen (*#o*) to what they say, capture by listening (*#oñe*, *#omi*) what they have in thought (*#oñase*)¹⁸ and memorize and copy (*ki*) what they *do*. All these verbs points to actions that are central in the Tukanoan system of knowledge (Oliveira 2016:384). But he also states that the students are those who register on paper, write (*boa*), draw (*boadare*), and photograph (*iña mi*). He distinguishes them from ancient people who did not record knowledge and had everything “in their thoughts,” and affirms that what he offers through writing is only part of the elders’ thoughts and knowledge.

Justino Sarmiento Rezende (2007:143), a Tuyuka educator, points out that the Tuyuka teach by “showing-living-speaking” and learn by “seeing-practicing-listening.” This occurs in everyday family and community settings and at feasts, when stories are told and heard and work is shown, thought about, and performed. The Yupuri student’s account reveals that research in indigenous schools involves practices related both to the conceptual horizons of “knowledge” and “study,” and even though he clearly distinguishes between these practices to address the latter, he invokes analogies with the former.

The Tukanoan processes of recording knowledge brings us quickly to Stephen Hugh-Jones’s argument (Hugh-Jones 2019b:137) that “The effects of schooling and the attractions of urban life mean cultural transmission based on memory alone is no longer reliable.” Thus, paper and writing are taken up as “adjuncts to memory” so that “one reason for recording traditional knowledge in books is precisely to prevent its loss” (*ibid.*).

My interlocutors justify the need to write and record by the fact that they no longer prepare their bodies to properly access and memorize knowledge through listening. They fail to perform everyday self-care practices such as bathing and vomiting early in the morning or breathing hot pepper, and they do not attend male initiation ceremonies or dabucuri rituals (see below) where their ancestors used to consume a hallucinogenic beverage, a powerful knowledge substance. However, they also consider writing to be an incomplete method of learning, and distinguish knowledgeable people who know everything “in their thoughts” from those who resort to written and recorded formulas. In fact, recording on paper is sometimes treated as an initial phase of learning; over time, people may manage to detach themselves from the records and “blow spells” without reading them. This shows that for today’s adults and young students, recording in notebooks does not have the effect of fixing knowledge in its entirety, or of replacing the complex processes of knowledge transmission. Rather, it enters into an array of codes and signs that composes a wider technique of memory.

By analyzing the relationships between different modes of speech and music (oral traditions) and various forms of iconography in Arawak and Tukanoan groups, Hugh-Jones (2012; 2016) points to a continuity between more traditional forms of “writing” or memory systems such as petroglyphs, house paintings, and basketry and the current production of books, maps, and indigenous calendars. He argues that although these processes seem recent, they are in fact old, because they are being produced in collaboration with knowledgeable elders and reproduce forms of knowledge that existed before the arrival of foreigners and the advent of missionary education. Hugh-Jones also stresses that in different indigenous languages of the region, the words for drawings made by people and for marks and patterns present in the bodies of animals are also applied to writing, and that Rio Negro people have “a sophisticated understanding of what writing is and does” (2012:140).

As many researchers have stressed, Tukanoan people consider reading and writing a kind of White peoples’ shamanism and a capacity that White people have from birth (Lasmar 2009; Rocha 2012; Mahecha Rubio 2004). Among the Nãhuri and Hausirõ Porã, researching and recording knowledge is an experiment in stabilizing relations with White people and accessing their shamanic powers and enhancing the transmission of their own knowledge through these acquired powers. Being powerful, writing is also dangerous. When a teacher’s son is born, before the parent returns to work after the couvade period, spells must be performed to ward off the colors, shapes, and designs of letters on the board and in the books handled by the parent in the classroom, since they are associated by analogy to those displayed by men in hallucinogenic visions, which might frighten children and cause disease.

In sum, with schooling, “respect” has been extended to people who master White peoples’ knowledge, and although some Tukanoan have the pessimistic idea that the maloca-escola is

training only “students” rather than “knowledgeable” persons, I have shown that students’ research entails both “study” and “knowledge” processes. Besides, it seems wrong headed to polarize the two categories since the Tukano continually establish analogies between these modes of producing, memorizing, and transmitting knowledge, and especially between writing and shamanism.

Food-giving House: Graduations as Contemporary Ceremonies

The graduation moment relates to more than the culminating endpoint of daily school life. It condenses several ritualized relations that formerly were expressed differently. It is an event in which the school-longhouse performs in a more explicit way its potential as “Food-giving House” as described by Hugh-Jones (1995:237). Graduation is an ambiguous contemporary ceremony which principally serves to confer diplomas on young men and women and brings together people and groups as members of the Yupuri School. While it “consanguinizes” distinct peoples, it is also the stage for the production and reinforcement of differences within and between groups—Tukano clans and Tukanoan exogamous groups (Desana, Tuyuka, Siriana, Miriti-Tapuya), Nadahup groups (Hupdë and Yuhupdë)—and in establishing political power in relation to White people.

Graduation consists of a rite that marks an important stage in the contemporary life cycle. It is the main ritual moment in which young men and women are introduced to society as people with enough knowledge to perform certain kinds of work, marry, and have children—a life stage that has been increasingly postponed due to schooling to a more advanced age. In this sense, it converges with intergroup Tukanoan celebrations, or social dances, that used to follow the feasting and learning period of male initiation, during which the missing female element was restored to the life of the initiate and the resumption of normal meals was marked (Hugh-Jones 1995:244). Among the Barasana, everyone wished to attend these popular dances that were compared to the fiestas held in Catholic mission stations. At this feast, neophytes danced, offered basketry to men and women that they had crafted during initiation, and manioc bread was distributed to all the participants (S. Hugh-Jones 1979:94–100). Graduation is also compared by Tukano and Desana women to the social dances that were organized soon after a girl left the fasting and learning period of menstrual seclusion. At these feasts, the young women prepared manioc beer for the first time and offered it to her affines as a sign of her availability to marry (Oliveira 2016).

In another sense, by promoting the gathering of different clans and affinal groups in the longhouse to carry out a celebration that involves a huge circulation of people, food and drink, objects (artifacts and commodities), narratives, songs, and dances, the graduation ceremony produces, or restores, types of relationships produced in large food exchange rituals called dabucuris. These were ceremonies took place at a longhouse during which guests provided male-provisioned smoked fish or meat and hosts provided female-prepared manioc beer and manioc bread. Guests perform their dances followed by the hosts’ performances, and the mood flows from formality to informality, affinity to consanguinity, culminating in a communal meal (Hugh-Jones 1995). Tukanoan exchange ceremonies produced fusion but also difference, consisting in “tournaments of value” or mutual displays (see above p. 160 and Hugh Jones 2013:82–3).

The graduation of students is one of the main moments when residents of each community that make up the Tukano Yupuri School gather to celebrate. Before the ceremony, the hosts, who consist overwhelmingly of community dwellers (captains, coordinators, teachers and their wives, some graduates, and their parents), collaborate to guarantee its success. They clean the community surroundings, renovate the longhouse, produce local food and manioc beer; raise contributions from students’ families, the government, and FOIRN and ISA for White peoples’ food and drink and fuel for transport. They send invitations to students’ relatives, AETIY members, FOIRN and other Tiquié indigenous associations leaders, employees of the municipal education and health departments, and ISA professionals. They contact the priest who will celebrate mass and organize accommodations for the guests. The size of the contingent of guests present at the feast is a sign of the status of the school association and the Food-giving House. It is recognition of the “work” conducted by community and school leaders and their ability to bring allies together. As the guests arrive, they are greeted by the leaders, shown their accommodations, and invited to join the

celebration in the school-longhouse, where men and women sit on opposite sides in kin groupings.

One graduation rite at the Yupuri School especially caught my attention because one of its organizers announced: “The first day will be about our knowledge, and the second day about the White peoples’ knowledge.” With reference to the sequence of graduation ceremony events, I understood that by “our knowledge” they were referring to innovative patterns of dialogue between indigenous and nonindigenous knowledge: indigenous research, valorization of local food, language, songs, dances, and forms of entertainments. By “knowledge of White people,” they were referring to conventional school graduation procedures: the choice of godparents, the celebration of mass, the presentation of diplomas, and the consumption of White peoples’ food, drink, music, and dance.

At “their knowledge” day, the graduates exhibited their research, which was presented as a gift offered to the scholarly community. This involved a verbal performance that reaffirmed the student as a male or female member of a clan or clan segment, reinforced intraclan transmission mechanisms, and was also another way for the members of each clan to display names and knowledge, demarcating differences in relation to other Tukano clans and Tukanoan exogamous groups.

At night, the graduates and some members of the host community performed *hãdeku* songs, pan-pipe dances (*wẽd̃pa* [Tukano], *carĩyo* [Nheengatu]), theatrical skits, and jokes. But the highlight was their performance of the *kahpiwaia* dances, also called “elders’ dances” (*bãhkeãrã babsa*). They were specially dressed and adorned for these: foregoing their usual t-shirts men wore shorts, seeds necklaces with animal teeth pendants, feather headdresses and anklet rattles, and women wore skirts or dresses, bead necklaces, and flowers in their hair; both men and women were painted with red pigment on their faces and black pigment on their bodies.

The Tukanoan groups of the middle stretch of the Tiquié no longer have a palm-leaf box containing male feather headdresses as do many longhouses in Northwest Amazonia and they have stopped performing ceremonies related to the annual cycle long ago, due to what they say was a combination of missionary persecution and their own decision to abandon them (*koa-*, lit., “throw away”) and forget (*wakuti-*, lit., “not to remember”). Ñahuri and Hausirõ Porã men affirm that nowadays they know only fragmentary part of the dances that were a fundamental part of the old dabucuris. However, during graduation a major concern is the presentation of *kahpiwaia* dances by the graduates and teachers, and guests, who also have the opportunity to perform dances.

Rehearsals for these dance performances can last for days, or rather, nights. Prior to one of the graduation feasts I witnessed, Clemente and José, men of the two partner clans, Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã, devoted themselves to showing (*iñõ*) the students how to dance the elders dances. Miguel, the old chief, oversaw the rehearsals and explained that in the old days, a Hausirõ baya danced with his Ñahuri companion. As the rehearsals progressed, the two companions invited Oribe, an expert in Tukanoan ritual dance, to help them teach the students. Miguel’s son’s father-in-law, Oribe was a Siriana Colombian man married with a Tukano woman and lived nearby. He helped teach the male students and interested fathers how to dance certain types of elders dances and how to prepare dance ornaments. The song lyrics, chanted in an archaic and unknown prehuman language of birds, were written on the blackboard and then read, sung, and recorded by young male students. Female students were taught to join the male dancers at the right time and to perform the dance steps. Hausirõ and Ñahuri leaders each sought to give prominent roles to young men and women of their own clans. During the graduates’ performances, Miguel, Clemente, and José, at times, rose up from their seats and issued instructions to the students, encouraging them to make the dance moves properly.

Although representing only a fragmentary version of the dances, the Tukano saw these school performances as part of a process of acquisition of “important knowledge” by youth for which it was necessary to prepare the body through shamanic spells and food and behavioral restrictions. Vicente explained how the young woman who would chant inside the elders’ dance circle (*yuhũgo*) was chosen. The AETTY leaders asked for Soporì Bua and Bote Purì Bua women to prepare manioc beer and asked several girls to demonstrate their singing abilities Vicente’s niece was judged to be the best singer because she had a “clean voice” and a bigger breath than other contestants. A shaman cast a spell to endow her body-soul the capacities of a chanter and recommended that she should be abstinent because they “were

already entering the culture, so they had to follow the rules. Then we can listen to her from afar during the dances.”

In preparation for the graduation dances, some Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã leaders noticed that students’ learning experiences through school were not enough for the formation of “knowledgeable” Tukano persons, and so they began to arrange to send students to deepen their learning with dance experts: the Yeba mahsã (Makuna) of the upper Castanha River stream region with whom their ancestors maintained a long-standing relationship of ritual exchanges, and with the Tuyuka of the upper Tiquié, who had previously restarted their ceremonies. But, although some young people were interested, the leaders were also hesitant to send them, arguing that such processes required seriousness and entailed risks, especially those related to the intake of hallucinogens and the need for abstinence in order not to get sick. Here we can see both the limits of the transmission of “important knowledge” in the “study” sphere and the risks to the person/body formed in a school environment run by whoever decides to venture into the depth of important knowledge related to the horizon of mahsãise.

During the day dedicated to the “knowledge of White people” the pupils presented themselves in a different fashion from the previous day. They were perfectly attired in “White peoples dress”: white clothes and suit trousers, hair combed with gel, black shoes. They thereby assumed another aspect of their personhood, that which related to the bue horizon.¹⁹ A local catechist celebrated the graduation ceremony mass, and while the offertory was conducted, the graduates offered smoked fish, bananas, books. Each graduate chose a “grandfather” or “grandmother,” usually among their teachers, from whom they received their diploma and to whom they offered a gift, made by themselves as a kind of acknowledgment of his or her contribution to their education.

But one of the most anticipated moments of the graduation ceremony was the great meal, prepared by the host women from various foods provided by the graduates’ parents. A large table suitably decorated with pottery and flowers offered an array of several dishes containing a mixture of several kinds of White peoples food prepared for the graduates and their parents. Such a choice of cuisine is very interesting if we consider that the Tukanoan associate the consumption of White peoples food with the acquisition of White peoples’ knowledge (Mahecha Rubio 2004; Oliveira 2016). After the graduates and their parents took their place at the table and started eating, the rest of the food, which had been stored in large pots and pans, was served to the other participants, who formed a long, ordered queue from youngest to the oldest. From the moment they gathered to eat together, people and groups began to mix, and the mood became more familiar and festive.

This was just the beginning of the party that would continue with the offering and consumption of drinks and performance of dances in the afternoon. While the male graduates offered small gifts of bottles of industrialized beverages purchased by their parents to the participants, the female graduates offered manioc beer they had prepared themselves. Following this, a line of female community members and the mothers of graduates offered large amounts of their homemade manioc beer to the participants. The dancing phase opened with the “*cariço* of graduates,” followed by the “*forró* of graduates” and the “*forró* of parents,” the former being the aforementioned pan-pipe dance, while the latter is a dance from Brazil’s Northeast that is also typical of the Brazilian Northern backlands. After that, groups composed of male students and teachers from each clan or community took turns performing other pan-pipe dances. After this, recorded music was played over loudspeakers, and all the participants were invited to dance their favourite rhythms, among them, *forró*, *cuximawara*, a popular indigenous musical genre from Northwest Amazonia, calypso from the Northern state of Pará, Amazonian region and some other new dances introduced by the younger people. As inebriation increased, reserve between different groups and genders dissipated, people got joyful (*ekatirã*) and closer, and the dances, conversations, and laughs became more animated. The party that continued until dawn allowed for the exchange of male and female knowledge, gossip, jokes, and also for flirting and sexual intercourse.

Finally, as in the old initiation and food exchanging rites (S. Hugh-Jones 1979; F. Cabalzar 2005; A. Cabalzar 2010), the timing of graduation is also linked to seasonal cycles but with the introduction of new sorts of seasonal markers. As one of the main intergroup ceremonies currently held on the middle Tiquié River, graduation is an important marker in the life cycle of a person. It demarcates the end of the period of study and work organized by the indigenous

associations. It also opens the major holiday period when families spend more time taking care of their own activities in their communities and visiting relatives nearby or in the city, where they also go shopping, attend to needed paperwork connected with government agencies, banks and commerce, and eat chicken, drink beer, and have fun.

Final Considerations

The disintegration of the longhouse produced and was the product of the following important transformations: 1) a material-spatial fragmentation of life into several new kinds of houses, including the school; 2) the division of the leadership into a multiplicity of leaders, each with a corresponding house; 3) an extension of the concept of ceremonial clan goods to include White peoples' objects, such as the books produced by indigenous groups (Hugh-Jones 2010, 2019b; Andrello 2010b); 4) the coexistence of "knowledge" and "study"; 5) and the extension of the conceptual distinction between "respected" (high ranked clan/knowledgeable) and "ordinary" persons to address the differences between new literate leaders and others.

The construction of longhouses in the context of cultural policies developed by indigenous associations in the Upper Rio Negro reveals their powerful symbolism and practical contemporary relevance. The longhouse of today is essential for the promotion of relations between people and groups and circulation of narratives, songs and dances, objects and food. Among the Ñahuri and Hausirō Porã and their neighbors living on the middle Tiquié River, a region where wise elders, leaders, other adults, young people, and children constitute successive "generations of those who studied," this process took shape through the construction of a hybrid building, the longhouse-school. This kind of conceptualization was only possible due to the existing transformational and ambiguous nature of the longhouse, aptly summarized by Stephen Hugh-Jones (1995:232): "A big maloca which holds many people is called 'dance house' (*basaria wii*) and dance-feasts are called 'houses', the pretext of the dance qualifying the 'house' in question; by metonymy, 'house' also refers to the people gathered inside."

The old maloca is sometimes referred by my interlocutors as *mabs̄rivii*, house of knowledge. It points to an analogy between the maloca and the *buerivii*, house of study, which probably underpins the concept of *maloca-escola*, a hybrid form, which brings together Indigenous and White peoples' knowledge. In this way the longhouse continues to be the site for the production of relations between people and groups and the circulation of knowledge and other valuables, but this is done in a manner congruent with a school setting. Residents and outsiders, consanguines and affines are also parents, students, coordinators, teachers, and wise elders. Graduations and workshops provide the occasions for ceremony. And the knowledge generated through research is captured in recordings and writing.

As Dominique Gallois (2014:512, my translation) affirms: "The most interesting effect of the appropriation of culture—not only in the context of the school—is that it promotes politics, that is, relations." Through experiences of recording knowledge and the hosting of meetings and feasts, the longhouse-school has become a focus of the development of new ways of producing descent and alliance relations within and between clans, intergenerationally, across same-sex and cross-sex lines, between in-laws, and with White people that are constitutive of contemporary Tukanoan house societies.

Objectifying and performing knowledge transmission through research, book publishing, workshops, and graduation feasts constitutes a way to deepen relations with White people and to access their knowledge and objects. It is an experiment with alternative modes of knowledge transmission, one that both reproduces and transforms its character. It also creates new possibilities for the affirmation of narratives and the objectification of valuables within and between clans or exogamous groups (Cabalzar 2003; Andrello 2010b; Hugh-Jones 2010, 2019b). The insertion of such knowledge within a wider circulation network is achieved by means of the Tukanoan logic that combines the concealment and display of wealth (F. Cabalzar 2010; Hugh-Jones 2002) and therefore requires caution.

However, some Hausirō Porã and Ñahuri Porã do regret that the longhouse-school is very different from the old longhouses. Such regrets can make them sensitive to criticisms directed at them from other Tukanoans regarding their innovation. On the occasion of his overnight visit from his indigenous association to the Tukano an elderly Barasana shaman from the Pirá Paraná told local leaders that he dreamt that there were many forms of interference in their

longhouse because they were carrying out activities that were not in accord with the lives of the ancients. By way of response, a Tukano leader commented that they had the idea of building a new longhouse on the other side of the river in a more secluded place to be used only for ceremonies. A few years have passed, and this has not yet happened. This suggests that the kind of purity demanded by the Barasana shaman is not really a priority for the Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã, who seem more interested in exploring the ambiguous or hybrid potentials that the longhouse assumes in its transformation into a longhouse-school.

After years of experimentation, Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã leaders manifest a certain pessimism regarding the effectiveness of the longhouse-school and of indigenous research to cultivate wise persons endowed with important knowledge. In professing this view they assume a regretful tone characteristic of Tukanoan accounts of social transformation (Hugh-Jones 1994; Goldman 2004; F. Cabalzar 2010). The formation of such persons would entail bodily transformations and ritual knowledge and “education” would need to be broadened to include daily self-care practices, the conduct of rituals, and rigorous food and behavioral restrictions. This is a challenge the Hausirõ and Ñahuri Porã seem to dodge, not because they deny its importance, but because, advised by their elders, they consider that because they are of the “generation of those who study,” and are also “sons of those who studied,” they don’t have the bodies, knowledge, objects, or relationships that would enable them to practice more rigorous self-care and restrictions in a complete and controlled way. Any attempt in this direction would run great risks. But despite these reservations Tukano usually demonstrate some satisfaction with their hybrid experiment that has become central to the production of persons, groups, knowledge, and relations suited to their contemporary lives.

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Notes

¹ Tukanoan refers to the Eastern Tukanoan language family, which is composed of nineteen exogamous groups: Tukano, Tuyuka, Kubeo, Desana, Uanano Pira-Tapuya, Bará, Barasana, Makuna, Tatuyo, Taiwano, Karapanã, Siriano, Yuruti, Miriti-Tapuya, Arapaso, Letuama, Pisámira, and Tanimuka (Cabalzar 2008:36). Each exogamous group is composed of a set of agnate clans hierarchically classified as major or minor or elder or younger in relation to each other. Throughout this article I use Tukanoan to refer to the groups that compose the language family and Tukano to refer to one of these exogamous groups.

² The indigenous concepts derived from my fieldwork experience are here presented in Tukano language, with the spelling adopted by AEITY, except in the case where I refer to another language, such as Nheengatu. When I refer to Tukanoan concepts mentioned by another author's works, they may be presented in Tukano (Geraldo Andreello, Henri Ramirez) or another Tukanoan Language: Barasana (Stephen Hugh-Jones), or Tuyuka (Flora Cabalzar).

³ Literally, “sons of Nãhuri,” “sons of Hausirõ,” where *porã* means sons. Generally, the name of a Tukanoan clan is given after the common ancestor of the men who compose the clan.

⁴ “Branços” (White people) is the generic mode by which the Tukanoans refer in Portuguese to several categories of nonindigenous peoples. The word used in Tukano is *pebkasã* (shotgun people), a term that carries mythical connotations (see Andreello 2004:45).

⁵ Fish stock with pepper eaten with manioc bread is the main local food and gives its name to communal meals.

⁶ An Indigenous Association is formally constituted and may be legally recognized and have non-profit NGO status. The association works toward common goals and provides services to communities in which it has a presence (see Andrade et al, 2002:9).

⁷ As of 1914, Salesian missions began to be installed at strategic points of the upper Rio Negro River: São Gabriel da Cachoeira, 1914; Taracua (Uaupés River), 1923; Iauaretê (Uaupés River), 1929; Pari Cachoeira (Tiquié River), 1940; Santa Izabel (middle Rio Negro River), 1942; and Assunção do Içana (Içana River), 1952 (Cabalzar and Ricardo, 2006, p. 93). At the time of the Salesians' arrival, the populations of the upper Rio Negro were at the mercy of Colombian and Brazilian traders and were subjected to the patronage debt system. Salesian missionaries “came to dominate the scenario of relations between Indigenous and White people in the Uaupés basin, with official endorsement and public funds that allowed them to build an efficient civilizing company” (Cabalzar 2008:45, my translation).

⁸ Equivalent to *nirõ kahse* in Tukano, translated by my interlocutors as “important things.”

⁹ My Tukano interlocutors usually contrast “ordinary people” (*mbeo nigã*) and “respected people” (*ehopeogã*).

¹⁰ Respect is the English translation I adopt for the Portuguese word “consideração” rendered by Tukano *Ehopeose*. that is used in relation to the performative aspects of clan ranking and groups' and experts' prestige. According to Ramirez (1997:55, my translation), *Ebó-to*: become, to regard, to term, to refer; *Ebo peó*: to believe, to entrust. According to Andreello (2020:231, my translation), “*ehopeosebé* is a term whose root (*ebó* or *ebã*) means both to breathe and to convert.” Andreello (2016:76, my translation) points out that among the Tukano, respect relations engender the “correct mode of treatment between persons and groups” (Andreello 2016:76, my translation). For further elaboration of this concept, see Andreello 2020. I am grateful to Andreello for conversations regarding this concept, one that continues to call for more investigation.

¹¹ *Bue* is probably derived from the Amazonian Lengua Geral, Nheengatu. The Guarani-based language was introduced to the upper Rio Negro in the eighteenth century by Carmelite and Jesuits missionaries and used as a lingua franca until the twentieth. *Bue* referred to the Salesian educational system (Navarro 2011; Ramirez 1997). Therefore, the term used for educational institutions by the Tukanoan, *Buerivii*, is composed of words of two languages: *Bue* (“learn and teach” in Nheengatu) + *ri* verbal suffix nominalization + *vii* (“house”) in Tukano (Ramirez 1997).

¹² I thank Rivelino Barreto, Tukano anthropologist, for calling my attention to this expression.

¹³ Even with the extinction of the boarding schools in the 1980s, the schools based in the Missionary centers continued to be managed by the Salesians through an agreement between the state department of education and the Diocese of São Gabriel da Cachoeira in 1970. (Albuquerque 2007:172, 175). In the beginning of the 2000s they were classified as Indigenous

Schools by the Ministry of Education. Later the primary schools started to be managed by the municipality and a couple of years ago the Salesians stepped away from any role in the administration of the Missionary schools, which began to be managed by the state government.

¹⁴ On NIRN, see Andrello (2010b) and S. Hugh-Jones (2010, 2019b).

¹⁵ *Bahpatise*, companionship (Port. *companheirismo*), is a central notion in some Tukanoan social relationships and designates the relationship between dialogical pairs in the context of economical activities, trips, rituals and war (see Oliveira, 2016, 2017). It can be used even with regard to relationships between nonhumans. At the level of individual relationships, it has a same-sex character and involves an invitation. At the level of groups, it concerns the relationship between clans of the same exogamous group that share trajectories (see Oliveira 2016, Andrello 2020), such as the case of clan cooperation around the school highlighted in this article. This relationship always involves an invitation. I am grateful to the Tukano anthropologist Dagoberto Azevedo for calling my attention to several aspects of this concept, especially regarding the need for an invitation.

¹⁶ Among the Makuna, the prospect of a local school was the main incentive for the formation of communities since these are conceived as places where children can be protected, supervised and provided with a formal education (Arhem 2000:82).

¹⁷ However, among elders there is discomfort in enunciating one's own personal name, which used to be taboo from the time a young man reached puberty. One of the reasons for the taboo is that access to one's spirit names allows the execution of evil shamanism. Even today's youth never use these names to refer to a person or to address them; Brazilian names or kinship terms are used instead.

¹⁸ Andrello (2004) highlights the Tukano concept of *ti'ó yã'a* (i.e., "hear" + "look" = perceive, think, feel). Luís Cayón (2010) affirms that in Makuna *tuôĩãre* combines the senses of sight and hearing and defines an overall capacity of apprehension and cognition beyond the sensitive. Stephen Hugh-Jones (2019a) relates sound to Yuruparí flutes and vision to hallucinogenic beverages, adding to this concept a deep cosmological meaning.

¹⁹ Consider the importance of clothes in the composition of Tukanoan personhood and its transformational quality (Andrello 2006).

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