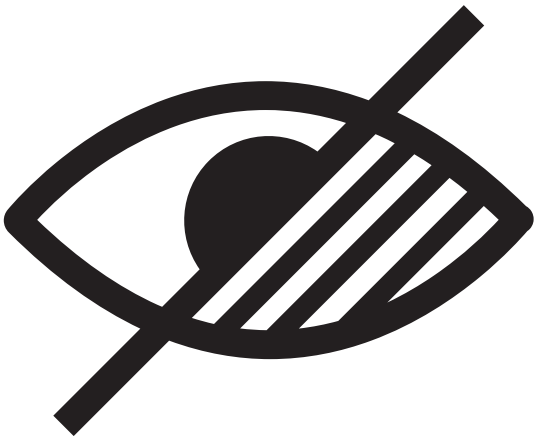
An Austrian
Mosaic of Brazil

22

Exhibition texts in large format



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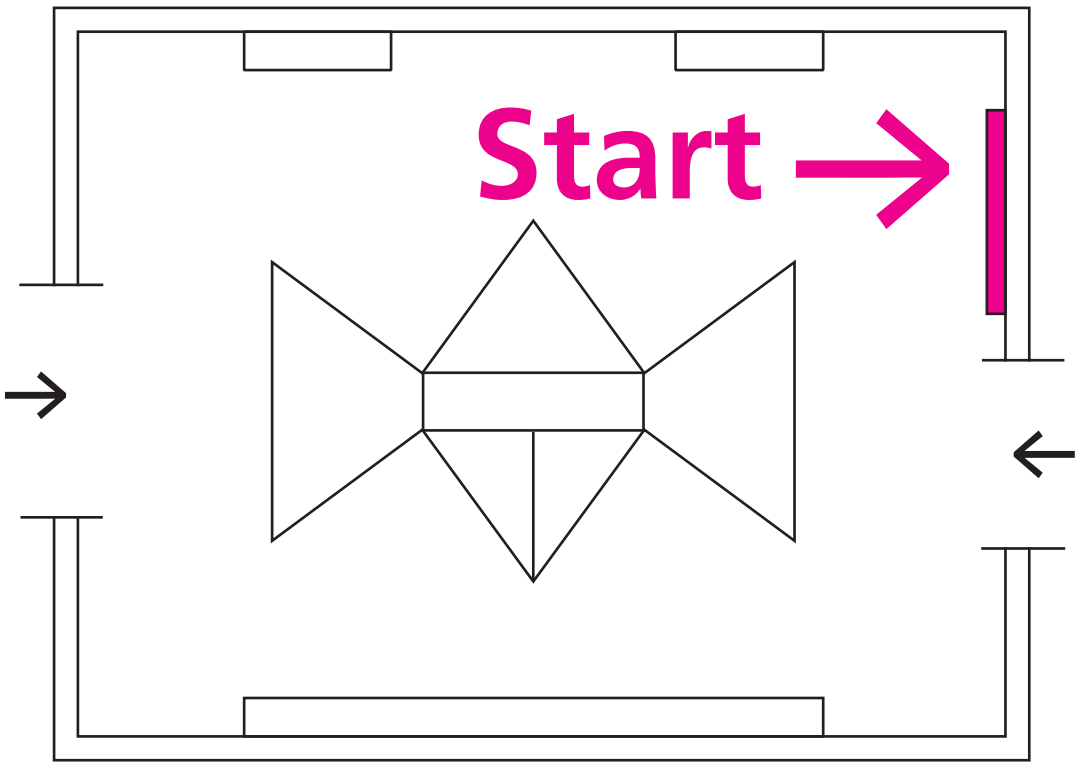
We hope you enjoy your visit to the Weltmuseum Wien!

Vienna, December 2024

Room 22



An Austrian Mosaic of Brazil

The foreign policy of the House of Habsburg was characterised by its expansion of power through marriage alliances. In 1817, Austrian Emperor Francis I sent his daughter, Archduchess Leopoldine, to Brazil: still terra incognita for Europeans at that time. A scientific expedition joined Leopoldine across the Atlantic to study the country's people, flora, and fauna. Brazil immediately cast a spell on zoologist Johann Natterer who stayed for 18 years and sent an extensive ethnographic collection to Vienna. Austrian scientists, diplomats, travellers, and museum staff have been expanding this collection ever since.

The exhibited objects relate, in fragmentary fashion, to creation myths, the rise and fall of Amerindian cultures in colonial times, and first contacts with all their catastrophic consequences. They are told from many different perspectives: naturalists of the 19th century, scientists of the 20th and 21st centuries,

and by indigenous people themselves. All of these voices speak the language of their time, culture, and individual personality: a language we sometimes may not immediately understand.

Blind Spot

The Brazilian collections feature a blind spot: there are hardly any objects of those who were once abducted from Africa, transported to the Americas and enslaved in Brazil. As they were uprooted and dislocated by force. African slaves were denied their culture, heritage and history in the New World. At first nothing changed even when slavery was abolished in 1888. Shaped by African, Brazilian and Amerindian elements, the diverse cultures of Afro-Brazilians did not correspond to the ideal of enduring and timeless “native peoples”. This perception only altered as late as the 20th century when people began realising that every single culture in the world was always subject to dynamic change.

A marriage, presumably of Archduchess Leopoldine
Johann Baptist Hoechle, 1818 © ÖNB/Wien, PK502-13

“Fortune is kind to me! Pedro de Bragança is my chosen one!”
“This portrait still makes me nearly beside myself. All day I stand before him and cannot turn away. Pedro is as handsome as Adonis himself.”

From letters to her sister Louise

Empress Maria Leopoldine of Brazil with her children
Domenico Failutti, 1821
© Collection of the Museu Paulista da USP,
Photo: José Rosael da Silva /Helio Nobre

Archduchess Leopoldine (1797–1826)
Josef Kreutzinger, Anfang 19. Jahrhundert © KHM, Gemäldegalerie

“My consort is of kind heart, though patience is at need. This unexperienced virtue is now granted by heaven itself. Everything is possible, if prudence and caution guide my way.”

From a letter to her sister Louise

“Brazil! You know I have always been intrigued by the New World and said I would go there when I was still a child. Finally, I will be able to hone my nature studies, as Brazil is home to a great variety and abundance of minerals.”

From a letter to her sister Louise

Marriage between Archduchess Leopoldine of Austria and Crown Prince Dom Pedro of Brazil and Portugal. Anno 1817.
Aus den Vaterländischen Immortellen von Anton Ziegler, 1840 © ÖNB/Wien 29.M.19. (Vol. 4)

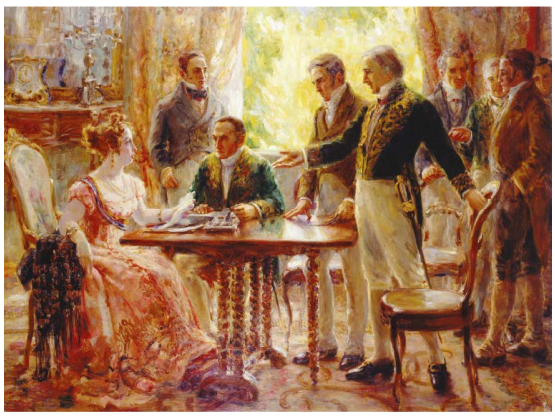
Funeral procession for Leopoldine
Jean-Baptiste Debret, 1826
© Museus Castro Maya/ IBRAM/MinC, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Photo: Horst Merkel

“I believe it is my duty to entrust myself to your fatherly prayers. My exceptionally weak condition, due to my recent pregnancy, in its third month, makes my request more urgent than ever that you, Sir, beseech the almighty Lord on my behalf.”

From a letter to her father

“Dearest Louise, my family is truly blessed, as I have given birth to a son. […] Our children are endearing. When we are at home, we have no other occupation but to hold them in our arms one after the other.”

From a letter to her sister Louise

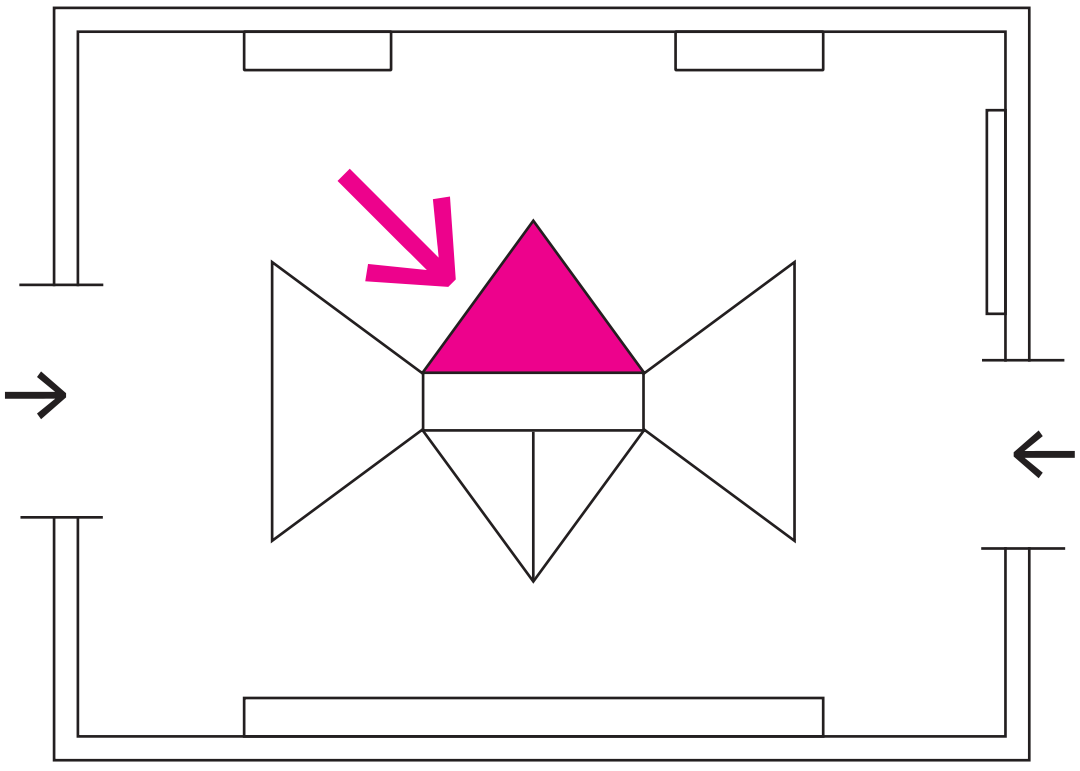


Senate of Brazil: Session on 2 August 1822.
In support of independence.
Georgina de Albuquerque, 1822 © Museu Histórico Nacional Rio de Janeiro,
Photo: Romulo Fialdini / Tempo Composto

“Brazil is like a volcano. The Portuguese parliament orders your immediate departure, threatens and humiliates you. The State Council asks you to stay. Brazil demands you as their monarch. The apple is ripe, pluck it.”

From a letter to Dom Pedro

Room 22



The Brazilian Collections: History, Strategies and Narratives

It is the history behind our collections that reveals how the perception of and approach to Brazil's Amerindian population has changed. As the collectors' personality as well as the time they live in affect their choices, their selection is never based on objective criteria but on preconceived notions, theories and intentions or coincidences. Such selection might not always be qualified to tell us something about the people from whom the objects originate but it certainly can tell us something about our concept of the Other and ourselves.
Our collections are still growing thanks to gifts and acquisitions. Folk culture and Afro-Brazilian cultures are also represented. Historical collections are supplemented by contemporary objects. This is how narratives of cultural change and continuity become possible. Our cooperation with researchers who have been working with Amerindian groups for a long time enables us to seek and engage in dialogue with the communities of origin.

“Although I intend to spend some time with these Indians [Munduruku] during my travels to the Amazon River, I thought it better to play it safe and keep these Indians’ crafts with me. After all, they will arrive in Vienna much earlier and surpass in beauty everything Indian already there.”

1817–1835, Johann Natterer (zoologist)

“It therefore comes as no surprise that the poor Indians take measures for their own safety to either annihilate their enemies or at least instill fear and terror in them. If the Canoeiros were not such a horror due to their cruel measures and without giving quarter to Christians, they would have been wiped out, displaced or enslaved long ago.”

1817–1821 Johann Emanuel Pohl (botanist)

“It is a melancholy fact, but too well founded, that where ever Europeans have settled, the extermination of native tribes has succeeded their arrival. “

1838, Robert Hermann Schomburgk (naturalist)

“Do they lie with their women when they are with child? Do they raise their orphaned children? Do the children work? Do the children show love and respect for their elders? Do the elders show love for their children?”

1844, Virgil von Helmreichen (engineer)

“Still to this day, northern Brazil is home to human tribes that are among the least known and most dangerous anywhere out there.” “… that scientific success cannot come by fire and sword but by encountering the savages and surprising them by bringing gifts.”

1902, Richard Payer (explorer)

“The island also has many rubber trees that are tapped by cutting into their bark, extracting the precious milky liquid and collecting it in small pots. The liquid is then poured over a paddle-like piece of wood over hot smoke to thicken it. I will bring such a piece of wood to Vienna …”

1904, Franz Steindachner (zoologist)

“Yet I can feel the task at hand. We will not be able to study primitive Indians much longer, as this Stone Age relic of humankind will soon disappear.”

1954, Etta Becker-Donner (ethnologist)

“Perhaps something in their [the Camoyos’] subconscious mind tells them that they will be doomed (just as all the other tribes) as soon as they benefit from the ‘blessings’ of civilisation. At any rate, I hope they will be able to maintain their free and independent existence without liquor, exploitation and so-called ‘culture’ for a long time.”

1936, Mario Baldi (photographer)

“It is rather a sign of appreciation for what Father Dornstauder believed in and took a stand for, and for his unbelievable courage and commitment in advocating the right to exist of the Indians in the Brazilian rainforest.”

1974 Karl Queteschiner (development worker)

“I am also grateful and think of the […] Asurini and Araweté who welcomed me into their homes. Making a case for understanding them, this book may perhaps be able to repay a small bit of my gratitude.”

1983, Anton Lukesch (missionary and ethnologist)

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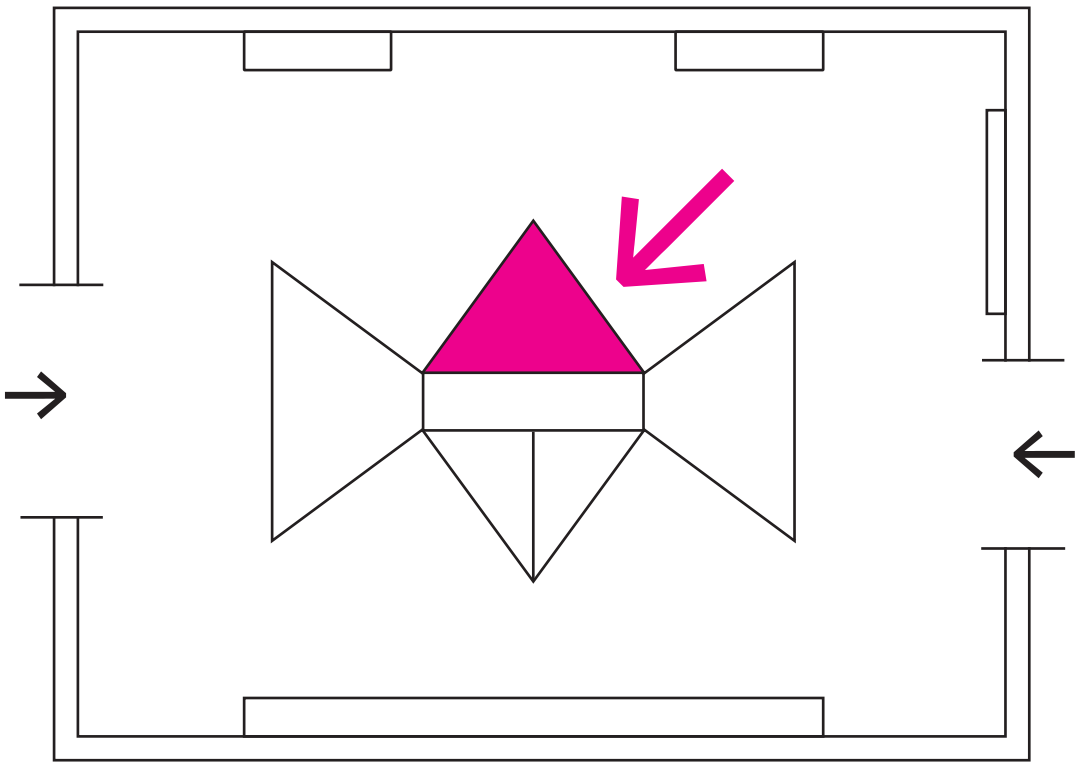

The Sound of History

Amerindian myths are much more than simple stories. They recount historical events and the creation of social order. In northwestern Amazonia, for example, the many diverse groups of the Tukano share the same mythological narrative about how they migrated to the region: their ancestors travelled inside an anaconda and found their new home by looking for the place at the waterfront where their rattle lance did not cast a shadow at noon.

“People draw on myths when trying to understand and order their surroundings, forging relationships with their social environment, and communicating with the wai-mahsá, invisible human beings dwelling in the domains of earth, water, forest and air. […] The ritual specialists kumu and baya bring to mind these myths in their speeches at major ritual events.”

João Paulo Lima Barreto, Tukano, anthropologist, 2015

The Beginning of Humankind

“The Third Thunder opens his protective cover and spreads out his riches: headbands made of macaw feathers, feather crowns, necklaces made of quartzite, breast ornaments made of quartzite, necklaces made of jaguar teeth, decorative chest plates and cigar holders. Each pair of ornaments represents man and woman, who become the mythical heroes Great-grandchild of the Holy Word of the Universe and Uaracu-Fish-Human of the Universe, who created mankind. In the background we see deer bones, meaning flutes, which are played before adorning oneself.”

Feliciano Lana, Desana, painter, 1978

1, 2

Headdress
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; feathers of various macaw species, monkey fur
Johann Natterer Coll.

3, 4

Headbands
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; feathers, monkey hair
Johann Natterer Coll.

5, 6

Necklace
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; quartz, seed pods, plant fibres
Johann Natterer Coll.

7, 8

Flutes
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; jaguar bones, wax, palm leaf strips, bast, plant string
Johann Natterer Coll.

9, 10

Necklace
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; monkey teeth, cotton
Johann Natterer Coll.

11, 12

Headdress
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; feathers, plant fibres
Johann Natterer Coll.

Becoming Human in Rituals

“As Master of Ceremony, the baya is supported by the kumu in leading through the festivities with kahpiwaya dances. The tiara is the most important element of his physical appearance. Both rhythm and style of dancing visualise the myth, reenact each step of becoming human, distribute knowledge, and create a connection with the wai-mahsá.”

João Paulo Lima Barreto, Tukano, ethnologist, 2015

13 Dancing costume
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; feathers, monkey hair, jaguar teeth, plant materials, colouring
Johann Natterer Coll.

14 Dancing shield
Upper Rio Negro, ca. 1880; bast strips
Amanda Loreto Coll.

15 Rattle lance

Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; wood, feathers, bones, bast, tree resin, seed pods
Johann Natterer Coll.

The Beginning Before the Beginning

"In the beginning, the grandmother of the world lived in her fantasy world surrounded by darkness. She lived on coca and smoked the Great Cigar. She thought of the thunders whose houses were in the east, west, north, south, and up above. The grandmother of the universe is made up of six different things: of wooden chairs; of woven frameworks for clay bowls; of calabashes; of coca calabashes; of peanut, coca, manioc and calabash plants; and of cigars."

Feliciano Lana, Desana, painter, 1978

16-19

Drinking bowls

Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; calabash gourd, colouring
Johann Natterer Coll.

20 Ceremony cigar
Makuna, Rio Apaporis, 1973;
tobacco, plant leaves
Wolfgang Ptak Coll., Fritz Trupp Coll.

21 Cigar holder
Upper Rio Negro, ca. 1880; wood, pigment
Amanda Loreto Coll.

22 Pot stand with drinking bowl
Rio Tiquié, 2006; Palm leaf strips, vine strips
Michael Kraus Coll., Andreas Kowalski Coll.

23 Stool
Rio Uaupés, ca. 1830; wood, colouring
Johann Natterer Coll.

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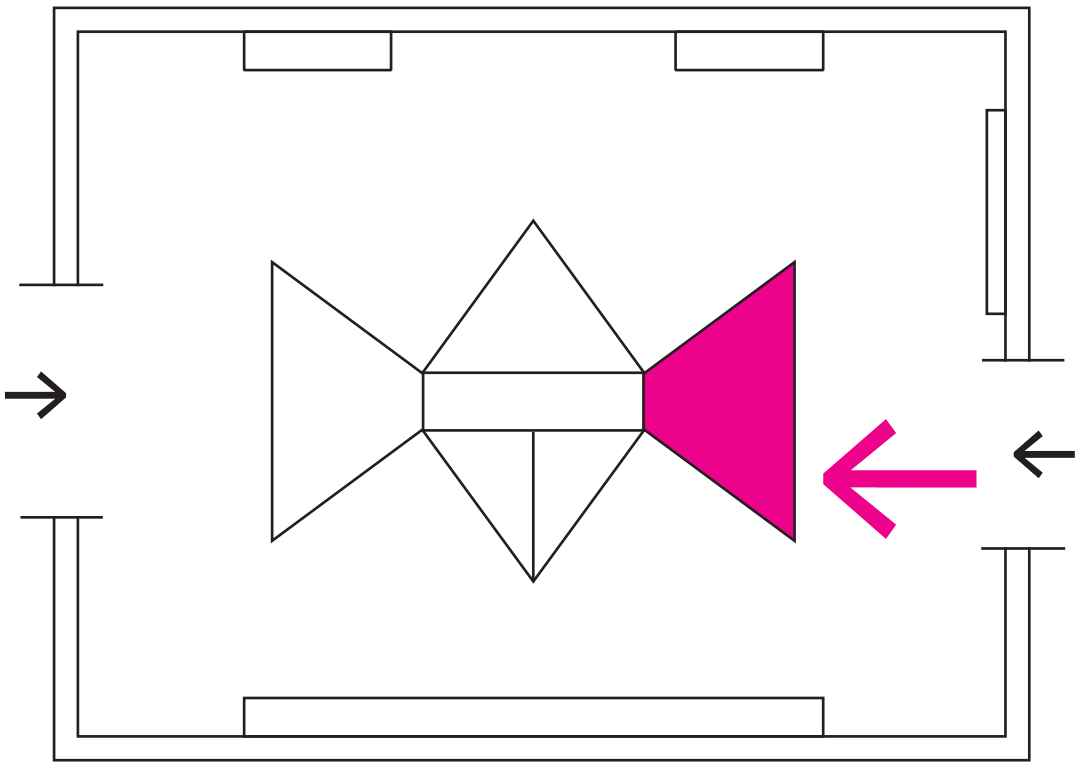

From Warriors to Political Actors

Indigenous groups experienced the colonial era as marked by turmoil and suppression. In rare cases and for short periods, some of them were able to benefit from these conditions. In the early 19th century, the Munduruku were feared as head-hunters dominating the area between Rio Tapajós and Rio Madeira, and joined colonial rulers in their campaign against allegedly common enemies to “pacify” the region. As they became part of the colonial structures and missionary work, the Munduruku gave up both warfare and head-hunting. In consequence, their warrior rituals and related featherwork disappeared as well. In the 20th century, the Munduruku were not recognised as part of the rural Amazonian population anymore. Nevertheless, they entered the political arena and vehemently opposed large-scale energy projects threatening their lands in the early 21st century.

“Every day nature gets farther away and hides itself from us because we are destroying it. Such a precious treasure, and people want to turn it into business. How far will they go with this destruction?“

From a letter by Munduruku political leaders to the Brazilian government, 2013

Head-hunting and Feather Decoration

“In the past, [we] the Munduruku were feared for [our] fame in the art of group warfare and we had effective strategies for attacking our enemies. We did not easily give up the pursuit of our enemies and our trophies were human heads that symbolised power. […] [We] left no one alive except the children whom we took back to our villages, whom we adopted and incorporated into our clans and treated as kin.”

From a letter by Munduruku political leaders to the Brazilian government, 2013

“Munduruku warriors wore festive costumes made of feathers for the major ritual cycle dedicated to head-hunting. The head trophy was a resting place of vital powers that could only be generated by the male warrior society. It was particularly the ritual presence of the killer and owner of the head that ensured […] the increase of wild game.”

Wolfgang Kapfhammer, ethnologist, 2012

1 **Top hat modelled on the headgear of the Brazilians**
Rio Araguaia, ca. 1829; tucum palm leaf strips
Johann Natterer Coll.

2 **Forehead tie**
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the scarlet macaw, blue-and-yellow macaw, and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

3 **Headdress (akeri kaha)**
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the guan, scarlet macaw, and hyacinth macaw
Johann Natterer Coll.

4, 5, 7

Headdress (akeri kaha)
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; Cotton, feathers of the scarlet macaw, blue-and-yellow macaw, and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

6, 13

Forehead ties
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

8 Wind instrument (kiohaa)
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; taquaracu bamboo
Johann Natterer Coll.

9 Shoulder string
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

10 Shoulder string
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

11 Shoulder string
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

12, 24
Forehead ties (akeri)
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the scarlet macaw, blue-and-yellow macaw, and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

14 Cap (akeri)
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the scarlet macaw
Johann Natterer Coll.

15 Trophy head
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; human head, hair, cotton, feathers, resin, rodent teeth
Johann Natterer Coll.

16 Signal horn
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; wood, feathers, cotton
Johann Natterer Coll.

17-23

Sceptres
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; feathers of the scarlet macaw, blue-and-yellow macaw, and guan, reed, cotton
Johann Natterer Coll.

25 Feather apron
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, bast, feathers of the scarlet macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

26, 27

Upper arm ties
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of one species of macaw and two species of guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

28, 29

Wrist ties
Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

30 Belt

Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

31, 32

Ankle band

Rio Tapajós, ca. 1830; cotton, feathers of the macaw and guan
Johann Natterer Coll.

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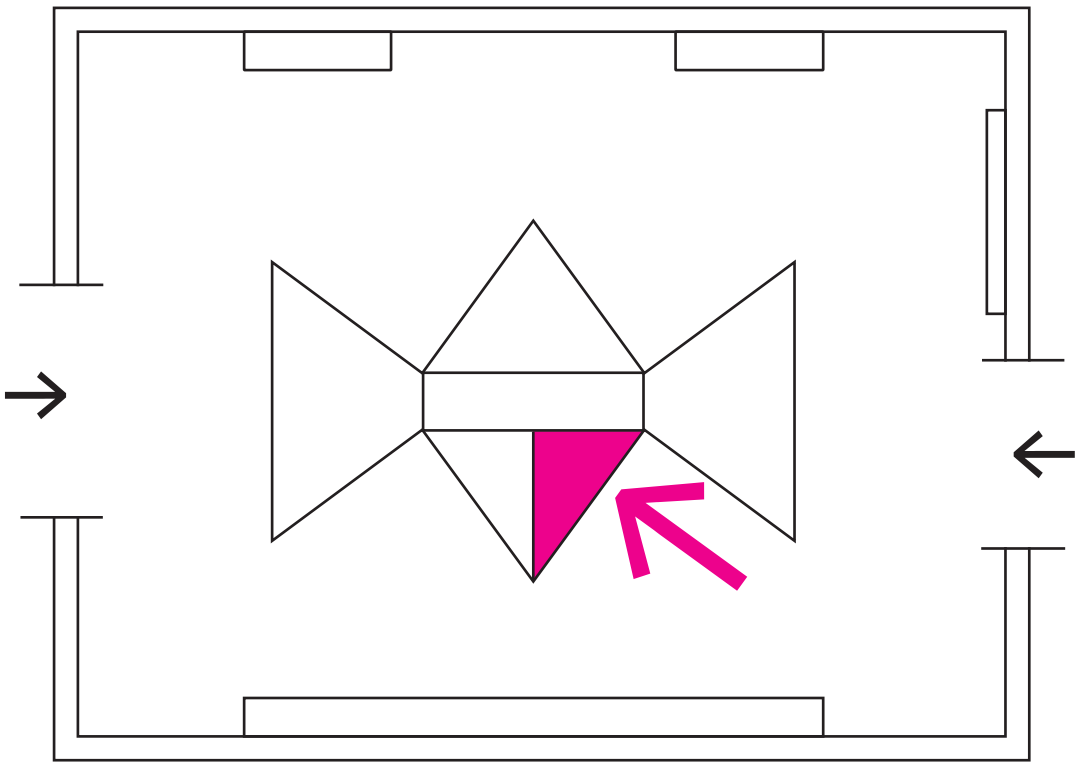


First Contact

“First contact”: What a fascinating idea!
Brazil is still home to indigenous groups that intentionally avoid contact to other people in their vicinity. They only agree to such encounters when in dire straits or for other compelling reasons.
The Warí in Rondônia gave up their “isolation” in 1956, when they began visiting an attraction post of the Indian Protection Service. At that time, Etta Becker-Donner, the former director of our museum, was conducting research in Rondônia and attended one of the first encounters. The objects, photographs and films she brought back provide silent witness of the onset of an unbelievable story: from a chain reaction of first contacts and epidemics to the breakdown of a culture. Such a tragedy could be repeated at any time.

Searching for the Warí

Etta Becker-Donner already attempted, but failed, to establish contact with the Warí on her first journey in 1954. She only found a few abandoned settlements and collected the objects that had been left behind and were no longer valued. She even collected arrows, originating from an attack on rubber collectors which she by chance experienced, and brought them back to the museum. At this time, the Warí generally avoided other indigenous groups and particularly Brazilians. They only attacked the latter, if they felt threatened or to obtain their iron tools.

1-16

Arrows used in the attack on rubber collectors
Bamboo, plant fibres, feathers, wood, cotton thread, pigment, blood

22 Flatbow
Palm wood, plant fibres, pigment, cotton, uruku colour

23 Cob husks of different types of corn

24 Back basket
Palm leaf, vine fibres, embira bast

25 Potsherd
Ceramic

26 Axe blade
Stone

27 Corn basket
Palm leaf, palm leaf strips, embira bast

28 Corn cob, staple food of the Warí

29 Drinking cup
Palm seed leaves, vine fibres

30 Calabash gourd for drawing water
Calabash

Witnesses of a Historic Moment

When the Brazilians assumed control of those river courses important for traffic, they also cut the connections between villages that were essential for survival. The Warí finally responded to the contact attempts of the Indian Protection Service to re-establish these vital connections in 1956. As Etta Becker-Donner was in the region on her second journey, she attended one of the first encounters in August. The resulting disaster took its course just a few months after establishing regular contact: epidemics broke out and killed more than half of the population. The social structure of the Warí collapsed and they started to question their own traditions. The fight for their physical and cultural survival had begun.

17 Cap
Palm leaf, fruit

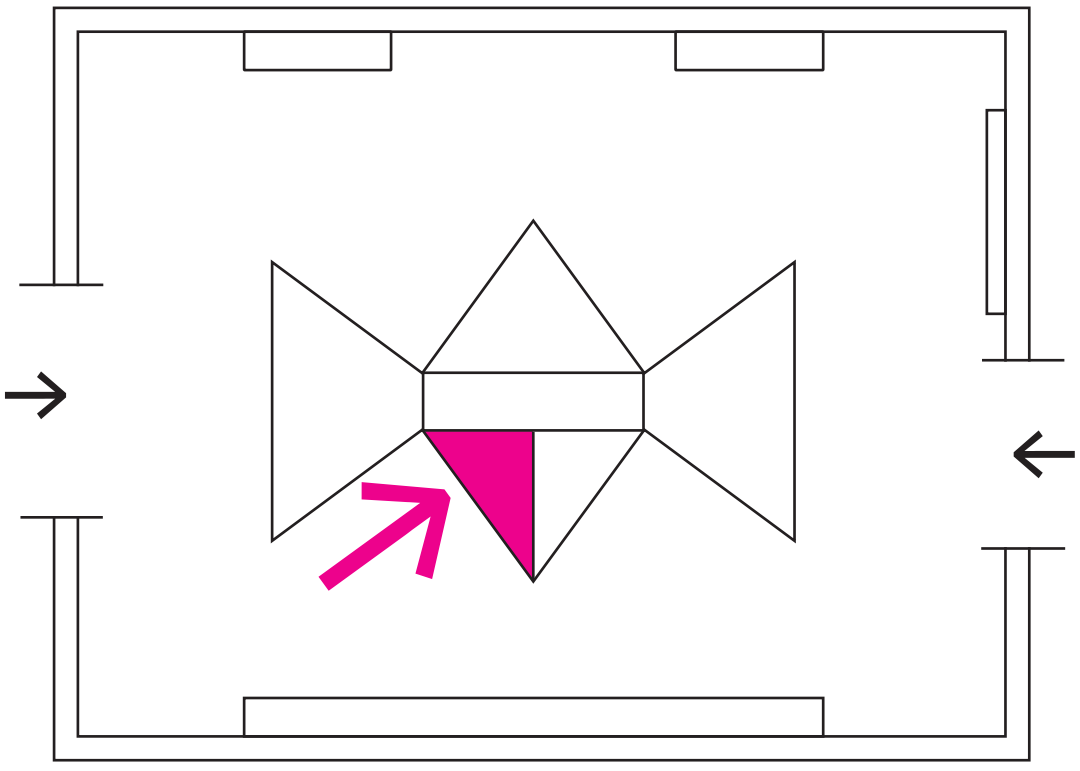
18 “Peace Staff” especially made as a gift for Etta Becker-Donner
Palm wood, fur, feather, cotton, wax, bast

19 Headband
Tree bark, wax, pigment

20 Ear studs
Bamboo, pigment (?)

21 Bow
Palm wood, vine fibres, cotton, bast

Room 22



Change and Continuity

Today's life of indigenous groups in Brazil is shaped by cultural revitalisation processes as well as their quest for self-determination. Against this backdrop, the Sateré-Mawé focus on cultivating and processing guaraná in the lower Amazon region. This fruit was once exclusively grown by them and has gained great popularity all over the world for its stimulating properties.
An indigenous cooperative dedicated to merchandising guaraná ensures economic success while also supporting a certain understanding of morality that the Sateré-Mawé attribute to guaraná.

“The culture of the Sateré-Mawé consists of leading a good and proper life. This knowledge not only benefits the Sateré but the entire world: The aim is to respect the environment, to respect questions of the ecological balance, to work in such a way that one can provide for one- self, to create wages and work, to offer an alternative form of education in the villages, to produce without being destructive.“

Obadias Batista Garcia, Vice-President of the General Council of the Sateré-Mawé, March 2012

Origins of the Ant Ritual

“A long time ago, the Mawé people suffered from a great epidemic, the cause of which the shaman did not know. The shaman set out to find a cure and tried out many different ideas. One day Mypynucury (armadillo) appeared and said: I can show you an ant that can cure the illness of your people. The ant lives underground and is called Tucandeira. Give me manioc beer and I will get the ant for you, so you can put in your hand and get well again. The shaman agreed that the armadillo would go and get Tucandeira. On the next day, the armadillo offered him a beautifully decorated glove with Tucandeira inside.
This dance has been part of the Sateré-Mawé culture ever since and we still stick our hand in Tucandeira to heal illnesses, such as rheumatism, lethargy and lack of motivation amongst other ailments of young men.”

Obadias Batista Garcia, Vice-President of the General Council of the Sateré-Mawé, 2016

1 **Initiation glove**
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; tucum palm leaves, palm straw, colouring from the genipapo fruit
Johann Natterer Coll.

2, 3
Initiation gloves
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; tucum palm leaves, palm straw, colouring from the genipapo fruit
Johann Natterer Coll.

4, 5
Initiation gloves
Parintins, 2016; tucum palm leaves, palm straw, colouring from the genipapo fruit
Obadias Batista Garcia Coll.

Guaraná is Wisdom

"And so our forefathers told the story of the origin of the world, of mankind, of the laws of the world, in their way, and in doing so they took guaraná, which is the word of the beginning of all knowledge and all wisdom. Guaraná is of great significance in our culture. We use guaraná in every way, at every opportunity: hunting, working, fishing, for every possible activity in the day-to-day life of the Sateré-Mawé. First of all we take guaraná."

Obadias Batista Garcia, Vice-President of the General Council of the Sateré-Mawé, March 2012

6 Box with guaraná powder from the Sateré-Mawé cooperative
Parintins, 2015; guaraná powder, plastic, paper
Obadias Batista Garcia Coll.

7 Stand with drinking cup for consuming guaraná
Parintins, 2015; reed strips, calabash gourd
Obadias Batista Garcia Coll.

8 Guaraná bar
Brazil, 19th century; guaraná
Georg Schwarz Coll.

9 Guaraná bar
Parintins, 2015; guaraná
Obadias Batista Garcia Coll.

10 Fish tongue for grating guaraná
Parintins, 2015; tongue of the pirarucu
Obadias Batista Garcia Coll.

Change in Shamanism

"My grandfather was a shaman as well. He told us everything about what shamans do. If someone became ill, then the shaman would find the cause in former times. Nevertheless, he did not find out which illness it was but accused someone else. He explained to us all the deceptive practices of a shaman. I do not trust in shamans anymore because we know that they usually do not do anything except deceiving people. Many have died because of something like this. There are still some shamans but not like those from earlier times. Once they were respected, like doctors, but you will not find many shamans along today's Rio Andirá."

Ranulfo de Oliveira, Sateré-Mawé, translator and subsistence farmer, March 2012

11 Altar set following the example of a healer
Parintins, 2016; plaster, colouring, plastic, palm branches, stones, glass, cork, paper, plant seeds, string, wax, dried herbs, bark of the tawarí tree
Wolfgang Kapfhammer Coll.

12-18

Set of utensils for sniffing hallucinogenic paricá powder for the shaman to communicate with spiritual beings
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; nut shells, wood, pigment, feathers, harpy quills, plant fibres, resin, tail hair of the giant anteater, bamboo, snail shell, paricá seeds
Johann Natterer Coll.

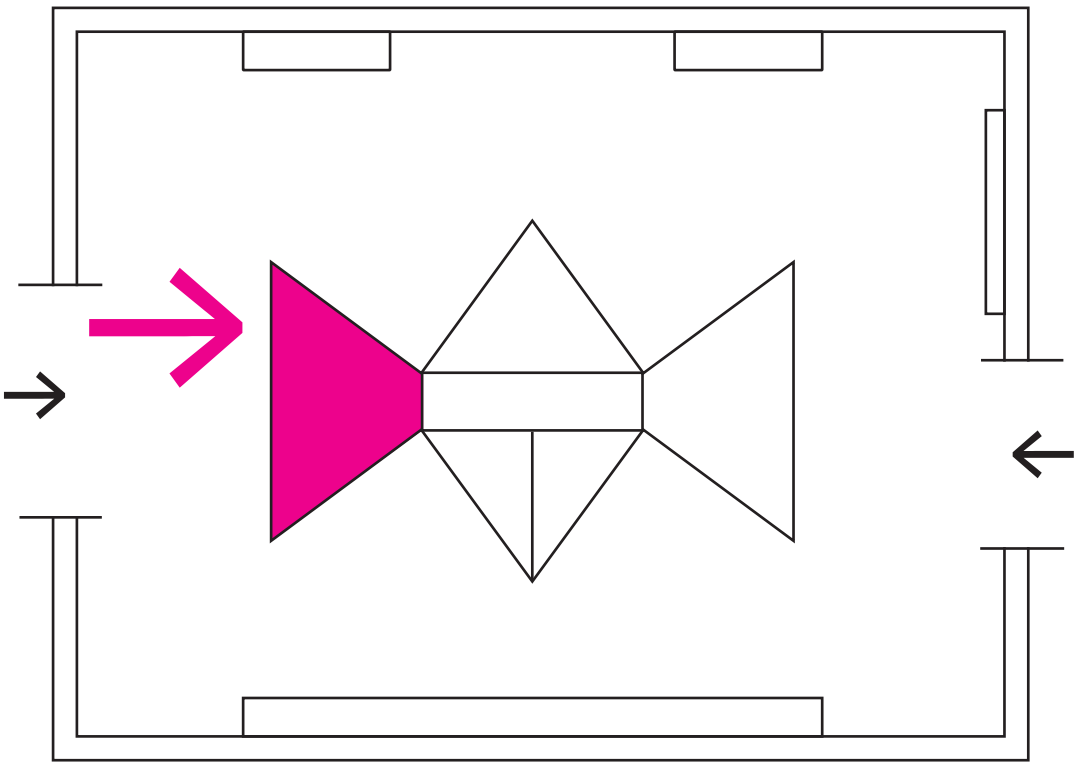
19 Snuff tablet
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; wood, pigment
Johann Natterer Coll.

20 Snuff tablet
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; wood, shell inlay
Johann Natterer Coll.

21 Ritual equipment (wegku'amen)
Rio dos Manas, before 1836; wood, deer bone
Johann Natterer Coll.

22 Ritual equipment (putu yp)
Rio dos Manas, before 1836;
wood, toucan feathers, pigment
Johann Natterer Coll.

Room 22



The mythical palms of the Wakuénai

The Wakuénai live in large areas along the Rio Negro in the border region of Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia. In their language wakuénai means „those who speak the same language.“ Their village communities form patrilineal structures whose order is of mythical origin: Iháperrikuli initiates the beginning of the story of creation. He is responsible for the form and essences of the world. His son Kuwái is the mediator between the primeval world and the real world. His singing and chanting created the non-human worlds of plants, animals, and objects. After Kuwái is killed in a bonfire, he transforms into trees and other plants utilized for making flutes and trumpets that are used to create a world of fully human beings.
From these narratives also emerge the associations for three plant species. They are charged with mythical and social meanings.
At present, the rainforest‘s deforestation is threatening the diversity of plant and animal species. Does the destruction of the forest also mean the disappearance of the mythical world?

Máwi: The gift

Máwi is the name of a small palm tree species that is processed into blowguns, fish traps and nets as well as ceremonial flutes. The products of the gift represent the transformation from wild nature into products for social consumption and exchange.
Máwi has a mythical association with death. Although Inápirrikuli is invincible, he cannot prevent the death of his younger brother Máwirríkuli (made-of-Mawi), who is poisoned by one of his arch-enemies. Associated with the first creature to die in mythical prehistoric times, the palm species symbolizes the connection to death.

1 Blow pipe
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
reed, bark, wood
Johann Natterer Coll.

2 Quiver with arrows
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
palm leaf strips
Johann Natterer Coll.

3 Fishing line
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
plant fibre, dye
Johann Natterer Coll.

Pwáapwa: The meal

Tools for the daily processing of manioc into food are made from thin strips of the outer bark of palm trees, referred to as the meal. Young men learn to weave during initiation rituals. They must know how to make baskets, manioc presses, manioc graters and other artefacts for their wives in the future.
As part of their initiation into adulthood, Kuwái shows a group of boys how they collect pwáapwa and make things from it.

4 Manioc grater
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
wood, stones, pigment, dye
Johann Natterer Coll.

5-6

Sieves
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830 and 2007;
palm leaf strips
Johann Natterer Coll.

7 Basket
Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
palm leaf strips, dye
Johann Natterer Coll.

Púpa: The secret

The paxiuba palm is used for making flutes and trumpets which are played during ceremonies and male initiation rituals. They are sacred instruments which must not be shown or represented. This creates a process of secrecy, because by capturing the animal sounds, hearing is privileged over seeing and being seen.
After the fiery death of Kuwái in mythic times, the world shrank back to its original miniature size. However, the production of the sacred instruments from paxiuba palms, yebaro bark, and dzámakuáapi vines is a process of materializating the creative powers of Kuwái's

singing. As a link between the world of the mythical ancestors and that of their human descendants, the trees provide mankind with life-giving ancestral powers.

Kulirrina: A Synthesis of the three associations in the catfish trumpets

In the materiality of the kulirrina, the gift (máwi mouthpiece), the meal (pwáapwa resonating body) and the secret (púpa vines for connection) come together. Longitudinal stripes on both sides resemble a species of large catfish, after which the trumpets are named. The trumpets' deep, rumbling sound imitates the sound of a stream filled with spawning leporinus fish.
They are not sacred objects, yet they have a special role in society. In púdali ceremonies they are played by men to announce the giving and receiving of gifts. In this way they connect blood relatives with in-laws, the spawning fish with social relations and the fishing of the men with the gardening of the women.
Once one of the characteristic artefacts of the Wakuénai, by the middle of the 20th century the trumpet was rarely used.

8-9

Catfishtrumpets

Northwestern Amazon, ca. 1830;
palm leaf strips, resin, pigment, dye, feathers
Johann Natterer Coll.