

Tales of the Death-Path: ethnography and translation of Amerindian poetry

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Poetic translation and conceptual translation

THE STUDY of productions of meaning differing from Western culture usually entails constant challenges to our thinking patterns. These challenges create an epistemological instability typical of a given translation work, namely that which seeks to associate the difference in sign regimes with the difference in states of affairs. It was the interest in this association, which is decisive for understanding the poetry of others or which preceded the trajectory of Western philosophy that eventually led me to Americanist ethnology. I was at the end of my undergraduate philosophy program at the University of São Paulo when I came across the article “*Vingança e temporalidade: os Tupinambá*”, written by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, a radical reflection on the conceptual otherness involved in Tupi cannibalism. I set myself to read all the works on ethnology I could get my hand on and then ventured into Amerindian thoughts and oral traditions. These and other readings of several other studies devoted to the limits of modern episteme showed, thus, that understanding the specifics of oral Amerindian traditions (and their thinking criteria) would rest not only in the ability of communication between languages as different from one other as Portuguese and Bororo but also, and more fundamentally, in the transition between different ontological regimes. Something inseparable, therefore, from broader problems of conceptual translation so familiar to ethnologists who find themselves struggling with concept-words such as “body”, “soul”, “substance”, “individual” or “energy.” This is hardly surprising for philosophers concerned with the translation of fragments from Heraclitus or Anaximander. However, the problem reaches a different level of complexity when we deal with other languages and ways of thinking detached from the Western tradition and its origins. In the passage below, Viveiros de Castro (2007) appropriately summarizes a development of the problem in question, which should persist for quite some time:

The issue of the entirely different meaning that mythic enunciation takes on when we leave the pre-philosophical world of the “Masters of Truth” and its monarchic regime of enunciation, the “classic” world

of the Hellenist, of the historian of philosophy, to enter the extra-philosophical world of “societies against the State”, the world of wild thought, of radical anthropological otherness - well, this problem is yet to appropriately addressed.

This register, different from the pre-philosophical mythical word, indicates another world configuration and its consequent reflexes on the forms of poetic development of the language. Not by chance, in his study on the Araweté people, Viveiros de Castro identified the existence of a link between the polyphonic enunciative structure of shamanistic chants and the composition of the person, separated into different aspects that are usually translated as body, soul, double or vital principle. This link enabled understanding the shamanic tendency towards otherness and thus its radical difference with respect to the metaphysics of the self-centered individual.¹ Marked by the overlapping with the voices of the dead, spirits and other agents that populate the indigenous worlds, the shamanistic word becomes an event through which knowledge is acquired by a certain kinship network. Not by chance, the relationship of the composition of the person with the forms of enunciation, associated with several other features of indigenous cosmologies, led Viveiros de Castro to systematize his ethnographic theory of perspectivism. Continuing the work of Lévi-Strauss in *Mythologiques*, perspectivism succeeded in providing a powerful translational reflection on indigenous thought through a careful examination of the pillars of Western episteme that are often inadvertently projected on others (such as those derived from the relation between interior and exterior, mind and world, and nature and culture, among others).

However, that was not precisely the concern that I found in other translation anthologies of indigenous chants and narratives. Many of them - such as Jerome Rothenberg's (1972) collections of texts from American Indigenous peoples and Herbert Helder's (1997) experiments - were interesting attempts at literary rewriting or translation, but distant from the reflection on the ontological configurations inseparable from the poetry translated therein.² It seemed necessary to explore the influence of these configurations in the transition between different conceptual lexicons, so eloquent when it comes to translating words from a given Amerindian language as others such as “sacred”, “creation”, “deity” or “nature”, which infiltrate written texts in a not always controlled way. Other anthologies, generally published by ethnologists, usually tend to lack attention not only to these lexical complexities, but also to the transposition of the poetic qualities of oral performances to paper, which end up impoverished by the indiscriminate use of straight prose.³ The area thus required (and still requires) an integrated approach that takes into account the different levels of what is understood as translation and the task of the translator/researcher.

This integration used to be more frequently present in the work of a generation of ethnologists-linguists that combines field research experience with knowledge of languages, their ethnological complexities and their expressive

qualities, among whom special mention should be made of Dennis Tedlock, Dell Hymes, Ellen Basso, Joel Sherzer, Bruna Franchetto, Greg Urban and others. Tedlock, for example, draws on the reflections and experiments on the verse conducted by the poet Charles Olson to transform the translation of the Amerindian arts of the word. By bringing it close to dramatic poetry, the author discarded the reduction to linear prose and the disregard for style that had marked the American ethnographic tradition of Franz Boas, thus paving another way for the written reinvention of parallelisms, pitch-height, pauses and silences. Tedlock invented a specific typographic notation characterized by the use of line breaks, long or short dashes, upper and lower case variation and the introduction of periods. His work with the Zuñi narratives and the great poem on the emergence of the Maya-Quiché's world, the *Popol Vuh* (recently translated into Portuguese by Gordon Brotherston and Sergio Medeiros), thus opened up important avenues for the aforementioned association between the study of categories of thought and the exercise of creative translation (Tedlock, 1983).⁴

Translations of Marubo verbal arts

Inspired by these questions, I decided to work with the Marubo people from the upper Ituí River (Javari Valley, Amazonas), where I lived for about 14 months between 2004 and 2007. I began to study the little that was available on the Marubo tongue (a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation by a linguist from the National Museum, plus other short lists of words and sentences collected by missionaries), as well as more complete studies dedicated to other languages of the Pano family (especially Shipibo-Conibo, Kaxinawá, Shara-nawa and Mayoruna). The ethnography and translation of Marubo verbal arts should start from the willingness, interest and consent of my hosts, in whose schools I taught and followed the work of indigenous teachers.⁵ It was with some teachers from the upper Ituí villages that I began the task of transcription and translation. Sitting next to my interlocutors I copied by hand on pages and pages of many notebooks their transcripts of the recordings I collected (the Marubo language has a graphic style of writing created by the missionaries who have lived there since the 1950s). As my understanding improved I also began to make transcripts on my own, but always improved by the reviews of native speakers. During the time I lived with the Marubo my research not only began to be authorized by singers and other collaborators but also to make some sense to them. By coincidence, I worked with a people who shared my interest in the poetic language, since the elaborated word is central to their intellectual and cosmopolitical ethos. I gradually became familiar to the nightly rounds of talks and chants, in which large doses of snuff and ayahuasca were usually ingested, often in the presence of spirits and other people that manifested in the bodies of the shamans (*romeya*). This familiarization process also involves establishing an intense intellectual exchange inseparable from the immersion in ritual life, and so appropriately characterized by them through the phrase "connect thought"

(*chinã ātinānāi*). That was how the learning of chants took roots in my own bodily experience, setting up the basis that would allow me to imagine the contours of their versions reinvented in Portuguese.

The Marubo have an extensive, complex and active oral tradition, distributed into various genres (such as mythical chanted narratives, healing chants, spirits' chants, ceremonial dialogues, teaching speeches and others), which are mastered by specialized shamans. The repertoire of chants is based on a very strict system of poetic formulas with a closed structure, but with certain openness to innovations. This system is filled with special metaphors, survival of the language of ancestors, ironies, allusions to obscure situations, condensed references to mythical episodes and different etiologies, specific expressions of the language of the spirits and the healing system, among other characteristics that make many of the chants incomprehensible even to a Marubo uninitiated in verbal learning. For these reasons it became necessary to set up a more specialized team, usually formed by the older shaman who is the author of the chant to be translated and Robson Dionísio Marubo, who plays the dual role of teacher and shaman. He stands out as an important ritual and intellectual leader because of his ability to make connections between worlds that are at play in his activities both as a shaman and a translator (shamanism, it goes without saying, can also be understood as a kind of local theory of translation). Because Robson is also proficient in Portuguese, I gradually helped him to acquire a certain linguistic awareness to assist me in identifying (even if incompletely) particles of the language, which was essential for understanding the transcripts. Still, a comprehensive Marubo grammar would be sufficient neither to reveal many esoteric details of the verbal arts, known only to a few masters of the word such as Robson and other older shamans, nor to solve the challenges of poetic recreation. This is what can be seen in this opening passage from the long sung mythical narrative about the emergence of ancestors, the *Wenia saiti*, whose full translation remains unpublished:

<p>1. <i>Vari awá chinãki</i> <i>Vari mai paroke</i> <i>Vari shōpa weki</i> <i>We sheamashōta</i></p>	<p>Vida de anta-sol No canto da terra-sol Vento de lírio-sol Ao vento se soma</p>
	<p><i>(Life of sun-tapir</i> <i>In the chant of the sun-earth</i> <i>Wind of sun-lily</i> <i>Joins the wind)</i></p>

<p>5. <i>Veōini otivo</i> <i>Vari mai nāko</i> <i>Nāko osōatōsho</i> <i>Wení katsi inā</i> <i>Pinikia avai</i></p>	<p>E ali assenta Néctar da terra-sol Dentro, no néctar Surgimento começa E couro cansado</p>
	<p><i>(And therein lies Nectar of the sun-earth Inside, in the nectar The emergence begins And tired skin)</i></p>
<p>10. <i>Vari shawā shakapa</i> <i>mai marak ativo</i> <i>mai raká rakai</i> <i>a aki avai</i> <i>Vari ima chiwāne</i></p>	<p>De arara-sol Sempre sobre a terra Na terra retorce E logo aquelas Pequenas formigas-sol</p>
	<p><i>(Of sun-macaw Always on the earth On the earth twists And then those Small sun-ants)</i></p>
<p>15. <i>Vari mai teorai</i> <i>Teorai kinisho</i> [...]</p>	<p>Abaixo da terra-sol Abaixo buracos fazem</p>
	<p><i>Below the sun-earth Below holes they make</i></p>

Formed by the “tale speech” (*yoā vana*) formulas, this opening passage of the *Wenia* (the full version of which spans more than two thousand verses) is formed entirely by veiled images: “life of sun-tapir” (line 1) is a metaphor for the semen (*ere*) of the ancestors which, added to a certain female vital principle (represented by the poetic formula “sun-lily wind”, line 3), will be deposited in the wombs of the first women, referred to in the poem as “chant of the sun-earth” (line 2). In the sequence, the formula “nectar of the sun-earth” (line 6) refers to the ancient women impregnated (or to their “egg”, as Robson Venāpa tried to explain to me). Next, “and tired skin/ of sun-macaw/ always on the earth” lines 10,11) is another poetic metaphor for the stretched skin of the pregnant wombs of the women and their babies moving therein. Thereafter a path will be trodden toward the final place of the ancestors (belonging to the Sun People, which lends this “sun” variable to the other elements mentioned in the chant): the image in one of ants opening up the way through underground

cracks – this is a metaphor for childbirth itself. An unsuspecting listener might very well think that the ancestors emerged from holes in the ground, when in fact the singer is following there a whole ethics of the language, indirect and poeticized, to refer to childbirth by ancient women. Note also that the *saiti* chants correspond to a sung rendition of narratives that could also be spoken: it is to the latter option that the translation criteria used by Tedlock would apply (emphasis on the action and dramatic quality of the narrative event, transcribed through a specific repertoire of notations). In the sung versions (unique, it seems, in the Amazonian landscape), Marubo narratives develop, however, in long strings of verses, then follow a strict metric, and a fixed rhythmic pattern, and are accompanied by melodic sentences typical of each episode that are repeated in short cycles from beginning to end of the rendition. There is no room there for gestures, pause variations, imitations and scenic improvisations that usually characterize narrations (spoken). Hence the adoption of the above mentioned solution, whose sequential structure is intended to recreate the repetitive, nearly hypnotic rhythm given by the long succession of verses (broken according to the metric of the original) and its imagetic condensation.⁶

The collaboration of privileged interlocutors able to unravel the metaphorical intricacies of Marubo chants, however, needed to be added to the constant attention to the dilemmas of conceptual translation: *nãko*, the above mentioned word recreated by me as “nectar”, is one of those notions that fit better into ethnographic texts if maintained in the original language, in order to protect their complexity from some hasty solution. The term refers to certain sweet plant saps appreciated by living beings, to a ‘hyper-food’ consumed by the spirits (a kind of fruit that, when ingested, completely appeases one’s hunger) and, finally, to principles of emergence of high variability (sexed, such as in the above case, mysterious in others in which a sexed genesis is not at stake, such as in the opening scene about the beginning of the world).⁷ My interlocutor, who has some familiarity with formal school knowledge, decides to translate it as “egg”. It is up to me to distinguish its use from the term of our association with the thinking assumptions of modern genetics, which are different from the Amerindian ways of thinking about pregnancy. This use of Western terms, which is becoming more and more frequent among Indigenous mediators, creates further complexities for the anthropologist who finds himself grappling with similar processes of conceptual appropriation and re-signification capable of generating processes of translational equivocity typical of the interface between plays on language.⁸

But what about poetic translation itself, that which falls on me, who writes and thinks in the target language? In the Portuguese version of the poem, maintaining a word like *nãko* in its original spelling did not seem a good solution to me. Hence its reinvention as “nectar”, a term that refers to a fairly analogous host of meanings in other mythical-poetic imaginations. Moreover, this is not an objective translation to be collated with the segmented original text, certainly

something critical to the early stages of the work. Although very close to the Marubo original, the text in Portuguese presented above (among others that I have published) is a poetic recreation, meant to reinvent in the written word the verbal elaboration of the chant. It seeks to establish in Portuguese something of the original paratactic register, which would tend to disappear in written linear prose. Hence the sparing use of punctuation, prepositions and articles to highlight the imagetic nuclei, parallelisms and rhythmic flow. All the better if, in the end, the text causes estrangement, as this is the register of this poetic made accessible through creative reinvention. As long as it succeeds in getting the reader to follow the meaning of this strangeness, part of the task will have been fulfilled.

To Henri Meschonnic (2010, p.57), it is this mutual implication of problems explored by different areas of knowledge (the problems of literature, language and society) that builds poetry and the possibilities of its translational recreation. I try to explore this combination of perspectives in *Onkisa - poética do xamanismo na Amazônia* (Perspective, 2011), a study derived from my doctoral thesis which, through various translations of chants, testimonies and narratives addresses the individual's relationship with illness, death and transformation. I also dedicate another more recent publication (*Quando terra deixou de falar – cantos da mitologia marubo*, Ed 34, in press) to the study and translation of sung narratives of that people. The two publications bring up several texts that could very well appear in the set of references essential for the study of oral poetry, in spite of my personal solutions as a translator and ethnologist. Among them is “*A Fala da Terra-Névoa*” (*Kõĩ mai vana*), a long chant dedicated to the scene of the formation of the world, which stands on equal footing with the *ayvu rapyta* of the Guarani and other Amerindian narratives of still unknown origin. It is also worth remembering the *Vaká yonoa*, a beautiful chant meant to lead the doubles of the dead in their posthumous path, a sort of Amazonian version of the famous Tibetan Book of the Dead. Added to contributions recently produced by other colleagues,⁹ these studies should conduct an opening of poetic Amerindian thoughts to other imaginative connections, in order to overcome the moral and intellectual gap that still exists around here.

Narration and experience

I said before that the elaboration of the word is central to the Marubo people. In fact, the learning of verbal arts is at the core of the individual's development and is achieved through strenuous ritual training. Their many uses should enable someone - especially a mature man - to at least heal his family in case of common diseases and also to become acquainted with the essential aspects of the mythical narratives underlying Marubo cosmology. One of the individual's link to cosmology lies in the problem of death and posthumous fate. Formed by aspects such as body support (*shaká*) and a configuration of doubles (*vaká*) that tend to project outwards in death and times of crisis, the person depends on verbal knowledge to ensure his well-being in life and the success of his

posthumous fate. It is of this condition that the shaman Armando Cherōpapa speaks in the testimony translated herein. By becoming a “master of words” (*vana ivo*), an individual is expected to be able to understand the processes of formation of agents such as deceased and spirits, besides remote landscapes such as the terrible Death-Path (*Vei Vai*) that must be crossed at the time of the final departure.

The translational character of Marubo shamanism itself rests, therefore, is this capacity of transportation between knowledge and references that are inaccessible to the ordinary experience of the living. That requires the articulation of the two types of shamans (or medicine men) operating there, the *kēchĩtxo* and the *romeya*. The difference between the two specialists resides primarily in the contrast between experience and mediation. On the one hand we find the knowledge transmitted through a chain of narratives linked to some source of authority (the knowledge of the ancients); on the other is the knowledge immediately acquired by the person. *Romeya* shamans are characterized by this direct access to other references; they thus validate their discourse through their own experience: sensorial, auditory and visual – acquired in the paths trodden by their doubles. Healer shamans (*kēchĩtxo*, also called *shōikiya*), in turn, must resort to the narrative memory and to the action of ancillary spirits, as their doubles do not leave their bodies voluntarily. Armando Cherōpapa, chief of the Paran community (upper Ituí) with whom I worked intensely throughout my stay among the Marubo, is both a *romeya* (condition acquired by birth, but also by certain crises that eventually transform the person) and a healer shaman (specialty that can be achieved through training and initiation rites in which the apprentice must develop an alliance with his ancillary spirits). This means that Armando has privileged access to the narratives and their teachings, confirmed by the experiences of his own double, which is familiar with the diverse landscapes of the cosmos. That is why he can describe and speculate about the Death-Path, which “he” himself (i.e., his double), as he explained to me, saw “flying in the wind.”

The testimony translated below is another form of poetic expression of Marubo arts of the word. In it Armando enunciates teaching (an oral genre called *ese vana*, “teaching speech” or “respectful speech”) and narrative (*yo vana*, “narrated speech”); transforms reflection into poem-talk marked by a specific rhythm, parallelism and the use of verbal formulas. Notice how the visual composition (central to the narrative thinking) is also present, as it seeks to provide the listener with a kind of condensed panoramic image of the Death-Path. Its stages are mentioned in a way that corresponds to the ritual chants that deal with the formation of that path (the *Vei Vai yoiya* chant) and with guiding the doubles through such path (the *Vak yonoa* chant), both translated by me in *Oniska – potica do xamanismo na Amaznia*. The line breaks used here are meant to make visible something from the parallelistic composition of the original, as well as of its dramatic nature, as so appropriately highlighted by Tedlock.

Still, I have chosen a simpler writing of the text recreated in Portuguese. I do not use other forms of graphical notation proposed by that author either, in the hope that the reading flow will be sufficient to refer to some experience of the rhythm. As we are dealing here with a narrative talk produced in the context of a reflexive and marked by a more exuberant use of language resources (such as time, aspect, evidential, deictic, connective and onomatopoeic markers, among others), it makes no sense to opt for the conciseness of verses or the general economy of punctuation I turn to when it comes to translating chants, characterized by a specific condensation, metric and rhythmic composition. Finally, it is worth pointing out that I have edited the testimony in some sections, marked by subheading, intend to indicate its main movements.

Reports of the Death-Path (by Armando Cherōpapa, translation by Pedro Cesarino)¹⁰

1. A história de Vei Maya
(The story of Vey Maya)

Txōtxo Koro shavo, winin aká shavo,
Mulheres-pássaro, as mulheres sedutoras,
(Bird-women, the seductive women,)

Atisho vei ooki, vei oo atisho.
aquelas que soltaram o grito-morte, aquelas do grito-morte.
(those who let out the death-cry, those of the death-cry.)

Aivo askásevi, Vei maya askásevi,
Esta também, Maya-Morte também,
(This too, Death-Maya too,)

Vei maya vei mai nākōsh wenímarvi, shavo wetsa.
Maya-Morte não surgiu do néctar da terra-morte, é outra mulher.¹¹
(Death-Maya did not come from the nectar of the death-earth,
she is another woman).

Aská aki, aská aki, isi akĩ,
Fazendo assim, fazendo assim, fazendo forte,
(Doing it like that, doing it like that, doing it strong,)

Aská aki isi aki, rishkikinã.
fazendo assim, fazendo forte, [o marido] ia mesmo espancando.¹²

(doing it like that, doing it strong, [the husband] kept on spanking her.)

Awe_ amai_nō wetsarotse_ a venemesh merasho rishkiti tenāi.

E assim fazendo, a outra mulher que ele também havia encontrado acabou por falecer.

(And so doing, the other woman he had also found came to die.)

Askámāi wetsarotse_, wetsa westí tsaokeaivorotse_,

E a outra, aquela que ficou sozinha sentada,

(And the other, the one that was sitting alone,)

Aro awe_ vene rishkia.

O marido nela bateu.

(The husband beat her.)

Awe_ chiná naíai tsaō,

Ficou sentada com o pensamento entristecido,

(She sat there in saddened thought,)

vei ari kenai, vei ari kenai.

pela morte sozinha chamava, pela morte sozinha chamava.

(alone she called for death, alone she called for death.)

Vei mayanā.

É Maya-Morte.

(It is Death-Maya.)

aivo vei ari kenaiti.

A que há tempos pela morte chamava.

(The one that for long had been calling for death.)

aská ak̃iserotse_ ari iniki vanai.

Assim mesmo chamando, ela sozinha cantofalava.

(And calling like that, she alone sang-and-talked.)

ronorasi_ kenaiti,

Chamava pelas cobras,

(She called for the snakes,)

vanavanakwāi avai kayakāisho,
falando e falando foi saindo,
(Talking and talking she left,)

kayā nachima.
foi banhar no rio.
(to bathe in the river.)

A nachia tsaosmāis, a rono anō rakákawās nachai.
Enquanto sentava-se para banhar, uma cobra que ali ficava a mordeu.
(As she sat down to bathe, a snake nesting there bit her.)

Tenāseiti.
Morreu mesmo há muito tempo.
(She died indeed a long time ago.)

Aská akaivo voshō,
E assim então ela chegou,
(And so then she arrived,)

shono yove Nawaro pakeivo paraiki voshō.
no Povo-Espírito da Samaúma ela terminou por chegar.¹³
(in the Spirit-Folks of Samaúma she finally arrived.)

anosho chināi,
E chegando lá pensou,
(And upon getting there she thought,)

ato chināmaki_,
foi pensando,
(and thought,)

ato chināmaki_.
foi pensando
(and thought.)

“Ramaro noke_ chinā naíai nō neskái,
“agora que estamos com o pensamento entristecido,
(“now that we in saddened thought,)

noke neská akavo noke.
agora vamos fazer assim.
(now here is what we will do.)

Txipo shavá otapa roai askátanivai ari shavámisvo.
A época que virá vamos transformar para que os outros sofram.
(The time that will come we shall transform for others to suffer.)

Vei Vai arina shovimakĩ!
Vamos, façam logo o Caminho-Morte!
(Hurry, build now the Death-Path!)

Vei Vai arina shovimakĩ!” ikiti.
Façam logo o Caminho-Morte!” disse ela há muito tempo.
(Build now the Death-Path!” she said long ago.)

Askáka akátōsh tanamakinānāi.
Assim tendo mandado eles entre si tudo combinaram.
(Thus having ordered them to agree among themselves.)

Chai yove Nawavo,
Povo-Espírito da Envireira,
(Spirit-Folks of Envireira,)

shono yove Nawavo,
Povo-Espírito da Samaúma,
(Spirit-Folks of Samaúma,)

Tama yove Nawavo,
Povo-Espírito das Árvores,
(Spirit-Folks of the Trees,)

ati tanamakinānāvaikis,
são estes os que entre si tudo combinaram,
(these are the ones who among them all agreed,)

awe_ vana anōkis akavo
a ordem obedeceram e fizeram,
(they followed the order and did it,)

Vei Vai shovimaki_.
construíram o Caminho-Morte.
(they built the Death-Path.)

Atiãro yora veiya roase,
Naquela época as pessoas morriam tranquilas,
(Back then people died peacefully,)

Vopitani tachikrãse,
faleciam e já chegavam,
(they died and quickly got there,)

vopitani tachikrãseika.
faleciam e já chegavam mesmo [na Morada Arbórea].
(they died and indeed got there [to the Arboreal Abode].)

Akáme_kirotse_ãtõ atovo
Assim era, mas ela ordenou e fizeram,
(So it was, but she ordered and they did it,)

Vei Vai aská aki_ shovimai akavo. construíram o Caminho-Morte.¹⁴
(they built the Death-Path.)

Shovo yove Nawavo aská vei chinãya shokoma,
Povo-Espírito da Samaúma não vive assim com pensamento-morte,
(Spirit-Folks of Samaúma do not live with a death-thought,)

Tama yove Nawavo vei chinãya shokoma,
Povo-Espírito das Árvores não vive com pensamento-morte,
(Spirit-Folks of the Trees do not live with a death-thought,)

Chai yove Nawavo vei chinãya shokoma.
Povo-Espírito da Envireira não vive com pensamento-morte.
Spirit-Folks of Envireira do not live with a death-thought.)

Akáme_ki_tse_ãtõ ato vanaka,
Assim mesmo são, mas ela os comandou,
(So they are, but she commanded them,)

chināmakinānāvaikis akavo,
eles pensaram entre si e então fizeram,
(they thought among themselves and then did it),

A vai shovimakinā.
Construíram aquele caminho.¹⁵
(They built that path.)

Atō aská ati,
Assim há tempos fizeram,
(So they did long ago.)

atō aská atisho.
assim há tempos eles fizeram.
(so they did long ago.)

Aki_ vai roa aina, vai roakama,
Ajeitaram o caminho, caminho ruim,
(The arranged the path, a bad path,)

anōsh txipo kaniaivo askái shavánō,
para que os depois nascidos padeçam,
(For the afterborn to suffer,)

txipo kaniaivo anō yostánō.
para que os depois nascidos sofram.
(For the afterborn to suffer.)

II. *A travessia (The crossing)*

Wetsaro vei ikitai,
Um já está morrido,
(One is already dead-dead,)

wetsaro vei ikitai,
outro já está morrido,¹⁶
(another is already dead-dead,)
Wetsaro vei matsá pakei,
Outro caiu no lamaçal-morte,

(Another fell in the death-swamp,)

wetsaro vimi noiaivo,
outro gosta de fruta,
(another likes fruit,)

awe_ vimi amai_nō anosho atxitai.
vai comer a fruta e ali mesmo fica preso.
(he is going to eat fruit and get stuck right there.)

aká akarasi_ aská atō veikāse aya.
Assim são mesmo aqueles que vão ficando morridos.
(So are indeed those who become dead-dead.)

askámāi yora ese vanaya,
Mas as pessoas que têm falas sabidas,
(But people of learned speech,)

yora vanaya,
as pessoas faladoras,
(talkative people,)

vana shatesmaivo yora,
as pessoas de fala firme,
(people of firm speech,)

akáro aská.
estas são assim.
(these are like that.)

Aro na mai shavápushō nishō,
Estas, tendo vivido nesta terra,
(These, having lived on this earth,)

wa shavo kai wetsa, wa shavo kai wetsa, wa shavo kai wetsa, akama.
com aquela mulher, com aquela mulher, com aquela mulher não ficaram saindo.
(with that woman, with that woman, with that woman would not go out.)

Mato mã ai_ viá keská,
São como vocês e suas mulheres,
(They are like you and your women,)

a westí verôsho oi_a akaivo yoratse_ Vei maya vei kati_pa,
estas pessoas que olham com um olho só Maya-Morte não pode matar,¹⁷
(these people that look with just one eye Death-Maya cannot kill,)

askárasí_ vei kati_pa.
pessoas assim não podem ficar morridas.
(people like that cannot be dead-dead.)

“Wa mai shavapashō, wa mai shavapashō,
“Na morada desta terra, na morada desta terra,
(“In the abode of this earth, in the abode of this earth,)

wa shavo kai wetsa, wa shavo kai wetsa,
com aquela mulher, com aquela mulher,
(with that woman, with that woman,)

e_ onã yora, onã shavorasi_,
com gente conhecida, com mulheres conhecidas,
(with known people, with known women,)

aki ichná kwāi e_ niámarivi.
eu não fiquei mesmo fazendo besteira.
(I indeed was not fooling around.)

E_ oi_tivoivo shavo ninivarāsh,
As mulheres que eram minhas,
(The women who were mine,)

aivo shavo oi_ inishō neskái,
por ter vivido apenas com elas é que fiquei assim,
(for having lived only with them I became what I am,)

vei kaya apai e_ neskámai_nō.
por isso é que agora sou morto íntegro.
(that is why now I’m a righteous dead man.)

Matō neskánamāsh ea vei kati_pa ea.”

Por isso vocês aqui não podem, não podem me matar.”¹⁸
(That is why you here cannot, you cannot kill me.)

Ikitō awe_ ese vanase ainai,

Assim ele vai então dizendo sua fala sabida,
(So he goes on saying his wise speech,)

awe_ ese vanase vevo ashō kai.

tendo dito sua fala sabida ele avança.
(having said his wise speech he moves on.)

Katsese vana ikitai tapi,

Falando com tudo ele segue,
(Speaking to everything he follows,)

awá shao tapā vana ikitase,

com a ponte de osso de anta ele fala,
(to the tapir bone bridge he speaks,)

awá shao tapā masotanáiri pao shokoarasi_ vana ikitase,

com as conchas cortantes da ponte de osso de anta ele fala,
(to the sharp shells of the tapir bone bridge he speaks,)

vei yochi_rasi_ vana ainase,

com todos os espectros-morte ele fala,
(to all death-spectrums he speaks,)

vimirasi_ vana ainase,

com os frutos todos ele fala.¹⁹
(to all every fruit he speaks.)

wa mai shavápushō vimi ichnárasi_ ōsipa yaniakĩ niáma,

“Naquela terra, não vivi me alimentando de ruins e fartos frutos.
(“In that land, I did not feed on bad and abundant fruit.)

Eri píti koi_ meramashōrivi, ea anō yanini.

Eu mesmo procurava comida de verdade para me alimentar.
(I looked for real food to feed myself.)

Aki ea anō, mato ea mā vei kati_pa.”

É assim que sou, vocês não podem me matar!”

(That is how I am, you cannot kill me!»)

A kaisa vanaina.

Assim ele segue falando.

(So he keeps on speaking.)

Vei shōparasi_ askásevi,

Com os mamãos-morte também,

(To the death-papayas as well,)

askárasí_ ave ke_vo anō inā askásevi,

com todas as coisas gostosas oferecidas também,

(to all the goodies offered as well,)

askásevi, askásevi vana akitasekāi.

e também e também, com tudo ele vai mesmo falando.

(and also and also, to everything he keeps on speaking.)

Vana arasi_ nokorivi,

Falando com tudo ele chega mesmo,

(Speaking to everything he arrives indeed,)

ese vanase vevo oshōkāi nokorivi.

tendo antes falado sabiamente ele chega mesmo.

(having spoken wisely before he arrives indeed.)

Askámai_nō wetsaro, aivo awe_ ese vana keyonamāsho,

Mas aquele outro, naquele lugar mesmo em que sua fala sabida acabou,

(But that other one, at that very place where his wise speech ended,)

awe_ keyovāianamāsho atxitase.

ali mesmo onde a fala foi acabando ele fica preso.

(right there where the speech ends he gets stuck.)

Noke_ shenirasi_ ramama itivorasi_ askásevi veikenaivorasi_.

Os nossos antigos, os antepassados de outros tempos ficavam também morridos.

(Our elderly, the ancestors of yesteryear were also dead-dead).

Rave nokoma, rave nokoma, Vei Nai shavaya nokoma,

Uns não chegavam, uns não chegavam, na Morada do Céu-Morte não chegavam.

(Some would not arrive, some would not arrive, in the Abode of Death-Heaven they would not arrive.)

ravero nokoai, ravero nokoma, ravero nokoai.

Uns chegavam, uns não chegavam, outros chegavam.

(Some arrived, some did not arrive, others arrived.)

Akārivi.

Assim mesmo é.

(So it is.)

P: *Askámai_nō vevotiãro roapa, yora veismarvira?*

Mas antes era melhor, as pessoas não morriam?

(But was it better before, people did not die?)

Ch: *Veiro veiyase, askáme_kirotse_ arime_s veis meraiti,*

Morrer elas morriam, mas foi lá mesmo que passaram a ficar morridas,

(Die they did die, but there it was right there that they became dead-dead,)

arime_s vei meraiti.

foi lá mesmo que passaram a ficar morridas.

(it was right there that they became dead-dead.)

Txõtxo koro shavo, pini raká shavo,

As mulheres-pássaro, as mulheres-cansaço deitadas,

(The bird-women, the weariness-women lying down,)

atisho vei oo ati aro.

foram elas que fizeram há tempos o grito morte, foram elas.

(it was they who long ago gave the death-cry, it was them.)

O surgimento do Povo-morte

(The emergence of the Death-Folks)

Vopitani arime_s tachikarãi

Tendo já morrido, ali mesmo [um homem] vinha voltando.²⁰

(Having already died, right there [a man] was coming back.)

akáme_kĩrotse_ awe_ ai_ ravevaki_ki,
Assim mesmo acontecia, mas as suas duas mulheres,
(So it happened, but his two women,)

askárotse_, naro vevoke, na txípoke,
esta, a mais velha, e esta, a mais nova,
(this, the oldest, and this, the youngest,)

na txípketõ a vene enemãitse_ a vene wetsa meraiti,
esta mais nova logo outro homem arranhou, tendo perdido seu marido.
(this younger one soon found another man, having lost her husband.)

Askámãi narotse_ a vene manoyati.
A mais velha, porém, sem homem ficou.
(The eldest, however, had no man.)

Awe_ makika, awe_ mixpo tesovarãsho waiki,
E tendo sido cremado, as suas cinzas trouxeram chorando,
(And having been cremated, his ashes they brought weeping,)

awe_ vakerañ, a vakerasi_ oi_ waiki, a vene_ yora manoi.
os seus filhos, os seus filhos choravam e viam o corpo do homem desaparecer.²¹
(her children, her children wept and saw the man's body disappear.)

Askái awe_ tsaoiti naro, narotse_, arotse_
Mas esta que ficou sentada, esta,
(But this who was sitting down, this,)

yora wetsa merasho,
esta encontrou outra pessoa,
(this found another person,)
mã mã veneyaiti.
estava agora casada.
(she was now married.)

Askásh a vakerasi_ ni, ã vakerasi_,
Então os seus filhos todos, os seus filhos
(Then all her children, her children)

shavo tekōi shokopatō oi_a merairã
iam juntos flechando calangos e o pai encontraram,²²
(went together shooting arrows at lizards and the father they found,)

awe_ tsao a meratinã.
ali mesmo sentado eles o encontraram há tempos.
(right, there, sitting down, they found him long ago.)

Meravaikistse_,
Encontraram e então...
(They found him and then ...)

“Ewa, wa papa tsaoa.
“Mãe, é o pai que está ali sentado.
(“Mother, it is father who is sitting there.)

Ewa, papa nō merai ewa, iki.
Mãe, ô mãe, nós encontramos o pai!”, dizem.
(Mother, oh mother, we found father!” they say.)

Askámãi...
E ela então...
(And she then ...)

“Mato yoama, yoama.”
“Vocês não mintam, não mintam!”
(“Don’t you lie, don’t you lie!”)

A imai_nō kaki_ a oi_atse_,
E tendo dito, ela logo vai olhar.
(And having said that, she soon went to check.)

Anōse, moshó txi_ti_ tsaoa.
Era verdade, era ele que estava ali sentado num tronco.
(It was true, it was him sitting there on a log.)

“A ase, mã veiyame_ki merainã.”
“É mesmo verdade, você já está morto mas vai aparecendo.”
(“Is it true indeed, you are already dead but just show up.”)

Aská askáme_ k̃irotse_ ã vene atxivãisho
Assim mesmo ela disse, foi agarrando seu marido
(So she said, grabbing her husband)

waikiti a anō a noiaivo.
e o chorou há muito tempo, aquela que o amava.
(and she wept a long time ago, the one who loved him.)

Askái ã wai imãinōserotse_
Mas enquanto chorava,
(But as she wept,)

a veneyaitōrotse_ ãtōrotse_
aquela que estava casada, aquela mesma,
(the one who was married, that same one,)

aro waishōmaki,
aquela não o chorava,
(that one did not weep for him,)

vene wetsa ma venekavo askásh.
pois já havia ficado com outro homem.
(as he had already been with another man.)

Askámãitse_...
E assim então...
(And so then ...)

“Mia chinãvrãi oamarivi.
“Não foi mesmo para te buscar que cheguei.
(“It was not take you that I came.)
Txitxo chinãvrãi oarivi.”, ikiti.
Vim mesmo para buscar a sua irmã,” disse ele há tempos.
(I came to take your sister,” he said long ago.)

A vanai venenã.
Assim mesmo o homem falou.
(So said the man.)

Askávaikis...

E depois então...

(And so then ...)

“Shokó Naí shavaya, aská nō chināninō, nō chināninō.

“Para a Morada do Céu-Descamar nós vamos juntos, nós vamos juntos.”

“To the Abode of Scaling-Heaven we go together, we go together.”)

Awetima shavaya nō chināninō.”, ikiti.

Para a morada imortal nós vamos.”, disse ele há tempos.

(To the immortal abode we go,” he said long ago.)

Aská aka orikaivo a ōpiketani torepakekrāiti.

E assim dizendo, jogou para lá um novelo e o deixou há tempos pendurado.

(And so saying he threw up a ball of yarn and for long let it hanging there.)

Askámāinōtse_ anō kaiti a a parinā.

Assim fez e foi subindo primeiro por ali.

(So he did and went up first that way.)

Askávaikis nokoinasho, nokoinavaiki...

E tendo chegado lá em cima, tendo chegado lá em cima...

(And having arrived up there, having arrived up there ...)

“Mia orina, mia e_ teteshōtsati”

“Venha logo, venha que eu vou te puxar!”

(“Come now, come that I will pull you!”)

Aská akaivo nokoinavaikis, a a pari nokoinavaikistse_ tete ashōaiti,

Assim fazia e ela foi chegando, ela foi chegando primeiro e ele puxou.

(So he did and she was coming, she was coming first and he pulled.)

Awe_ aská akárotse_ ti a vakerasi

Assim fez e então os seus filhos,

(So he did and then his children,)

awe_ a vakerasi_ awe_ ai_ akarasi_ vōvōaiti.

os seus filhos e a sua mulher foram embora há muito tempo.

(his children and his wife left long ago.)

“Miaro e_ kanōkiti.”

“Vou com você”, disse há muito tempo.
(“I’ll come with you,” she said long ago.)

Anã, a veneyaivo.

Ela, a casada.
(She, the married one.)

Askámai_nōsrotse_,

E ele então...
(And then he...)

“Miaro txipo onosho akati,

“Você eu tiro depois daí,
(“You, I’ll get out of there later,)

miaro txipo onosho.”

você eu tiro depois.”
(I’ll get you later.”)

Askávaikis atovo keyonismai_nos tete ashōaiti.

E então, quando todos os outros já tinham subido, ele puxou.
(And then, when all the others had already gone up, he pulled.)

Awe_ aská akatse_ a veneyaivo kaiti.

Assim ele fez e aquela que havia casado se foi.
(So he did and the one who had married was gone.)

Awe_ tekinasmāis, taas tii – pakeikwāti.

Mas, quando estava subindo, *chhhh, tum!* – ela caiu há tempos.
(But when she was going up, *chhhh, tum!* - she fell long ago.)

Anosho wa askárasí_ shovinã,

Foi ali que tudo isso começou.
(That was where it all began.)

A askásevi, askámtaivo Vei maya a pakeikawāmtaivo...

Ela também, assim também aconteceu há tempos, Vei Maya foi caindo há tempos...²³

(She too, so it happened so long ago, Vei Maya began to fall long ago ...)

IV. *Os perigos do caminho (The perils of the path)*

P: *Awe shovia, a pakemai_nō awe shovia?*

P: O que foi que surgiu? Quando ela caiu o que surgiu?

P: (What was it that emerged? When she fell, what was it that emerged?)

Ch: *Vei Vai tea shokoivo ati.*

Aqueles que vivem juntos fechando o Caminho-Morte.

(Those who live together closing the Death-Path.)

“Mia mato nō manánō.” iki ari shokoivo avo.

“Estamos aqui esperando por vocês”, dizem aqueles que vivem ali.

(“We are here waiting for you,” say those who live there.)

Akash aivo vei ikitaivo

Assim falam e estes que já estão morridos,

(So they say and these that are already dead-dead,)

aro vei,

esse que está morrido,

(the one who is dead-dead,)

a vene vei ikitaivo,

o homem que está morrido,

(the man who is dead-dead,)

aivo atxikesh.

este elas agarram.

(this they grab.)

Matô wetsārvi shokoaiti,

Aqueles que vivem há tempos numa colina,

(The women who have for long lived on a hill,)

naivo matô wetsārotse_ aro ai_vorasi_ shokoai.

as mulheres que vivem juntas numa colina.

(the women who live together on a hill.)

Mató wetsārotse_ Vei Venerasi_ shokoaiti.

E noutra colina vivem há tempos os Homens-Morte.
(And on another hill the Death-Men have lived for long.)

Aro shavo kākāmāi vei akaya.

Estes, os matadores de mulheres passantes.
(These, the killers of passing women.)

Noke vene akayaro ai_ro, Vei maya.

A matadora de homens é mulher, Maya-Morte.
(The killer of men is a woman, Death-Maya.)

Awe_ kakaya natireme_ro, kakaya shavo:

As suas chefas talvez sejam estas, as mulheres-chefe:
(Her bosses perhaps are these, the boss-women:)

Vei maya, Vei Peko, Vei mashe, aká awe_ kakayase ane,

Maya-Morte, Peko-Morte, Mashe-Morte, estes são os nomes de suas chefas,
(Death-Maya, Death-Peko, Death-Mashe, these are the names of their bosses,)

kakaya shavose anerivi.

são mesmo nomes de mulheres-chefe.²⁴
(names of boss-women indeed they are.)

Akarotse_, arotse_ venerasi_ akaya.

São estas as matadoras de homens.
(These are the men killers.)

Vei yorarasi_rotse_ atovorotse_,

É tudo gente-morte esse pessoal,
(They are all death-folks, these people,)

aro ai vo aka iki vei ikirivi.

essas mulheres são mesmo morridas.
(these women are dead-dead indeed.)

Aská askárvivi.

É mesmo verdade.
(It is really true.)

Askáyavo askáyavōs ātsarivi.

Pessoas assim, pessoas assim são mesmo muitas.
(People like that, people like that are many indeed.)

Noke vene vei aki atxikesh, aivo yora takemashō shokōi.

Quando nos matam, elas nos pegam e passamos a viver com essa gente.
(When they kill us, they take us and we go live with those people.)

Aivo atō parā vanashō atxikesh Vei mayase takeshō shokōno. Enganando com sua fala-mentira, pegam [os homens] que passam a viver com Maya-Morte.

(Deceiving with their lie-speech, they take [the men] who go live with Death-Death.)

Aská askáitō ātsarivi yora wa aská,

É verdade, é mesmo muita aquela gente toda,
(It is true, they are indeed many, all those people,)

vei akaivorasi_ askái ātsaivo yoãvere.

é mesmo muita a gente matadora de quem falo.
(it is indeed many killer people of whom I speak.)

Vei ikita ase atxitai,

Estando morrida a pessoa é agarrada,
(Being dead-dead the person is grabbed,)

atxita awe_ vei ikita ase.

é mesmo agarrada quando está morrida.
(he are indeed grabbed when he is dead-dead.)

Ravero awá shao tapā tapiskamea,

Um escorrega na ponte de osso de anta,
(One slips on the tapir bone bridge,)

ravero yama tapā kanekami,

outro erra a ponte mortal,

(another misses the mortal bridge,)

vei waka shakini pakekami,
cai dentro do rio-morte
(falls into the death-river,)

shākā taas,
e o caranguejo *chac*
(and the crab *chac*,)

mapi_ taas
e o camarão *chac*,
(and the shrimp *chac*,)

shatea, aro veika,
o retalha inteiro e fica morrido,
(shreds him whole and he dead-dead,)

aro a veika.
fica morrido.
(he is dead-dead.)

Vimi noiaivoro,
O que gosta de frutas,
(The one who likes fruit,)

vimi akī nikai_ sho,
o que come frutas ao andar,
(the one who eats fruit as he walks,)

kaki_ ro a kaki_ se, metsevāiki a kaki_ se aká.
ir ele vai, colhe as frutas e vai.
(he goes, he picks the fruit and goes.)

Askámāi wetsāro nikai_ sho noika,
Mas aquele que se apega às frutas ao passar,
(But he who clings to the fruit when passing by,)

a vimi noika nikawāshō,

aquele que se apega às frutas ao passar,
(he who clings to the fruit when passing by,)

awe_ a anō nerish nakachnivoĩ a tanama.
este, sem saber, vai virando cupinzeiro pelo tornozelo.
(this, unknowingly starts to turn into a termite colony from the ankle.)

Nerish nakachnivoiki_ ori tekiti_pa.
Vira cupinzeiro pelo tornozelo e não se move.
(Turns into a termite colony from the ankle and won't move.)

A veiyase.
Está morrido.
(He is dead-dead.)

Neri nakachnivoiki_, neri a mapo mashteki tanama.
Virou cupinzeiro do tornozelo até o final do pescoço, mas não sabe.
(He turned into a termite colony from the ankle to the end of the neck,
but he doesn't know.)

A vanaro vanasa, a oi_ro oi_sa, neno kesoa.
Falar ele fala, escutar ele escuta, mas está por aqui.²⁶
(Speak he can, listen he can, but he is around here.)

Akárasi_vo seteni,
Estão todos aí parados,
(They are all standing there,)
amari vai keso kase,
lotam uma margem do caminho,
(they crowd one side of the path,)

amari vai keso kase.
lotam outra margem do caminho.
(they crowd the other side of the path.)

Õsiōsipaiivo veikenarvi, yora veia.
São mesmo diversos os morridos, as pessoas morridas.
(They are indeed many the dead-dead, the dead-dead people.)

Vei Vai averasi_ westíma,
São muitas as coisas do Caminho-Morte,
(Many are the things of the Death-Path,)

Vei Vai averasi_ westíma.
são muitas as coisas do Caminho-Morte.
(many are the things of the Death-Path.)

Akáro rakero rakeka,
Assustador o caminho é,
(Spooky is the path,)

askámai_nō we ronōsho noke oi_ro,
mas voando no vento nós vemos,
(but flying in the wind we see,)

noke oi_makōvāiki.
voando nós costumamos ver.
(flying we usually see.)

Aská ea oi_machi_rivi.
Foi assim mesmo que vi há pouco tempo atrás.
(So I saw indeed not long ago.)

Notes

- 1 For this relationship between the composition of the person and the problem of enunciation in Amazonian shamanism, see Viveiros de Castro (1986 p.526ss). See also Viveiros de Castro (2002, p.265-95; p.345ss).
- 2 For the special meaning that the notion of ontology takes in contemporary anthropology (as well as its controversies), I recommend consulting Holbraad Martin's position ("Against the Motion") (Candea et al., 2010, p.152-200) and Viveiros de Castro (2004, p.3-23).
- 3 Take as examples the following publications from Pano peoples, all of great ethnographic relevance: Bertrand- Ricoveri (2005); Cabrera (1995); D' Ans (1978). In this latest edition – comprising an ensemble of important narratives of the Kaxinawá - D' Ans seems to conceive the transposition from oral performance to written prose under the sign of certain negativity. Despite the recognized loss of qualities such as onomatopoeia, breathing and gestures, there is no space for its reinvention in that which the author calls "literary reinterpretation" (ibid, p.51). Well, in this case the

charm the author meant to give to the texts in an attempt to overcome the objectivity of the linguistic treatment is given by an easy concession to hypotaxis and its linear consistency (indeed recurrent in the other aforementioned editions). The translator himself wonders in his preface whether that option is in fact the most suitable for such an enterprise. Admittedly, it makes the edition more palatable to a reader unaccustomed to other sign regimes, but one must ask about the qualities of experience left out in this process. For the rest, titles and categories such as “tale”, “wonderful stories”, “fabulous beings,” “moral and immoral tales” and “historical myths” (ibid, p.53- 4), which relate more to certain western view of a fantastic other than to their categories of thought, multiply in the titles of the narratives (awarded, it seems, by the French edition).

- 4 Note also the author’s attention to conceptual translation, noteworthy in his study of problems of interpretation of the notion of creation in the *Popol Vuh*, published in that book (Tedlock, 1983 p.261ss). Admittedly, other authors such as Jakobson had already highlighted the importance of parallelism in oral traditions before Tedlock, but his work becomes significant here when reviewing the possibilities of translating Amerindian verbal arts. In another study I develop further considerations on the meaning of parallelism in these verbal arts associated with shamanism (Cesarino, 2006, p.105-34).
- 5 The study was conducted in partnership with the NGO *Centro de trabalho Indigenista* (CTI), which runs an educational program in the schools of Javari Valley. This partnership was important for my research to be understood and accepted by the Marubo people. Over the years, it has also contributed to reconnecting generations separated because of the transformations experienced by indigenous peoples, as it stimulated the interest of young teachers in research on their traditional knowledge.
- 6 The effects of this translational resource can be tested from the reading of longer excerpts of the *saiti* chants, which unfortunately are not reproduced here. Therefore, the interested reader should refer to my publications listed at the end of this text.
- 7 The scene of the beginning of the world is told in the chant “*A fala da Terra-Névoa*”, which will soon be published in its entirety. An initial fragment can also be found in Cesarino (2011 p.162ss).
- 8 See Viveiros de Castro (2004) for a reflection on translational equivocation.
- 9 I highlight here some recent Brazilian publications: Medeiros (2007); Vianna Baptista (2011); Mussa (2009); Galvão (2004); Tugny (2009).
- 10 An abridged version of this testimony was originally published in Cesarino (2011, p.297-8).
- 11 “Nectar of the earth” is a metaphor for the semen of the men from a certain place that generate children with their wives (see note above). In the report, the man had three wives, Mashe, Peko and Maya. He beat the youngest two to death and only the oldest one, Maya, was left. As they all live in the Abode of Death-Earth (*Vei mai shavaya*), this stage of the cosmos we inhabit, they generally have the word “death” before their first names. The same happens with the names of everyone and everything that belongs to this “death” world, among so many other worlds that make up Marubo cosmology.
- 12 Repetitions like these indicate the intensity, order and duration of a given event.
- 13 The Spirit-Folks of Samaúma and their neighbors live in the Arboreal Abode (*Tama*

sha-vapá), the first upper layer of Marubo cosmography. After dying, Maya's double (*vaká*) will live there and starts talking to those spirit-folks.

- 14 Thereafter, the posthumous fate of the double became risky and evil raged. The Death-Path is very close to this earth, in contrast to the Arboreal Abode which, because of its height, kept the dead at a safe distance. Now the dead are fleeing terrified right at the entrance of the Dantesque path. Because of that, they end up staying here harassing the living and spreading diseases.
- 15 In Marubo cosmology, spirits are not thought of through fixed moral polarities: they built the Death-Path because so they were ordered by Vei Maya, but by themselves they would not think of causing suffering. The procedure is common to shamanism and sorcery, which consist in the mobilization, by a particular specialist, of a contingent of spirits to carry out aggressive or beneficial actions.
- 16 The term “*morrido*” (dead-dead) refers to two the deaths foreseen by Marubo eschatology, for which there are two words with different meanings: one is the death of the body-shell, *vopiya*; the other is the subsequent death of the doubles, *veiya*, which refers to their failures in the posthumous fate (and which sometimes I translate as “*morrido*”, in a way inspired by the Popular Brazilian “natural death”). Note that at this point, Cherōpapa switches from the narrative of *Vei Maya* to a general reflection on eschatology.
- 17 “People who look with one eye” is a metaphor for those who do not commit incest and adultery, currently a common behavior, condemned by shamanistic moral. The comparison here is between foreigners and Brazilians (*nawa*), a reference of monogamy to the Marubo. The latter often practice polygamy, a form of marriage that in past times was restricted to great chiefs and today extend inadvertently to ordinary people.
- 18 Cherōpapa reproduces here the dialogue of the dead person's double with the inhabitants and obstacles of the Path. This dialogical structure is developed in detail in “*Canto Para Conduzir os Duplos*” (Vaka yonoa), translated in Cesarino (2011).
- 19 Loquacity is decisive in posthumous fate. It should have been acquired in life by the person, so that he/she could then be able to speak/think about each risk found along the path. Once these obstacles are overcome, the person finally manages to arrive in the Abode of the Scaling-Heaven (*shokó Nai shavaya*). There the ancestors break their old shell, in which the person re-emerges as a baby. The ancestors then wash the body of the newborn with annatto. Growing fast, he will henceforth live around there.
- 20 The speculation about the posthumous fate unfolds again in the narrative.
- 21 The narrative refers to the ancient *makika* funeral ritual, in which the corpse was burned and the bones ground and then ingested by the relatives of the deceased.
- 22 Shoot arrows at lizards is a common habit among Marubo children.
- 23 This myth-narrative completes the preceding one, also about Vei Maya, the unfortunate woman. In the compilation of myths gathered by Montagner & Melatti (paperback novel, 1999 p.144ss), it says that *Txōtxō Koro*, one of the epithets of the Death-Women used by Cherōpapa early in his speech, is the name of the younger sister, present in the second narrative. In the version of the two authors we see that this narrative is also about the disjunction between the living and the dead: “It was because of that woman the dead will no longer come back alive, he is finished. First the dead came back to life, not now” (ibid.). Montagner & Melatti collected a second version, the outcome of which completes the narrative translated here: “Where she fell, a hole

remained [...]. With the earth from the hole all the holes on *the Vei mai* land were formed [*Morada-Morte* in my translation]. The body and flesh of the woman turned into termite (*mai tsipó*) and the mound of earth (*voyanoã*). The life of the dead woman went to heaven. It arrived in the mound of heaven (*naí voro*), a piece of the sky land and lived there. Upon arriving there, she formed the capuchin monkey (*chino*)” (ibid, p.146). Vei Maya seems to be the first to introduce the separation of Heaven and Death-Earth after Kana Boã had formed the world in ancient times. It gives rise to all the people who live there, as Cherõpapa says in his narrative. However, one does not understand the precise connection between the two narratives presented here by Cherõpapa (and also in the collections of the two anthropologists), since the two husbands are very different characters: one seems to be kind and decides not to take Maya just because she betrayed him; the other is aggressive, spans Maya out of jealousy and abandons her, leading other men to abuse her. That is when her husband spans her even harder and she, distressful, allows a venomous snake to bite her (cf., ibidem, p.148). The very figure of Maya is inverted in the two moments: initially she is fickle, and soon goes to live with another man. Variations like these are not signs of inconsistency of mythical thought - quite the contrary; they seem to indicate a reflection on the dynamics of retaliation (*kopía*). Vei Maya, attacked or attacker, decides to build the path so that people like her husband will not easily move on to better abodes. The woman continues to live “for herself” on the Path, from where she sometimes speaks to the living of this earth. That is what I witnessed at a feast held in the Alegria village in 2007, when she sang a few *iniki* to the guests through a young *romeya*.

24 As in the entire Marubo cosmos, the Death-Path also has its respective groups and chiefs.

25 The detail is important: many of the doubles do not realize that they are “dead-dead”.

26 The narrator indicates with his hands that the dead has been transformed into a termite colony up to the neck.

TN The free translation into English of the poems presented herein has the sole purpose of helping the reader capture the idea of the source text.

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ABSTRACT – The article addresses aspects of the ethnography and the translation of the poetry of Amerindian peoples from the South American lowlands, particularly the Marubo (Javari valley, Amazon). I begin with a brief review of theoretical perspectives that are central to understanding the subject and go on to argue that the work of translational recreation of songs and narratives derived from oral performances should be carried out in tandem with the work of conceptual translation. Finally, I provide a bilingual rendering of a long narrative testimony on posthumous fate and the formation of the Way of the Dead (“The Reports of the Death-Path”), as given by Marubo shaman Armando Cherõpapa.

KEYWORDS: Ethnography, Translation, Amerindian poetry, Marubo, Armando Cherõpapa.

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