

Ättä Edemi Jödö: the cosmosonics ritual of inauguration of the Ye'kwana round house

Ättä Edemi Jödö: o ritual cosmosônico de inauguração da casa redonda Ye'kwana

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Abstract: This article aims to describe a musical ritual performed by the Ye'kwana in 2016, for the construction of their round house, which was not performed in years in Brazil. The Ye'kwana are a Carib people of indigenous speech whose current population is estimated to be around 7,000 people distributed in villages that are located in Venezuela and Brazil. In Brazil, they are a total of around 520 people distributed in three communities located at the Yanomami Indigenous Territory (TIY, in Portuguese), in the state of Roraima. Understanding hearing as a privileged sense regarding the access to knowledge and using different acoustic codes, the Ye'kwana build their houses by intrinsically relating cosmology, sounds, dances and verbal arts. To think about such questions, I use the concept of cosmosonics, to light the centrality of the sound aspects in the cosmology of this Caribe people.

Keywords: Musical ritual. Cosmosonics. Ye'kwana people.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo descrever um ritual musical realizado pelos Ye'kwana em 2016, para a construção de sua casa

redonda, que não era realizado há anos no Brasil. Os Ye'kwana são um povo de língua caribe cuja população atual é estimada em cerca de 7.000 pessoas, distribuídas em aldeias localizadas na Venezuela e no Brasil. No Brasil, são cerca de 520 pessoas distribuídas em três comunidades localizadas na Terra Indígena Yanomami (TIY), no estado de Roraima. Entendendo a audição como sentido privilegiado para o acesso ao conhecimento e se utilizando de diferentes códigos acústicos, os Ye'kwana constroem suas casas relacionando-as intrinsecamente à cosmologia, aos sons, às danças e às artes verbais. Para pensar sobre essas questões, uso o conceito de cosmosônica, para iluminar a centralidade dos aspectos sonoros na cosmologia desse povo do Caribe.

Palavras-chave: Ritual musical. Cosmosônica. Povo Ye'kwana.

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Introduction

This article¹ aims to describe a musical ritual performed by the Ye'kwana in 2016, for the construction of their round house, which was not performed in years in Brazil². Between 1911 and 1913, the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg conducted his renowned research going from Roraima, Brazil, towards the source of the Orinoco river in Venezuela and passed by several Ye'kwana villages performing ethnographic, phonographic and photographic recordings of inaugural importance for the ethnological literature of this and other peoples in the region. On this expedition, he carried out the first descriptions and photos of the construction of the traditional Ye'kwana house, as well as some notes on the cosmology of these people.

The Ye'kwana cosmology called “watunna” is articulated with the most different kinds of sounds, especially singing. This mythological corpus is like a network that invisibly connects everything, keeping the “culture in place” (GUSS, 1990, p. 1). Watunna is expressed in the material culture, verbal arts, chants and in the musicalization of the world, pointing to a philosophy that sees people, things, houses and places as clusters of sound relationships.

Marilia Stein (2009), in her dissertation on the chants of Mbyá-Guarani indigenous children, proposed the concept of cosmosonics with the goal of bringing to light the centrality of the sound aspects in the cosmology of this Tupi people. This line of work is linked to other seminal studies on indigenous music in the Lowlands of South America, which have addressed the importance

1 - This text is part of my doctoral dissertation, defended at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Germany, entitled: “The Ye'kwana cosmosonics a musical ethnography of a North-Amazon people” (ALBERNAZ, 2020) - available on: <https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/handle/10900/100241>

2 - The last great collective house (ättä) had been built in the 1990s, when the community of Fuduuwaduinha was located on the opposite bank of the river Auaris.

of hearing and the centrality of their vocal (and/or instrumental) sound systems, such as those made by Menezes Bastos among the Kamayurá (1999, 2007, 2013), by Seeger among the Suyá (2004), by Jean Beaudet among the Waiãpi (1997), by Montardo among the Guarani (2002), by Piedade among the Wauja (2004), and by Lewy among the Pemón (2011) in Venezuela, among other studies.

For the Ye'kwana, the acoustic codes create the society based on references of the cosmos, and its chants are the same that resonate since the beginning of time, so that the singers, every time they perform their songs, connect to the melodies of the ancestors.

By privileging the Ye'kwana concepts about their acoustic system instead of structural and formal analyses, I adopt the notion that “music is much more than just the sounds captured on a tape recorder” (SEEGER, 2004, p. xiv) and I seek to focus on the acts of speaking and making sounds, on the performances and discourses of the natives.

I will describe the ättä edemi jödö ceremonie based on the observations I made throughout my fieldwork, and as a complement to the ethnographic observation, I followed the suggestions of Stone and Stone (1981) and conducted “feedback interviews” with the Ye'kwana to try to reconstruct part of the meanings of these rites³.

That said, the general objective of this article is to carry out an ethnographic description of the ritual ättä edemi Jödö, in which I participated during the last days of the year 2016, pointing to the relationships between singing, dance, sounds and cosmology.

3 - The Ye'kwana have several precautions and prohibitions regarding their songs, which according to them should not be disseminated to the knowledge of other peoples (not even among the Ye'kwana this knowledge is dominated by all, but only by the owners of songs). In respect to this premise, I chose not to transcribe them literally in this work, but only a general description of their themes and structure.

The Ye'kwana

The Ye'kwana are one of the Carib peoples who migrated through the Amazon rivers located in northern Brazil and southern Venezuela, succeeding the Arawak groups that lived in the region. The ethnographic literature refers to the Ye'kwana using different names, Makiritare, Dekuana, Guaynungomo, Ihuruana, Kunuana and Majonggóng are some of these names, which designate phonetic and regional variations (COPPENS, 1971).

Arvelo-Jimenez (1974, p. 15) states that the Ye'kwana territorial expansion started by the mid-18th century. This expansion happened largely due to the wars with some Yanomami subgroups (Waika and Xirixana) who came from Brazil and pushed the Ye'kwana towards the north, just as they had previously displaced Arawak groups. The hostility between the Yanomami and the Ye'kwana lasted for more than a century and, since the last war between them, it turned into concealed opposition. Nowadays, these groups inhabit a vast common territory and the relationship between them is of respectful truce despite the reciprocal distrust and criticism.

The migration to the north started by the Yanomami expansion caused one Ye'kwana group to abandon the region of the Federal Territory of Amazonas and settle at the margins of the Paragua river, south of the Bolívar state. Another group, however, migrated to the south, towards Brazil and the Uraricoera river. This migration did not happen so much because of external pressures of enemy groups but because of a search for new trade routes. The ceased relations with the Spanish led to a lack of manufactured goods on which the Ye'kwana were already dependent. This fact motivated this group to cross the Pacaraima mountains and settle in Brazil (GUSS, 1990, p. 11). The Ye'kwana claim that trade relations with

the Macuxi and the conflicts with the Yanomami are two of the main factors that motivated their settling in Brazil.

In 1912, Koch-Grünberg visited Ye'kwana villages located in the Merewari, Ventuari and Canaracuni rivers, located in Venezuela. In "From Roraima to the Orinoco" (1917), he claimed that the groups that lived in the rivers Caura and Merewari were "Ye'kwana", those who lived along the margins of the middle and lower Ventuari river were "Dekuana", those who lived near the rivers Cunucunuma, Padamo and Orinoco were "Kunuana", and those who lived in the mountains from which come the sources of the main tributaries of the Orinoco river were "Ihuruana", close to the center of this people's traditional territory. In addition to creating important descriptions about the habits and culture of the Ye'kwana, Koch-Grünberg described the construction of a roundhouse (ättä), collected objects, took several photographs, and created phonograph records (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1917, 1916, 1923a, 1923b, 1928)⁴.

In the 1950s, more systematic research on the Ye'kwana starts being conducted. In 1952, the French researcher Marc de Civrieux, originally a geologist but with great anthropological curiosity and sensitivity, took part in an expedition to the source of the Orinoco that led to a relationship of decades with the Ye'kwana. Among his many studies in the areas of linguistics, ethnobotany and ethnology, he compiled myths that resulted in the masterful book "Watunna: An Orinoco Creation Cycle" (1980), regarded as one of the first American reports about the conquering of Spanish America.

4 - Published in Berlin, the research results are distributed into five volumes: the first (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1917) one comprises the field diary of the ethnologist, where we can read a vivid and detailed report on his traveling conditions and on the culture of the indigenous people he visited. The second volume (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1916) is a collection of myths of the Taurepang, Macuxi and Arekuna peoples, the third (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1923a) one contains his ethnographic descriptions of the cultures of the Taurepang and their neighbors, the Schiriana and Waika (Yanomami groups), as well as the Ye'kwana and the Guinau. The final part was written by the musicologist Erich Hornbostel and describes the phonograms and musical instruments of the Macuxi, Taurepang and Ye'kwana indigenous peoples. The fourth volume (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1928) is dedicated to linguistic records, and the last tome (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1923b) contains hundreds of pictures of indigenous peoples of the many ethnicities found in Roraima.

Years after having been invited by Marc de Civrieux to translate his book containing the myths of watunna (1980), David Guss published part of the results of his research with the Ye'kwana, carried out between 1976 and 1984, in the beautiful book "To Weave and Sing", a work about the Ye'kwana basketry and chants, relating them to the myths and dualisms of the watunna. In his book, the author states that the Ye'kwana self-designation refers to their navigational skills, since "ye" means tree, "ku", water, and "ana", people, which, translated, means "people of the canoe" or "people of the water stick" (GUSS, 1990, p. 7).

While commenting on the progress of his research, which initially intended to study watunna, Guss highlights the difficulties of learning a myth, which was often told in parts, in an open mode of narration, and of the problems with the study of chants, performed in specialized shamanic language. In the very introduction, he comments about the chants and their ability to communicate with the spirits of the invisible world, stating that, because of that, they "had a resistant intent towards any electronic interference" (GUSS, 1990, p. 2).

Realizing the difficulties of the process of learning watunna, which should be broad and active, Guss began to learn how to make the male baskets and, from this process, ended up being introduced to the world of watunna and the chants, since, according to him, all the paths in the Ye'kwana culture lead to watunna. Combining the structuralist tradition with some studies on the anthropology of art and Geertz's interpretive anthropology (1983), from which he derives his concept of culture as being a way of thinking, David Guss analyzed the dual metaphors present in the symbolism of the baskets, which were projections of more elementary oppositions between chaos and order, visible and invisible, being and non-being (GUSS, 1990, p. 4). From the study of the techniques and

the patterns of waja baskets, the ethnographer realized that each cultural symbol reproduces the dual organization of reality that structures every aspect of society and is an expression of the lessons learned from watunna. In addition to his analysis of the baskets, Guss carried out an important analysis of how these dual structures are expressed in the construction of the houses (ättä).

Currently, the Ye'kwana population is estimated to be nearly 7,000 individuals, distributed in villages located in Brazilian and Venezuelan territories⁵. In Venezuela, their traditional territory covers part of the Bolívar State and of the Amazonian Federal Territory. In Brazil, Fuduuwaduinha, Kudaatainha and the small family nuclei called Takunemoinha and Tajädedatoinha are located near the Auaris river, while Waschainha is the only community located near the middle Uraricoera, both rivers are located inside the Yanomami Territory. In Venezuela, the Ye'kwana territory has borders to the east with the territory of other Carib cultures, to the south with the Yanomami and to the west with the Piaroa.

In Brazil and Venezuela, the Ye'kwana territory is located in regions of difficult access, near river sources, established in areas where it is possible to keep a constant watch on river and jungle zones considered as areas of spontaneous surveillance and allow the Ye'kwana to have a certain degree of control over the contact with white people and outsiders (BARANDIARÁN, 1966; ARVELO-JIMENEZ, 1974). In 1911, all villages had only one roundhouse shared by several families and the number of inhabitants in villages ranged from twenty to sixty people. Nowadays, most Ye'kwana houses have a rectangular shape (Ku'shamaakadi) and are only home to the closest family, although Fuduuwaduinha has a new roundhouse (ättä). Married men usually build their houses next to that of their parents in-law, following an uxorilocal residential

5 - Most of the population lives in Venezuela: 7997 (Instituto Nacional de estadística-INE. 2001), in Brazil, the Ye'kwana are approximately 593 individuals (Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health-SESAI, 2015).

pattern typical of the people from the Guyanas region (RIVIÈRE, 2001), which causes the village to be currently made of several family nuclei represented by houses near each other.

Ademi: cosmosonics and drunkenness

The ademi are cosmosonic ceremonies that include the participatory presence of a large audience in the various stages of the ritual process, marked by collective chanting and the consumption of fermented beverages. These ceremonies are long-lasting rituals that extend over three days and are held on three occasions: at the inauguration of houses (ättä edemi jödö), at the opening of new gardens (äudaja edemi jödö), and on the arrival of visitors and hunters (tänöökö edemi jödö). In 2012 and 2016, I watched parts of the hunters celebration (tanöökö), and at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017, I attended the complete ceremonies of new house and new garden inauguration.

A'chudi is the native concept for a vocal-sound genre that includes the naming of beings and spirits in invocations that can be made in silence, through the spoken word or, as in most cases, through vocal chanting. The ademi emphasize collective singing and introduce the musical instruments shiiwokomo⁶. In these ceremonies, the chants, the dances and the unrestrained consumption of fermented beverages (yadaake)⁷ are primary means of connection (wadeekui) with the cosmos (Kahuña). So singing, playing, dancing and drinking are actions that repeat the primordial moments narrated in the myths of watunna⁸.

6 - The *shiiwokomo* is a native category that includes the objects that produce sounds and that are used in different contexts, from ritual to daily life. For more details see Albernaz (2020, p. 127).

7 - The *yadaake*, commonly known as *caxiri*, is a fermented cassava-based drink.

8 - The celebrations with consumption of fermented beverages are fundamental in many societies of the Guyanas region and are related to shamanism, since they aim at "leaving oneself in the sense of seeking both the other human and the non-human" (SZTUTTMAN, 2003, p. 2; my translation). According to the Brazilian anthropologist Renato Sztuttmán "the collective rituals, which in the region are commonly marked by the excessive consumption of fermented beverages - regionally known as *caxiri* - mobilize, through a program that involves dance and music (instrumental or sung), people from diverse backgrounds, whose relationships tend to oscillate between codes of hostility and cordiality. In general, the *caxiri* festivals in the Guyana are responsible for opening up a field of sociability, often reduced in daily life, thus, drinking *caxiri* proves to be a decisive model of sociability and a mark of humanity liable to be shared" (SZTUTTMAN, 2003, p. 30; my translation).

In the early twentieth century, Koch-Grünberg (1917) drew attention to the relationships between music and myth, stating that the chants are often sung myths. A few decades later, Claude Lévi-Strauss (2004) hypothesized that there were reciprocal relations and a profound analogy between myth and music. According to the author, vocal chanting, probably the first form of music, approaches the myth by using articulated language as a framework so that “the respective fields of articulate language, vocal chanting and myth intersect”, and there are frequent cases in which “the myths are actually sung” (LÉVI-STRAUSS, 2011, p. 646). These statements by the German and the French ethnologists lead to the myth-music-rite triad pointed out by the Brazilian ethnomusicologist Rafael Menezes Bastos as being central to the cultures of the Lowlands of South America (2007) in their relationship with dance. According to Menezes Bastos:

From the choreographic viewpoint, some of the most common dance patterns associated with this structure and its variations are line, file (procession), wedge and block formations. Indeed, as emphasized earlier, the third characteristic of the region's music is strongly choreographic in nature, a sign that dance, as much as music and the other nodes of the intersemiotic chain of ritual, is also a strategic area of interest in terms of understanding the indigenous lowlands (2007, p. 303).

Ättä edemi jödö: singing the houses

The indigenous peoples of the Guyanas region consider their settlements self-sustainable, politically independent, and economically self-sufficient. For the Ye'kwana, the physical separation of the village and the house from the outside world

is ensured by its metaphysical isolation, expressed in the house construction ceremony, the ättä edemi jödö. The ethnological literature states that this spatial arrangement associates the interior with safety and familiarity, and the exterior with danger and the unknown, although these oppositions are relative (RIVIÈRE, 2001, p. 37-68).

Koch-Grünberg was the first ethnographer to describe the construction and inauguration ceremony of the Ye'kwana ättä. In his reports, he stated that the house is "a true piece of art" (1917, 1923b), more complex and well-finished than the houses of the Macuxi and Taurepang. His diary and the volume dedicated to the analysis of the cultures in the Roraima region contain the details about the construction of the ättä. His notes, however, focus only on the construction technique, not addressing questions about the cosmology implied in the material culture.

Decades later, Barandiarán (1966, p. 49) and Nelly Arvelo-Jimenez (1974, p. 156) wrote that the relationship between the understanding of universe and the roundhouse as its visible replica was one of the group's most important beliefs, which is tied to the idea that the world outside the village space is populated with supernatural forces that can turn against people. David Guss (1990, p. 21) in his approach to the art and chants of the Ye'kwana, influenced by the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, described the relationship between the house and the cosmology, and pointed to the distinction made between the community and its outer world, which makes the Ye'kwana attribute special attention to the physical and symbolic creation of the house.

When I started my fieldwork with the Ye'kwana, I heard many times about the intentions of the ayaajä (leader) Davi Ye'kwana to build a big ättä at the center of the village. The problem that prevented them from starting this construction was, according to the leaders, the absence of young people, since most of them

were in Boa Vista attending high school and university. What once was only a project discussed at the anaaka night meetings became reality in 2016, when the house was built in a process that lasted the whole year and had the help of everyone in the community, including some young people that returned from the city.

In September 2016, I returned to Fuduwaduinha for a stay that coincided with the house roofing phase. During this period, I participated in the house construction activities during the day, and at night I talked with Elias Ye'kwana⁹ about the chants of ättä, using as a study framework the final course paper at the Insikiran Institute of Indigenous Education (Federal University of Roraima-UFRR) made by Fernando Gimenes (2009), who made a full transcription of this ademi, resulting in a manuscript of more than one hundred pages. Three months later I returned to participate in the ättä edemi jödö ceremony, which ended on the last day of 2016, occasion in which I could sing, dance and play with the Ye'kwana, amidst an extensive schedule of ceremonial activities.

The French geologist Marc de Civrieux (1980) lived for decades in contact with Ye'kwana groups in Venezuela and collected a watunna that addresses the origin of the ättä and how this construction consolidates the separation between heaven and earth. According to the narrative, in the beginning of time, after Odosha¹⁰ created death and night, people lived in darkness, afraid and hidden as animals and it was no longer possible to see the light of Kahuña, the true heaven. Wanadi then blew a wiriki stone (shamanic stones) and gave birth to Ättawanadi, his third double, and sent him to populate the world with wise and good people. Wanadi created the sun (shii) to illuminate the earth during the day, and the moon (nuna) and the stars (shidishe), to light the

9 - Elias is a singer, and boatman at the health center of Auaris.

10 - Wanadi is the creator of the world, and Odosha is his twin. The origin narratives talk about how Wanadi tried to create a good earth but was interrupted by his brother Odosha who, along with him, created the world as it is now: a flawed, degraded earth (amoije) disconnected from Kahuña, the primordial heaven.

night, and from that moment on the earth started to have its own sky, and people were able to leave their hiding places and learned to make their own homes (CIVRIEUX, 1980, p. 28-31).

I heard from Majaanuma, a sage Ye'kwana, a version of this watunna that mentions eight houses built by different characters of the mythology. The first house, called tuduumashaka, was built in the yaamu region in Venezuela, near the Marawaka mountains. This house was round but had a different roof than that of the traditional ättä. The second house, a round ättä of conical roof called Wayanatödö, was built by Uduujude next to the Mount Roraima. Wanahamjödö, the third house, was built by Wanadi, Tukuijödö, the fourth house, by Uduujude. Then, Wanadi built a rectangular house called Ku'shamaakadi and an ättä called Kawaijhödö. He built two houses at the same time to escape from Odocha, while his grandfather Majaanuma built another and named it muwa'jödö. Finally, Iudeeke built a house called ättäinha, and two other houses which he named waata'jödö, one of which is near Waschainha, which is currently a conical-shaped mountain range that can be seen from the banks of the Uraricoera river.

These houses, built by several mythical characters at the beginning of time, serve as a model for the construction of the current rectangular (Ku'shamaakadi) and round (ättä) houses. Similarly, these characters taught the Ye'kwana the chants of ättä edemi jödö that are repeated until today in the house inauguration ceremonies, and therefore the elders always retell these stories. Majaanuma concluded the story mentioning that when Wanadi left he left his spit on the anaaka, who continued singing as if it were himself, a strategy used to mislead his brother Odocha. From that escape on, the distinction between heaven and earth was consolidated, leaving the house as the architectural model of the cosmos (GUSS, 1990; ARVELO-JIMENEZ, 1974).



Figure 1 - Drawing of the Tuduumashaka, first house created on earth. Photo: Robélio Ye'kwana



Figure 2 - Construction of the ättä, the roundhouse. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



Figure 3 - Construction of the ättä, the round house. Photo: Koch-Grünberg (1923a, p. 328).

This cosmological and architectural model is expressed in the terminologies referring to the ättä. The outer circle (äsa), which housed the families and the domestic fire, represents the earth, the central circle (anaaka), the place of the ritual life and dormitory of the single men, corresponds to the sea (dama), and the central pole (ñududui) is the axis of the center of the earth and the connection (wadeekui) of the house with Kahuña, the center of the cosmos. The four main poles and the ñududui are the strongest and are arranged in a circle among other twelve smaller poles (iadadä), joined together by several sticks used as beams that serve as a support for the ceiling, which is constructed with many rims and sticks¹¹. The cardinal points guide the places in the cosmos inhabited by the spirits, so that the more beneficial spirits live toward the east and, to a lesser extent, to the north. While the beings and spirits of Odosha live to the south and the west. That is why the most important door of the house faces the east. The roof is covered with two different types of straw, reproducing the duality of the internal division of the house.



Figure 4- Scaffolding structure used in the construction of the ättä. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz

¹¹ - Wanadi is the creator of the world, and Odosha is his twin. The origin narratives talk about how Wanadi tried to create a good earth but was interrupted by his brother Odosha who, along with him, created the world as it is now: a flawed, degraded earth (amoije) disconnected from Kahuña, the primordial heaven.

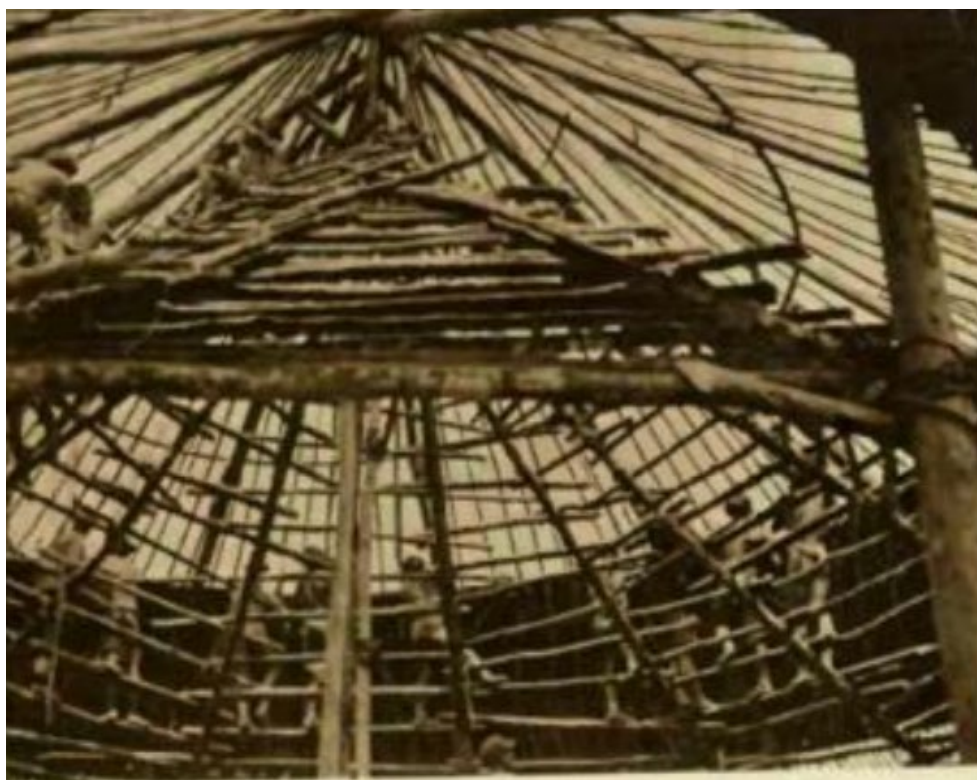


Figure 5 - Scaffolding structure used in the construction of the ättä. Photo: Koch-Grünberg (1923a, p.328).



Figure 6 - Woman serves yadaake to the young man who plays the drum (samjuda) to animate community work. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz

The first chant of the house occurs after the covering of the conical roof. The a'chudi edamo includes the tu'de chant (which means enemy), which mentions all the known ethnic groups, sending them away from the ättä. The Macuxi, Waiwai, Wapischana, Piaroa, Sanumá, Yanomami, Maku and white people are some of those mentioned in the chant, performed again when the walls are covered with clay. Nevertheless, with the increase of interethnic marriages with the Sanumá, Macuxi, Piaroa, and white people, Vicente Castro and the other sages have avoided naming these ethnic groups, so the chant does not turn against the Ye'kwana, something also noted by Guss (1990).

The chant owners, called a'chudi edajä, are the ones responsible for the communication with the beings of the invisible world. According to what I heard from the Ye'kwana, Vicente Castro is the last great sage still alive. His prestige is immense, even among the other sages, such as Majaanuma, who has remained years next to Vicente, studying him, a learning process that began in 2012. Contreras, who also lives in Fuduwaduinha, is another renowned sage and, as Vicente Castro, he knows the chants and stories of watunna "from memory", without the use of notebooks as a way recording them. Besides them, the ayaajä (leader) Davi, Elias, Joaquim, and Romeu who are other ritual specialists, as well as a few others like Claudio and João, have notebooks with some important chants¹².

On December 29, 2016, on a sunny afternoon interspersed with rain showers, the Ye'kwana began the inauguration of their ättä. The sages positioned their hammocks and tools near the eastern door, surrounded by men, young people, children, and women, and Majaanuma began to sing the chant called nonooankomo odoshankomo, which aims to drive away the evil

12 - On the Ye'kwana theory of writing and phonographic records, see Albernaz (2020).

spirits that become visible through the countless species of snakes and animals of Odocha that can enter the house. This performance, which lasted exactly eight hours, went on without interruption and began the responsorial style that lasted over three days of chants before the curious and participative audience, which gave special attention to the names mentioned in the lyrics.

I took a stump of wood and sat next to the sages. Majaanuma, who had forgotten his chant notebook in Waschainha, used as a guide for his performance a copy of Fernando's work, while extra copies served as a basis for other Ye'kwana and made it possible for me to sing along with them. With his glasses raised on his forehead, Majaanuma leafed through the manuscript lying on his hammock, singing the words written on the paper. The strong and metallic tone of his voice emphasized the characteristic microtones of the chants that give a special tone to these sound structures of few notes. "Tänökone" means beautiful singing, and Majaanuma's voice is appreciated by all for correctly repeating the sounds that never cease to sound in Kahuña.

At the beginning of each stanza, Majaanuma emitted a long heeeeeeee, stronger than a sigh that preceded the melody that progressed in wavy variations, ending in a descending tone movement, strongly marked by the singers who repeated the phrases at different times, giving a polyphonic aspect of singular beauty to the chant.

The chant mentions several animals such as the blind snake (täseenemö), the coral snake (widi), the worms (shiiyaama), the geckos (makaishana), the centipedes (kumeejeje and köya'köi), the wasps (awaakanei), the beetles (ätuukwada), and other beings of Odocha who live near the house, asking to close their paths and prevent their approach. It sends away Odocha birds that have invisible sieves, with which they capture people, and asks for

animals like the piranha fish (Ka´ shai) to cut the wires of the winds, the rains, and the storms. It orders the paths of the reptiles (animals that live on the land) to be closed, it sends away the chants and songs of the Odosha birds (animals that live in the sky), and cuts off the path of the rains and storms, sonically isolating the ättä space.



Figure 7 - Chants and dances around the round house. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz

It was about 10 p. m. when Majaanuma invited us to leave the house, taking with us the pieces of wood where we were sitting. We left the house through the door that lies to the east, and we went singing toward the front of the west door. We stopped at this place, facing the mountains where the sun sets, and we sang for a few more minutes until we finished the song, throwing our woods away, and blowing to drive all the evil away from the house. This way we finish the first stage of the ceremony, which ended with shouts of satisfaction. We went back inside the house and, before the beginning of the ättä edemi jödö, the leader Davi oriented the people who were there and talked about the details of the ceremony:

We are going to get adorned, embellished, you who are young, we will dance well. We are in our community. The women are going to give us yadaake, and if someone sleeps or has a fever, we will take care of them. You young people, do not walk by yourselves at night. We are going to play wasaja¹³ and dance. Do not have sex on these days. Only the day after tomorrow, when the celebration ends, you can resume romantic relationships. We must bring the yadaake and put it at the ñududui (central pole). Vicente Castro is here with us, he is the wisest among us, I know only a little. Adawata¹⁴ is also here, he likes our culture and has several a'chudi and ademi in his computer. And like us, Ye'kwana, he is happy to be here. Let's purify our house, without shouting. Let's imitate our ademi. We have to listen to the words of our greater ones.

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The words of the sage instructed the others on how to proceed during the three days of the ceremony and emphasized my presence as someone who enjoyed the chants. A few minutes later, the chant was resumed and a group of dancers formed a circle and began to dance moving counterclockwise, in a dance step that marks the right foot forward, while the left foot passes behind or in front of the right foot, instigating the movement to the right. The firmness of the slightly flexed legs leads to the leaning of the torso, giving a plastic beauty to the repetitive dance¹⁵. The first man who danced on the right side held a wooden staff that had on its upper part an enclosed container with the seeds of a plant

13 - The wasaja is a rattle-stick or a rhythm staff with a wooden body that emits sounds due to the friction of stones and seeds of a plant with the same name, of the family of the apocynaceae, either placed inside a weaved, enclosed and oval container or tied with strings to the stick, which is struck against the ground thus making sounds, belonging, just as the madaaka, to the category of idiophones (HORNBOSTEL and SACHS, 1961).

14 - I was nicknamed by the Ye'kwana as "Adawata" (howler monkey), due to the color of my beard.

15 - "It is not a dance properly speaking. The men walk with their heads bowed, one after the other, without a precise compass. Some have their arms crossed over their chests, carrying their right hand on the left shoulder of the one preceding them. The first dancer carries in his right hand a staff, which has maracas of fruit peels on top, thus marking the beat." (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1917, p. 307; my translation). ["Es ist kein eigentlicher Tanz. Die Männer schreiten mit gesenktem Haupt ohne Gleichtritt hintereinander her. Einige haben die Arme über der Brust gekreuzt und halten in der Hand die lange Zigarre, an der sie von Zeit zu Zeit ziehen. Hier und da legt einer die rechte Hand auf die linke Schulter des Vordermannes. Der Vortänzer trägt in der rechten Hand einen Stab, der oben mit Klappern aus Fruchtschalen umwunden ist, und gibt damit den Takt an"].

called wasaja¹⁶, which gives name to this instrument that marks the rhythm of the chant and the steps of the dancers in an uninterrupted way throughout the three days of the ademi (ättä edemi jödö)¹⁷.

A few hours after the ademi began, Jairo, son of the leader (ayaajä) Davi, who was playing the wasaja, stopped dancing beside me, handed me the instrument and asked me to go on with the dance. I began to dance along with them, learning in practice, amid laughter and words of encouragement, to repeat the steps of the dance and beating the wasaja against the ground, strongly marking the continuous pulse of the chant. The men place their right hand over the shoulder of their partners of the same gender, and if there is a woman on their side, they dance arm in arm.



Figure 8 - Ättä, the roundhouse. Photo: Koch-Grünberg (1923a, p. 320)

¹⁶ - See Albernaz (2020, p. 141).

¹⁷ - "The old man, who still bears the name of the high command, is stretched out in his hammock and sings the text of the dance, each stanza twice, while he ties a small net. Meanwhile, in the large central space of the maloka, the dancers have quietly walked a round. Now they join in the song by repeating the stanza twice. Despite the simple melody sung in a somewhat nasal and vibrant voice, everything produces a solemn, epic effect, like an ancient heroic song, a myth recited by the old bard. And it won't be anything else either. Legends and myths are thus passed down from father to son by word of mouth, forming a tradition, the mythical story of the tribe." (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1917, p. 306-307; my translation). ["Der alte Herr, der noch dem Namen nach das Oberkommando führt, liegt in seiner Hängematte und singt, während er an einem kleinen Kescher knüpft, den Tanztext vor, jede Strophe zweimal. Die Tänzer sininzwischen schweigend im großen Mittelraum der Maloka eine Runde gegangen. Nun fallen sie ein und wiederholen zweimal die Strophe. Trotz der einfachen Melodie, die etwas näselnd mit vibrierender Stimme gesungen wird, wirkt das Ganze feierlich, episch, wie ein alter Heldengesang, eine lange Mythe, die der alte Barde vorträgt, und es ist wohl auch nichts anderes. So pflanzen sich diese Mythen und Legenden vom Vater auf den Sohn, von Mund zu Mund fort, die Überlieferung, die mythische Geschichte des Stammes"].



Figure 9 - Women adorned for the ättä inauguration celebration. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz.



Figure 10 - Hammocks around the roundhouse. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



Figure 11 - The chants of inauguration of the round house. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz

The first part of the chant “naajänta eduuwa wishomeekaanä”, which means to sweep the house’s construction site, invites a variety of birds such as swallows and the harpy eagle to sweep with the feathers of their wings. Other animals are called to sift diseases such as malaria, fever, headaches, flu, and madness, thus keeping them away from the ättä. The beings of Odosha and his maada plants are also sent away. At that moment, the consumption of the fermented beverage begins, but still moderately.

At noon of the next day, all the Ye'kwana embellished themselves following the teachings of Wanadi during the first ceremony ättä edemi jödö. The men are painted and feathered by their wives, they use their white bracelets amäkenaawono, their wo'mo and sawiia necklaces, thongs made of red cloth wayuuku, and their red cloths in the head femi. The sages Vicente Castro and Contreras show their imposing necklaces of wild pig teeth. The women wear their thongs muwaaju, their necklaces wo'mo tökokono and wo'mo, and go to the center of the anaaka for the collective dance. With the sound of the wasaja and the verses sung by the a'chudi edamo and repeated by all, they dance, adorned, in a spectacle of beauty and vitality.



Figure 12 - Singing and dancing. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz

After the embellishment, a part of the chant called “needaamuna kaanä” begins, when the immoderate consumption of yadaake begins. Many women serve yadaake to men in the dance line and sitting around the dance, who drink all the liquid from the calabash bowl, sometimes expelling part of the drink or vomiting beside the central pole. After more than 30 hours of ceremony, the ättä floor becomes totally muddy, the women keep diligently serving the men¹⁸, the dancers maintain the solidity of their steps and the singers remain firm in emitting the notes of the sacred chant. Some excerpts of the chant describe the search for a good place to build the house. Akuena, a lake that lies in the center of Kahuña, where the children of Wanadi go after death, has an island called antadönkawääne, in which there are strong woods and pure sands that are requested by the singer for the construction of the ättä.

In the morning of the last day, the Ye'kwana closed a small gap on the clay wall that was still open on the right side of the east door and chanted again the tu'de. Right after that, they begin the kudaawake wataajuina ritual, which follows the same process that occurs in the aji'choto during the menarche of the young women. Everyone, myself included, are whipped up with the kudaawa plant to drive away bad dreams and bad thoughts. “Drinking makes people say bad things, so the kudaawake wataajuina cleans our thinking”, says Joaquim, a singer Ye'kwana. We went back into the house and the chants started over until all the yadaake was drunk. When the last gallon of yadaake has just been served, everyone leaves the ättä, blowing and gesturing with their arms toward the west, once again sending all the evil away.

18 - “The dances continue their course. The dancers drink until they vomit. What is left over is carelessly spit on the ground, which becomes quite slippery from it and when dancing you can fall. I do several rounds with them (KOCH-GRÜNBERG, 1917, p. 309; my translation). [“Die Tänze nehmen ihren Fortgang. Gesoffen wird dabei bis zum Erbrechen. Den Überfluß speien dieTänzer rücksichtslos auf den Boden, der davon ganz schlüpfrig wird, sodaß man beim Tanzen – ich gehe mehrere Runden mit – leicht ausgleiten und zu Fall kommen kann”].

This way, amidst the euphoria generated by the chant, the dancing and the consumption of the fermented beverage for three days, the ceremony of inauguration of the house, the ättä edemi jödö, ended.



Figure 13 - Ye'kwana Inchonkomo sages. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



Figure 14 - Closing of the ättä. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



Figure 15 - Cleansing ritual with the Kudaawa plant. Photo: Koch-Grünberg (1923a, p. 384)



Figure 16 - Cleansing ritual with the Kudaawa plant. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



Figure 17 - Ättä, the roundhouse. Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz



*Figure 18: The sage Vicente Castro comments on excerpts of the book "From Roraima to the Orinoco".
Photo: Pablo de Castro Albernaz*

In general, the ceremony was divided into three different moments: an initial phase that is exclusively vocal and has no consumption of fermented beverages, the beginning of the ademi, the stage in which the chant is accompanied by dance and the wasaja musical instrument, and in which yadaake is consumed, although maintaining a certain solemnity and sobriety, and not much adornment is used, and a final stage of embellishment and excessive consumption of cassava beer, with the ademi songs and dance. After many years, the ättä edemi jödö was remembered, and a new ättä, constructed imitating the houses of the ancestors, became the new center of the ritual life of the Fduuwaduinha village.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to describe the opening ceremony of the Ye'kwana round house, ättä edemi jödö, a central

ritual in Ye'kwana culture, as the house is a replica of the cosmos. Although the Ye'kwana themselves make a distinction between a'chudi and ademi, the chants are linked to each other and, in both genres, the manipulated power and the logic are the same: creating a neighboring zone with the positive non-human in order to establish ties of reciprocity and cut off the lines of the predator beings.

The concept of cosmosonics aims to bring light to the centrality of sound aspects in Ye'kwana cosmology and to the indiscernibility of sounds, cosmology and society. For these people, it is the acoustic codes that create society from the references of the cosmos. In the opening ceremony of the house, the songs seek to create lines (wadeekui) with the multiple forms of beneficial otherness present in the cosmos, cutting, at the same time, the lines of the evil beings that can enter the house and make people sick. Dance, in turn – enhanced by the consumption of fermented drink – becomes the way the Ye'kwana experience, with their bodies, the sounds and their multiple forms of cosmological alterity.

One hundred years after the famous trip made by Koch-Grünberg, the Ye'kwana are still performing their cosmosonic rituals. Except for the shamanic chants, all the rituals described by Theodor Koch-Grünberg are still practiced nowadays and, although the Ye'kwana have often stated their concern with the transmission of this knowledge to future, the young people are still living their culture despite the intensification of the contact with the surrounding society.

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