

Muraycoko Wuyta'a Be Surabudodot / Ibararakat: **Rock Art and Territorialization in Contemporary Indigenous** **Amazonia – the Case of the Munduruku People** **from the Tapajos River**

Jairo Saw Munduruku

PARIRI – Munduruku Association of Middle Tapajos River, Pará, Brazil

Eliano Kirixi Munduruku

Visual Anthropology and Archaeology of Image Laboratory – LAVAI/ Federal University of Western Pará, Brazil

Raoni Valle

Visual Anthropology and Archaeology of Image Laboratory – LAVAI/ Federal University of Western Pará, Brazil.

Abstract: The Munduruku people are a Tupian Indigenous group that inhabit the region between the Tapajos and Madeira Rivers in the southern outskirts of the Amazonian rain forest in South America. During the recent history of the Munduruku people's fight for official government protection of their territory, rock art places became invested with greater importance as a type of sacred historical landmark connected to Munduruku ancestry by the myth-historical narrative of Muraycoko, the father of writing. Muraycoko is a Munduruku culture hero who, as a form of secret knowledge, converted his thoughts into painted images and symbols using a traditional red paint called *sura*; he also manipulated rock outcrops and boulders, to which *sura* was later applied. Images thus constituted are called *surabudodot*. This chapter presents the basic elements of the Muraycoko narrative and proposes a possible account of how it connects rock art, territory and history, thus influencing the Munduruku territorialization process.

Keywords: Muraycoko; rock art; Munduruku people; territorialization; Tapajos River; Southern Amazonia.

Introduction

This chapter stems from an intercultural report made in 2015 to inform the Federal Public Ministry of Brazil of the existence of Indigenous sacred places with rock art in the middle Tapajós river, Amazon basin (Saw Munduruku and Valle 2015). These places are part of traditionally occupied meaningful landscapes in the cosmography and history of Munduruku Indigenous people. At the time of the report, these places were under severe threat of being destroyed by a proposed governmental hydroelectric power plant, along with a mega-dam wall more than 10 kilometres in length, called the São Luiz do Tapajós HPP (see map in Figure 1). Although that immediate threat has diminished due to persistent opposition by Indigenous groups, and changes in Brazilian politics in the last three years, the situation in the region is still alarming.

Munduruku people, a Tupian Indigenous group from southern Amazonia, have been fiercely fighting against the project and other menaces to their well-being, especially from the second half of the 20th century onward, adopting several tactics of resistance. One of these tactics includes the apt use of their cosmology and oral tradition coupled with archaeological sites to reinforce their notions of a sacred geography full of historical landmarks that could and can be acknowledged by non-Indigenous laws as liable to legal

environmental and heritage protection, even when outside demarcated Indigenous land. In other words, archaeological sites/sacred places became tools for Indigenous resistance working as a strategic resource for the cultural shielding of the Indigenous territory.

The Munduruku notion of territory goes further than the officially demarcated area recognised by Brazilian State in the beginning of the 21st century. It fundamentally encompasses meaningful places (Bowser and Zedeño 2009) endowed with spiritual vitality, historical significance and ecological importance outside of the demarcated borders. Some of these places are also archaeological sites such as ancient indigenous villages, sometimes called *açokabuk*, settled by their ancestors or by other ancient Indigenous groups. The reoccupation of these sites by Munduruku people have been happening often and for a long time, inside and outside demarcated lands.

On the other hand, *Wuyta'a be surabudodot/ibararakat* (rock art sites), though their status as types of special places endowed with sacredness and importance, are not (re)occupied; nor are they frequently visited. These sites, different from ancient village sites, are regarded as dangerous and very restricted places accessible only in the company of a *wamōat* (benign shaman) or when someone gets ritually protected by a shaman before contact with the rock art sites.

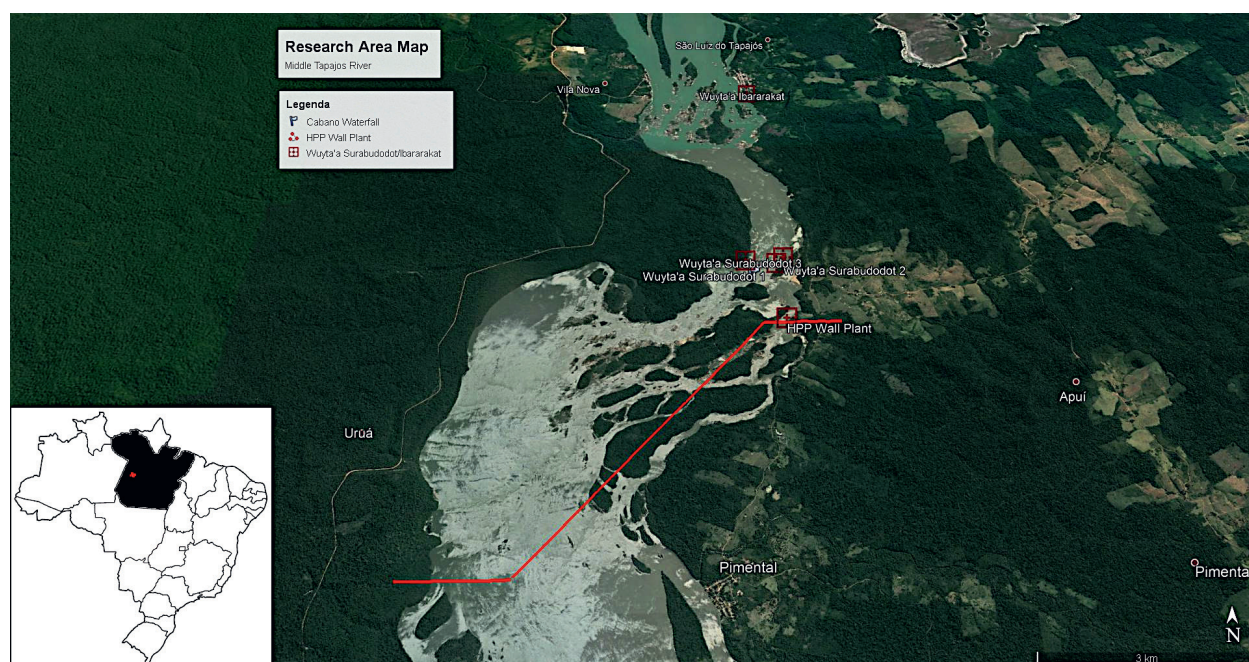


Figure 1. Map of the study area showing Muraycoko places in the Middle Tapajós river with the projection of the HPP dam wall (red line).

Katō (anthropogenic dark earth), *tig'abagbag'a* (ancient pottery shards), *uk'buk* (ancient trash mounds) and *kubukbuk* (regenerated vegetation patterns grown over abandoned crops) are all evidence of past human actions constituting hallmarks of Indigenous history in such landscapes. Munduruku people recognise those signatures, theorise on their meanings, and choose these places as their preferred areas for reoccupation sites based on historical and ecological criteria (e.g. Rocha and Honorato de Oliveira 2016).

Today, their major reoccupied territory is called *Daje Kapap Eipi* (the Passage of the Pigs Territory), labelled after a sacred place situated in it, which gives its ontological rationale. Situated at the middle Tapajós River, it constitutes one of their most disputed cultural, political and ecological border zone inside their traditional territory, which is being retaken through an auto-demarcation process, consisting in their largest land claim outside the officially demarcated area, Mundurukânia in the upper Tapajós. The Brazilian State refused and still refuses to acknowledge the status of Indigenous land in *Daje Kapap Eipi*. Fully recognising Indigenous land rights in the middle Tapajós River would certainly cause complications to governmental plans.

This chapter addresses aspects of the Munduruku peoples' resistance. Sacred places with rock art, and other types of archaeological sites, are more than indexes of past Indigenous presences; they became tools and weapons for cultural-environmental defence

of their traditional territories in the present. This situation is particularly noteworthy where the Brazilian State does not fully recognize Indigenous land rights. In such contexts, myth-historical landmarks as rock art places have the potential to become disputed but important war trenches.

One of the most powerful strategies adopted by the Munduruku people along their entrenched territorial frontiers was the auto-demarcation initiative in the middle Tapajós basin, taking in their own hands the process of setting the territorial physical limits of their lands according to traditional knowledge and oral history, regardless of governmental acknowledgement.

The myth-historical narrative of Muraycoko, known as the father of writing, is the main focus of this chapter. For the first report, elements of the narrative were gathered from different Munduruku elders from middle and upper Tapajós River villages and carefully analysed by one of the authors, Professor Jairo Saw Munduruku, an experienced historical researcher and philosopher among his people, later assisted by the other two authors. Professor Saw has extracted from these narratives the main points that are also presented here. However, most of the material selected and analysed here comes from an interview with a renowned Munduruku traditional historian in the Tapajós basin, Saw Apompu, also known as Mr. Adriano Saw Munduruku, who was recorded by the authors during a 2015–2018 documentary film production (Kirixi Munduruku and Karo Munduruku 2018).

The general narrative that constitutes the source material of this text was primarily recorded in the Munduruku language, then translated to Portuguese and finally to English. There might therefore be translational noise and impreciseness, which expresses the linguistic and cognitive efforts of the authors to bridge diverse knowledge, memory and time regimes, expressed in Munduruku historical cognition when interculturally filtered by Western languages and mindsets. In short, this chapter expresses a tentative effort towards an interepistemological approach of rock art theory building. However, before proceeding to the narrative itself, a brief account of some political constituents of the Munduruku resistance process may be of help to understand the background of their struggle.

Munduruku resistance in the context of the recent Brazilian political upheaval

In the past thirty years, conflicts have increased in southern Brazilian Amazonia, an area devastated by illegal logging and mining, massive land grabbing and deforestation connected to agribusiness expansion (mainly cattle raising and soybean plantations, which are the leading Brazilian commodities besides iron, bauxite, gold, oil and corn). Amidst this capitalist turmoil in central-southern Amazonia are the Munduruku People trying to defend their territory. In 2012, the preparations for the Tapajós Hydroelectric Power Complex with more than 7 mega-dams planned to be built along that basin, raised the pressure even more, turning the area into the Amazonian eye of a developmental hurricane.

From 2013–2016, the menace caused by the proposed hydroelectric complex, projected to engulf the entire Daje Kapap Eipi territory, reached its peak. One of the major issues was that the prior, free and informed consultation process with the Indigenous people did not follow the ILO Convention no. 169¹, not yet implemented in today's Brazil. Nor did the government observe the specific cultural rules that the Munduruku themselves have defined as their Consultation Protocol. The entire consultative process was flawed, and governmental agencies implemented the project without proper adherence to Indigenous constitutional rights and international regulations, which led to a rapid deterioration of the relationship between the Federal Government and the Munduruku People.

¹ An international juridical disposition that arbitrates prior, free and informed consultation processes to Indigenous and traditional peoples, whenever major infrastructure projects offer a risk of harmful impacts on Indigenous territories and lives. This protocol was defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO), an agency of the United Nations (UN).

Running parallel to this, the then Brazilian centre-left government was falling to pieces, succumbing to the so-called white coup d'état that reached its goal with a fraudulent presidential impeachment in 2016. This rearranged the Amazonian developmental agenda for several years, giving a false-positive break to the Munduruku situation (but worsening all others).

In 2019 an extreme-right wing president, supported by the military and the top agribusiness and mining elite, came to power. Bearing highly controversial and dangerous authoritarian discourses and practices, this chief of state, among other things, insanely supports the burning of swathes of Amazonia, illegal mining inside Indigenous lands, and adheres to a negationist and downplaying response to Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, along with catastrophic genocidal consequences for Indigenous populations in their territories. If things were bad previous to 2016, they have dramatically worsened. Again, in the middle of this environmental war theatre, Amazonian Indigenous peoples constitute the main line of resistance.

Muraycoko narrative from the perspective of the traditional historian Adriano Saw Munduruku (Apompu)²

Wakopadi (Marupá River) is located in the area of the headwaters of Das Tropas River; which is a major tributary of the Crepurizão River system. In this same region, there is an ancient Indigenous village also called *Wakopadi*. Munduruku history and the origin of all things began in that village. According to the ancestors, there was the beginning of our history. The legendary warrior Muraycoko was born in that same village.

Muraycoko was a wise man who possessed knowledge on the science of human nature, but nobody taught him that knowledge and he did not teach it to anyone else. He was born that way with the ancestors' legacy.

He had an unknown origin, his parents were never mentioned in the stories. His intelligence and intellectual capacities he extracted from inside himself. Through that he attained an extraordinary result: he could turn make his thoughts visible to the naked eye; he could turn his thoughts into images. Every time he showed that knowledge to people, he was received with

² Although Mr. Adriano Saw constitutes the fundamental source here and in the following related parts, Prof. Jairo Saw adopted a methodology of collecting narrative elements about the same cultural hero from different elders, opportunistically. Thus, sometimes bits coming from distinct sources may merge, resulting in a compilation from several provenances. In these cases, it is hard to say which parts came from whom. Nevertheless, to bring together all the elements of Muraycoko's narrative, the version from Mr. Adriano Saw was the spinal cord, the most important. However, in the following part of the chants, other sources (e.g. Tawe *et al.*, 1979) were possibly also invoked by Prof. Jairo Saw Munduruku as part of his research methodology.

V. <i>Munduruku time</i> (ethnographic present)
IV. <i>Karo Daybi time</i> – the greatest warrior chief that lived during a period of intense wars and extensive migrations, possibly associated to the early-mid Colonial period [17th and 18th centuries A.D.]
III. <i>Muraycoko time</i> – not so long before Karo Daybi epoch and possibly associated to the late Pre-Colonial period (i.e., before 17th Century A.D.)
II. <i>Peresoatpu time</i> – A more ancient period of Munduruku mythic history characterized by transformations between humans and animals and travels through their worlds.
I. <i>Karosakaybu time</i> – The creation of the world, humans and animals.

Table. 1. Munduruku myth-historical sequence showing five different phases. According to their oral tradition: I – *Karosakaybu* time when the world and humans were created; II – *Peresoatpu* time when humans and animals transformed into each other and travelled along their worlds; III – *Muraycoko* time is situated in the middle of the historical sequence; this is when rock art is created. IV – *Karo Daybi* time when wars and migrations took place, which is possibly associated with the beginning of colonial times and European invasion during the 17th and 18th centuries for that area. V – Munduruku people in the ethnographic present, or simply put, “us”. According to this scheme of myth-historical relative dating, rock art creation happens sometime before colonial disruptions, possibly during late pre-colonial times, somewhere in between the 10th and 16th centuries AD (after Saw Munduruku and Valle 2015: 44).

surprise and amazement. He caused an impression in his people as much as in himself. But little is known about him.

Muraycoko had this special gift that made him different from the other Munduruku that lived back in his time. He mastered the art of writing with figures using for that matter a traditionally well-known paint made from the red seeds of *coko'a* (urucum [*Bixa orellana*]) called *sura*. However, he had sophisticated the techniques of paint preparation and usage, while it was traditionally used only as body painting on some parts of the body for medicinal purposes, Muraycoko experimented with its application on other types of supports and added other substances to the paint recipe. Particularly, he started to draw and write figures on the rocks, and by that he invented *wuyta'a surabudodot* (red rock painting; but also drawing/tracing in red figures/images) and *wuyta'a Ibararakat* (petroglyphs³; but also writing using letters as codified symbols in a writing system).

His skills were impressive, creativity and tracing precision were hallmarks of his depiction technique. He was a warrior in the Munduruku mythology known as the father of writing. But he did not use writing signs like alphabetic letters as in the *pariwat* (non-indigenous people) writing. As he himself said once, he had the capacity to project images from his thoughts using that red paint. This information is traditionally sung in this part of his song: ‘...*Wedem tak òn wexat'in ma...Bio dak òn wexat'in ma...*’ (Tawe et al., 1979: 162).⁴

³ Some Munduruku elders acknowledge a straight relation of authorship between Muraycoko and *surabudodot* paintings. However, this relation is disputable when it comes to *wuyata'a ibararakat* (petroglyphs), without the red paint. In such cases, Muraycoko authorship is contested by some.

⁴ ‘...I make turnings in all animals...I also make tapir turns...’ Turning is used here in the sense of becoming a drawing, a depiction of the animal in red painted traces, a graphic representation. So, to turn a tapir means to turn it into a drawing.

Munduruku history is divided into phases. At least five of them can be visualised according to their myths and oral tradition (see Table 1). The first period is the creation of the world by Karosakaybu, Munduruku's main demiurge, during which *Wakopadi* was founded. Another important event which occurred in that period was the transformation of the *pucayū juap* (the first humans) into animals as a punishment caused by disobedience and violation of the rule of reciprocity, a fundamental principle that organized the Karosakaybu world.

The second historical period witnesses Karosakaybu transferring free will to humans, allowing them to take care of the world by themselves. Before that, people feared their great leader who possessed entire dominance over them. Humans were obliged to listen to him and could not take any decision without consulting him first. But, sometime during this period, there was a deal struck between humanity and the demiurge because his second son had the habit of sexually harassing human females very often, a fact that caused rage among men who demanded that his son be punished. Sensing that humans were rightfully demanding a resolution Karosakaybu granted them autonomy to choose; notwithstanding, his opinion continued to be highly regarded.

However, nobody listened nor showed interest in Muraycoko's knowledge. He was not taken seriously by his people. Indeed, he was rejected by his people and his gift was not accepted. Even his wife refused, after a while, to accepting her husband's gift, a knowledge that could have changed their lives and that of all the people. Feeling the rejection of his most beloved person, he decided to leave the village taking with him all his knowledge without teaching it to Munduruku people. Feeling sorrowful and brokenhearted he became mute and kept in silence all this pain inside his heart. He became a laconic man, yet very wise.

He left to the unknown world and arrived at a place called *Katō'adip Muraycoko Ekabi* (The Fertile Mountain, or the Muraycoko Heaven), located at the margins of *Parawa Dukti* river, which is a region with many meadows and macaws. The mountain was Muraycoko Heaven, his paradise, and there he stayed for a long time after leaving *Wakopadi* village. There, in isolation with the macaws, he could develop his skills and techniques with much more efficacy and put into practice his experiments with the *sura* paint (*tapuruzeiro*), more patiently and wisely.

Sura before and after Muraycoko

Sura paint had different applications before Muraycoko. It was used to characterize the clan/family identity and was also a form of medicine applied as insect repellent and as a type of protection to the skin of newborn children. This third application is very important; indeed, newborn children receive a layer of *coko'a* paint on the entire body as part of a ritual treatment performed by mothers to prevent contact with spiritual pathogens as soon as the baby is born. It was also applied to counteract ageing and against *bikuy' ūmat* (bad luck). Women used it for body painting and men used to optimize hunting success, applying it under the feet and at the side of each eye to attract game animals as well as avoid *bikoy' ūm* (hunting bad luck). Since these two last applications are medicinal, it follows that *coko'a* / *sura*'s most important and general application was in the medicinal realm.

Besides medicine, it was employed in Mundurucu initiation rituals. For men it is called *Jepēmap* and for women, *Jepoap*, during which they have their upper frontal heads shaved and then painted with *sura*. Children around 10 years old were initiated to become a full-grown person. Among adults, the use of *sura* began with men that popularized its use as a hunting medicine, while women firstly used it in the newborn protection rituals, then, afterwards, they also used it in their body painting, especially on the face.

It follows that varied forms of usage and great importance are attributed to *sura* paint by Mundurucu people. Nevertheless, this diversity did not originate all at once it slowly evolved throughout Mundurucu history. In this sense, it is possible to establish a chronological sequence of cultural usages of *sura*: 1 – first used by men as hunting medicine, applied in between the toes and on the temples, between the eyes and ears; 2 – later used by women on their newborns' entire bodies as protective medicine; 3 – then, as an initiation ritual on the shaved head of the youngsters; and, 4 – finally, women started to use it as facial painting, improving the stiffness of their face skin. This all was before Muraycoko.

When Muraycoko started experimenting with *sura*, he refined the use of the paint with more sophisticated applications. He even changed the chemical properties of the paint to improve its durability, consistency, resistance and permanence on object's surfaces, so that it suffered little wear over time. He mixed the ground *coko'a* seeds with vegetable oils and the grease of diverse animals, besides those already mixed in the traditional recipe. He changed *sura*'s old formula by adding other new substances, for instance, *Amapari* milk (possibly *Parahancorni amapa*).

Besides chemical experiments, he structured a new visual language based on *sura* traces, giving birth to graphic forms he called *surabudodot* (organised sets of traced lines made with *coko'a* paint (*sura-tapuruzeiro*) resembling the shapes of actual things). These *coko'a* paint based drawings received meanings and became figures of *puncá* (animals), figures of *wuyjuyū* (persons/humans) and other types of figures. It is fair to assume that Muraycoko had a figurative, sometimes realistic, style of painting and, though experimenting with more symbolic designs, its figurative depictions, where iconicity played an important role, were the primary visual element structuring his graphic language.

Regarding painting supports, initially Muraycoko applied *sura* over artefacts such as basketry and pottery, giving them identification labels with varied meanings. The body was not the sole support for *sura* application anymore, for after him objects were also painted. He promoted innovations in the knowledge of painting at least in three levels: chemical formula, style of application and in the painted supports. In sum, he gave entire new layers of meanings and practices to *sura* paint by developing *surabudodot* language.

After leaving *Wakopadi* village, Muraycoko further developed his knowledge. From then on, he decided to paint over more resistant and smooth rock surfaces producing results that are still visible in our days. So, through time, it is possible to see historical transformations in the way Mundurucu conceived the usage of *coko'a* based red paint:

1. *Sura* / *tapuruzeiro* – medicinal use;
2. *Yapak* – body paint in both common cosmetic use and initiation rites;
3. *Surabudodot* – paint used to structure drawings in the shape of figures adopted in the decoration of artefacts;
4. *Wuyta'a Surabudodot* / *Wuyta'a Ibararakat* – painted (and sometimes also engraved) figures and graphic designs executed on rock surfaces.

The Muraycoko chants

According to traditional sources (besides Mr. Adriano Saw), Muraycoko has two chants that go along with the narrative of his life history and work. The first chant refers to a poetic description of his depictive and writing techniques and knowledge, referring specifically to his power of transforming animals, plants, objects, and other things like his speech and thoughts, into drawings, *surabudodot*. The second chant refers to his enigma and how he challenged the wise Munduruku men to decode his writing system. Those who succeeded in the task would acquire formidable powers. Due to the restriction of space, here we present only one of the Muraycoko songs.

These chants are fundamental parts of the Munduruku traditional knowledge on Muraycoko history and nature, and constitute, in a sense, Munduruku rock art songs. This idea of rock art songs becomes even more relevant when we consider that one of the most important modes of transmission of traditional knowledge among Munduruku people occurs through singing the old (hi) stories. In this sense, Munduruku oral history is less a matter of storytelling than of 'story chanting', as it relies heavily upon a sung mode of knowledge poetics, in both its construction and transmission. Songs and rock art are powerful mnemotechnic devices (e.g. Severi 2002), and by coupling both, Munduruku seems to double the potential for memory storage, transmission and manipulation.

Ebabi juk ojat / Ebabi juk ojat i Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Wedem tak òn wexat in ma, wedem tak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Xekpu dak òn wexat in ma, Xekpu dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Dapsem tak òn wexat in ma, dapsem tak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Bio dak òn wexat in ma, Bio dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Witõ dak òn wexat in ma, Witõ dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.

I got your art, I got your art; yes, Muraycoko, yes, Muraycoko; I transcribe what I speak; transcribe what I speak; yes, Muraycoko, yes, Muraycoko; I transform the lizard too; transform the lizard too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the deer too; transform the deer too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the tapir too; transform the tapir too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the curassow too; transform the curassow too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko;

Wedem tak òn wexat in ma, wedem tak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.

Xekpu dak òn wexat in ma, Xekpu dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Dapsem tak òn wexat in ma, dapsem tak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Bio dak òn wexat in ma, Bio dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Witõ dak òn wexat in ma, Witõ dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.
Kapido dak òn wexat in ma, kapido dak òn wexat in ma i
Muraycoko, Muraycoko.

I transcribe what I speak; transcribe what I speak; yes, Muraycoko, yes, Muraycoko; I transform the lizard too; transform the lizard too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the deer too; transform the deer too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the tapir too; transform the tapir too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the curassow too; transform the curassow too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the weather/time too; transform the weather/time too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko; I transform the weather/time too; transform the weather/time too; yes Muraycoko, yes Muraycoko.

This last part deserves a further comment, for the concept of *kapido* seems rather abstract in terms of an iconic graphic form. The first thing that needs clarification regarding these chants is that the verb *transform* means to convert a real living thing (e.g. an animal, plant or person) into a drawing, or a graphic rendering. These transformed entities, while not being the things in themselves, possess a spirit (*axik*) similar to the animal, or person. So, they are not exactly what Westerners would call a depiction, or a representation. But, concerning the concept of *kapido*, this is a little more complicated and abstract since *kapido* is not a being with a particular form that can be communicated in *surabudodot* iconic language; and it is not entirely clear how Muraycoko made such a depiction of 'weather' or 'time'.

When *kapido* is invoked by Muraycoko in his song, it is possibly related to the fact that, in the old times, the ancient Munduruku would ask for *iojuy imēnpuk*, that is *permission* to ritually deforest areas for their crops. By the same token, a *da'i* is performed – a ritual made before burning down stretches of forest to keep fire under control. Songs and dances were dedicated to *Ipixi* (mother earth) by our ancestors; they are still practised nowadays. There is a deep respect towards the forests (*awaydip*) and to all life forms on earth. The problem is that Muraycoko did not leave clear indications on how he might have graphically codified the complex concept of *kapido*. He left us in the dark on this matter, but the geometric conception of time and calendar for Munduruku people is circular, the Munduruku calendar is a circle of time; the year or a full seasonal

set of transformations is represented in a circle, a shape present in the *Koatá-Koara* rock and other places.

Where did Muraycoko go?

The narrative tells us that Muraycoko was born after Karosakaybu in *Wakopadi* village. But his origin is unknown. He possessed a special gift and was considered a type of *wamōat* (shaman), for in those days every person was capable of transforming into other beings. Muraycoko was just like that, and once he transformed himself into a spider.

He could climb rock walls very efficiently. The history tells that he could stay up there on the top of high outcrops and cliffs writing, above a hundred meters high, just like on *Koatá-Koara* (Cantagalo) rocks, upstream from the *Mamãe Anã* community, in the upper Tapajós. In this place he stayed in his hammock extended between the rocks, writing his art with enigmatic characters. If Muraycoko became a spider, his hammock became a spiderweb. *Koatá-Koara* is the dwelling place of *coatá* monkeys, also known as spider monkeys. In the highest part of this rock wall, many paintings constitute the proof of the existence of this Munduruku legendary warrior, specialized in the technique of painting *surabudodot*.

He left several *surabudodot* recordings on the rock surfaces along the places he visited during his journeys, mainly diverse drawings of different shapes of animal figures. The drawings possessed important meanings; they gave sense to life cycle experiences, and sometimes referred to the plentiful food resources during those days, or the moments when the animals were Muraycoko's sole companions along his pilgrimages. During the most difficult and loneliest of the moments, he had, at least, the companionship of animals.

Surabudodot epuca (animal figures painted with *sura*) also possessed *axik* (spirit), but the painting did not walk around like a *puca* (animal), it stayed there on the rock wall. But inside it there is an *axik* which is reciprocal to the animal's *axik* in the jungle. It is not visible as the *surabudodot*, but it can be heard and sometimes it disturbs people's mind, frightening them.

There are places where Muraycoko first began his painting work. There is a *wuyta'a bidiot* (cave) with two entrances in the locale where he stayed for most of his time, *Katō'adip*, near the headwaters of the Das Tropas River, *Wakopadi* and *Parawa-Dukti* rivers. It was there where the *Surabudodot* history started, inside this cavity with paintings in its walls.

There are also the *iba'arêmrmëmayũ*, the guardians of the sacred places that normal people, non-*wamōat* people,

only dream about, while *wamōat* men can listen and see them. They do not allow people to get close or go into such places, for there are powerful *cewuy* watching over. *Cewuy* are invisible spells acting like *iba'arêmrmëmayũ* motion sensors monitoring movement inside or near sacred places, and every time unauthorized, unprotected, or unwise people go there, *cewuy* gives an alert of invasion to *iba'arêmrmëmayũ*. Besides alerting, *cewuy* can also cause harm to the invaders of sacred places.

The ancient elders tell that Muraycoko's whereabouts are unknown after he left *Katō'adip* and passed by *Koatá-Koara*. However, Muraycoko *surabudodot* near *Joropari Kôbie* (Hell's Channel) were recently discovered, in a place the *pariwat* (whites) call Cachoeira do Cabano, located downstream from the *Dace Watpu* Munduruku village and upstream from the *Sawré Jaybu* village. The complete route of his journey, however, remains unknown; nobody knows his destiny nor the direction he might have taken. What is known is that his written records are scattered throughout many places in Munduruku territory and beyond. For example, at the *Kerepoca* Waterfalls, in Cururu river; at *Karo-Bixexe* (Sete-Quedas waterfall), on the *Manoedi* River (São Manoel); and between the headwaters of the *Kabitutu* and *Kadiriri* rivers. There are many places with *surabudodot* in these areas.

They say that he became the 'spider king' or that he transmuted into a species of spider that nobody knows about. That is why he could easily climb steep and high rock walls. He walked on the surface of water without drowning; he set up his *ukpibuğebu* (hammock-spiderweb) between rocks and trees, and walked over its strings. These are just a few of his characteristics. The history of Muraycoko keeps on being told to new generations. However, many mysteries remain indecipherable regarding this legendary Munduruku warrior, despite the occurrence of his vestiges in all Munduruku territory.

Muraycoko vestiges are almost undocumented by *pariwat* archaeology. Though there are a few *pariwat* researching rock art in Amazonia, they do not know about *wuyta'a surabudodot* on the *Idixiri* (Tapajós) River, other than the mention by the 19th-century chronicler Antônio Tocantins (1877), on the paintings of Canta-Galo rock (here referred to as *Koatá-Koara* sacred place), in the Upper Tapajós, later repeated by other sources. However, in the Munduruku knowledge system, *surabudodot* research is made through Muraycoko storytelling. It is noteworthy that in many Indigenous knowledge traditions, storytelling and chanting are important methodologies to construct and transmit knowledge about the territory (e.g. Datta 2017). In other words, understanding the history of this culture hero is the first step towards the Munduruku way of rock art research.



Figure 2. Wuyta'a Ibararakat. Anthropomorphic petroglyph near São Luiz do Tapajós Community, Middle Tapajós (Photo: Raoni Valle, 2015).

Finding Muraycoko places

During the dry season of 2015, the authors surveyed the region of the middle Tapajós River outside the northern border of *Daje Kapap Eipi* territory, which is not fully acknowledged by Brazilian State. In two of these intercultural surveys, rock art sites were found. These constitute one petroglyph site (Figure 2) near São Luiz do Tapajós non-Indigenous community, and four occurrences of pictographs in separate locations in the vicinities of the Cabano waterfall, also known

as Devil's Gorge or *Joropari Kôbie*, in the Munduruku language. The most significant of these pictograph sites is situated at 1.1 kilometres from the HPP's planned dam wall location, in its direct impact zone (Figures 3 and 4). The main idea guiding these intercultural surveys, specifically those oriented to rock art location, was to follow the Muraycoko narrative as a geopositioning device and look for his surabudodot in the places the elders in Sawre Jaybu, Sawre Apompu and in Sawré Muybu Munduruku villages mentioned, that is, by the major waterfall of *Joropari kôbie*.



Figure 3. Prof. Jairo Saw Munduruku examines a sector of the riverine outcrop in *Joropari Kõbie*, approx. 1.000 metres downstream from the hydroelectric wall plant. At this point, an undoubtedly Muraycoko red pictograph was found (anthropomorph) presented in Figure 4 (Photo: R. Valle, 2015).

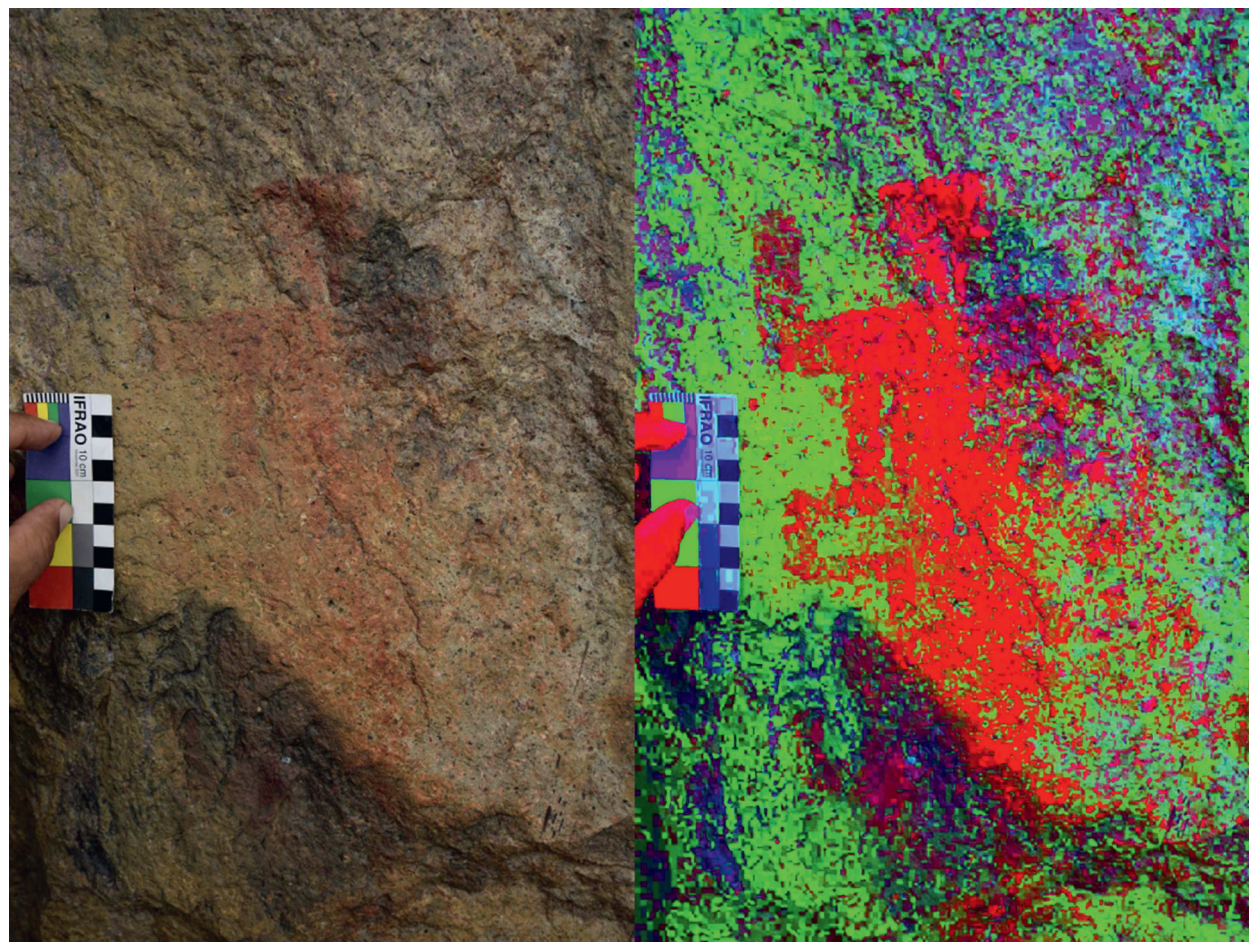


Figure 4. Wuyta'a Surabudodot. Anthropomorphic pictograph no. 3, Cabano Waterfall/*Joropari Kõbie*, Middle Tapajós River (Photo and d-stretch enhancement: Raoni Valle, 2015).

Although the Munduruku elders did not tell us the precise locations of the sites, they were assertive in saying that there must be *wuyta'a ibararakat* and *surabudodot* right there where the government wants to build the dam, because there are many rapids and a big waterfall in the very dangerous place called *Joropari Kôbie*, and Muraycoko made this place too: not only the drawings on the rocks, but also he manipulated the rocks in the rapids and waterfalls to make them more inaccessible to others, and prevent them from following him. Thus, Muraycoko agency is directly associated with the fabrication of the Cabano waterfall and rapids' geological structures, so those drawings are his extended mind (Clark and Chalmers 1998) diffused all around that place. Based on that premise, the intercultural investigation team went to the rapids to survey for rock art, effectively finding Muraycoko evidence in five different places between São Luiz do Tapajós community up to the immediate area downstream of *Joropari Kôbie*.

Two aspects of that rock art are noteworthy: first, a quite regular environmental pattern for Amazonian rock art is riverine petroglyph sites, which constitute the majority of known sites in this vast region (e.g. Valle 2012); the second, and more frequently found, type of rock art is painting in rock shelters on higher ground, far from the main rivers.

So, petroglyphs were expected to be found there, not red pictographs. Taphonomic reasons would account for most of the absence of these vestiges in these types of environments. However, contradicting all expectations, most of the places bore red pictographs, *wuyta'a surabudodot*, which are undoubtedly associated with Muraycoko agency; a second interesting aspect is that in anthropomorphic category at least, there seems to be a curious stylistic similarity between petroglyphs and pictographs. Stylistic homogeneity between these two technological categories of rock art are not usual in Amazonian known samples.

In any case, the fact that it was possible to find this *wuyta'a surabudodot* site in the *Joropari Kôbie* sacred landscape using the Muraycoko narrative, was a fundamental step towards the cultural shielding of one of the most vulnerable borders of the reoccupied territory. The coupling of oral tradition and archaeology has shown potential to become another Munduruku resistance strategy for territorial defence.

The territory is us

Wuybabi Ijurũğ'at eju imubapukap: wuyta'a Ibararakat muwebotbon kuyjeat eju ġasũat eju i (visual culture and identity – rock art reconnecting past and present) is the name of this book written in the Munduruku language.

From the Munduruku perspective, there is only one way of giving sense and purpose to reconnecting past with present, and this is attained by the interrelated notions of *xipan wuydopap* (living in communal reciprocity), *xipan acewekuk* (living with an educated respect of the forest and the river) and *xipan ajukuk* (living with responsibility, taking care of things).

These three notions are embroiled in the Munduruku concept of well-being (cf. Taçon 2019), which is a state of existence fundamentally constituted through reciprocity. So, the past is reciprocal with the present. Muraycoko narrative and songs create this state of reciprocity connecting Munduruku people to sacred landscapes with rock art, merging the past into present, history into geography.

Territory must be protected, and it must be retaken; auto-demarcation is a first step in that direction, because besides the physical survival of the people it contains places that are these reciprocal connectors among and between those five historical phases. That is, there is no Muraycoko without Karosacaybu, as there is no Munduruku without all those past culture heroes, the demiurge and their eras giving sense to the present. Without any of them there could not exist 'us', the present-day Munduruku people and our⁵ movement of resistance. That is why *wuyta'a surabudodot* and *wuyta'a ibararakat* are not unknown marks on rocks made by a mysterious and laconic ancestor. These marks, although we do not know their intended, precise meanings (because Muraycoko did not tell these to others), are still marks of our historical identities entangled to land, and they communicate to the Munduruku people the deepness of indigenous history and the extension of sacred geography, thus territorialising our sense of place and historical consciousness (Semken 2005; Hill 1988).

It is not a problem therefore that we do not know exactly how Muraycoko drew vital processes like *kapido*, we know that he did and we know what *kapido* is, and this is sufficient for us to understand the importance of *wuyta'a surabudodot* as encoded Muraycoko historical memory and identity. If it is Muraycoko, it is also part of the Munduruku visual and historical identity, not only on the rocks, but on basketry, on pottery and on the body too (Figure 5).

Muraycoko left his mysterious enigma since he appeared amongst our society. In the beginning his

⁵ From here on, text delivery will be purposefully alternating the impersonal voice with the plural first-person mode, since the first two authors are Munduruku researchers that decided to write in that way regarding some culturally sensitive subject matters. In other parts of the text, however, where the non-Indigenous author made more contributions, keeping the plural first-person would result in contradiction and misguided content delivery.

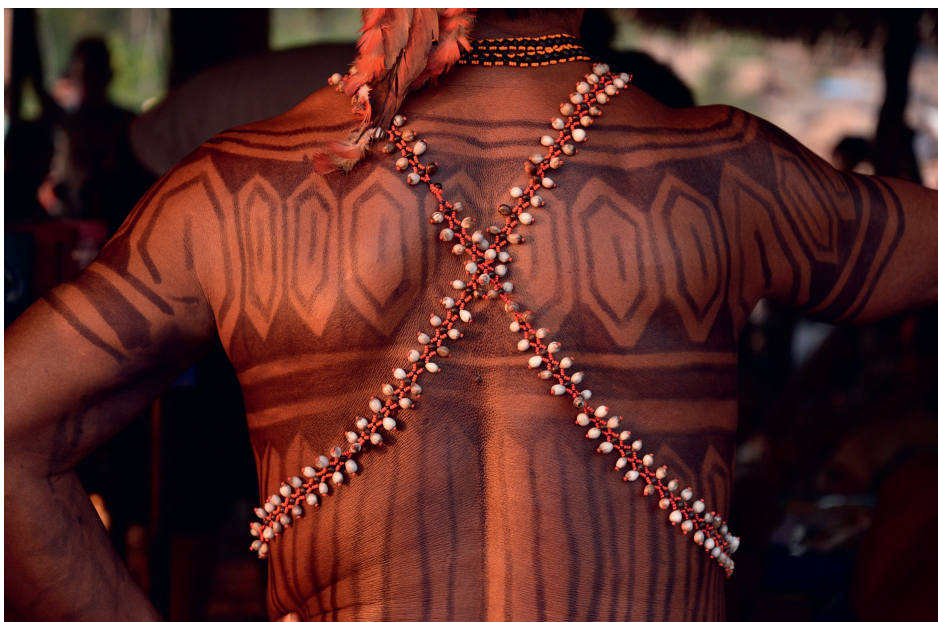


Figure 5. Mundurucu body painting showing the Poy pattern (tortoise) made with *waremap'a* paint (*Genipa americana*) (Photo: Raoni Valle, 2015).

surabudodot pabi (art of painting) was not accepted by the others, even his most beloved familiars. They saw him without any interest, let alone prestige, while he was painting on the *pubutap* (artefacts). But he knew what he was doing. His thoughts were focussed during those moments on the process of giving *ibapukap* (visibility) to the elements of *imubapukap* (identity) transcending the body and becoming visible on all types of surfaces and objects – thus, painting the world.

Surabudodot first appear on basketry, modifying its original state, imprinting technical signs of greater ability and creativity than before. Muraycoko went further: starting on basketry he developed a way of codifying the identity of the different clans by establishing a specific design for the *Iiritat* (white clan) and another design for the *Ipakpakat* clan (red clan). In the *op'ukpidoydoy* (arrows) he applied different types of traces, those noted by the ancient elders, for they could distinguish which were the arrows for display (*ajeap*) and which were intended for real.

After leaving *Wakopadi*, the first place he went to was a cave, *wuyta'a biküy*, his first dwelling place. There he decided to use the paint to draw figures on the rock walls. He intended less to represent animals by drawing their shapes than to show his capacity of projecting the images of his thoughts over objects and other surfaces. Through the *Idixidi*, *Manoedi*, *Juruena* river regions and beyond, Muraycoko left the marks of his passage by painting *surabudodot* and recording his historical identity of that time. In *wuyta'a biküyü* he left his paintings under protection of his body-guards. Before anyone entered such places a ritual specialist, *wamōat*,

had to be consulted and asked to accompany them to that specific place. Indeed, *Wuyta'a surabudodot* places are guarded with *cewuy* of *iba'arēmrmayü* (spells of spirits) that can harm unprotected visitors. If security procedures are not followed then a tragedy can occur, even death can befall the person who carelessly enters rock art places, breaking safety rules. *Iba'arēmrmayü* are invisible beings that protect sacred places; they do not allow strangers to get too close. Paintings cannot be touched, only observed. Touching may bring sickness not only upon the one who touches, but also upon his or her entire family or community, and epidemics can spread. That is why such places are *weo - ikukpiat*, sacred, and cannot be violated. The enigma Muraycoko has left was not thought to be materialised into just *wuyta'a be ibararakat / surabudodot*, but it was intended to reside in the process of transforming visual imagery into a graphic language and communication system. When he started painting on artefacts, and then on the rocks, he introduced an image-seeing-reading articulation in knowledge construction and transmission, even though he could not transmit it to anybody. Prior to that, culture was transmitted only on an oral-aural base, spreading through talking-listening articulation, but afterwards, the figures he drew expressed his sight of thought. Then, the history of knowledge that was passed on through orality, generation to generation, was not enough anymore, and it was necessary to use images and visual communication besides storytelling, because knowledge was hidden inside the figures.

The disclosure of these images is the description of the past (*kuyjeat muwēnap*) in the present time (*ġasūjeat*), and corresponds to the evolution of scientific and historical



Figure 6. Prof. Jairo Saw Munduruku surveying for *Wuyta'a Surabudodot* near *Joropari Kôbie* (hills in the background of the image that also demarcate the limit of the HPP wall plant) (Photo: Raoni Valle, 2015).

knowledge (*etaybitbitap etaybinap mujudodinap*). To keep alive the science of knowledge it is necessary to protect the culture (*wuybabi muwedayoap*) in the land. Thus, it is equally necessary to grant the demarcation (*ipi mukodepap*) of its territorial space (*wuykadip*).

Reconnecting past and present

The historical recordings left by Muraycoko are ancient territorial markers into Munduruku geography. They are part of the history and knowledge of our people. That is how a territorial space is defined, by the history and knowledge of the people. However, without demarcation, there is no guarantee that our history and knowledge will be enough to determine where or what the territory is. Without demarcation, our history and knowledge condensed in the land will disappear, so too our people. Thus, if the government will not do it, we will do it by ourselves.

Munduruku territory is not a stretch of land and river. It is where our knowledge and history gives sense to our existence. When Muraycoko painted his knowledge of Indigenous history on the rocks, he turned them into ancient indexes of Munduruku territoriality. We possess many other landscape markers and historical visual indexes, however, *wuyta'a surabudodot* and *Ibararakat* are also meaningful to us and work as additional cultural references into the territorialisation process (Figure 6).

This does not necessarily mean that Munduruku people are claiming that those rock art sites must be

integrated into their territorial auto-demarcation, implying the expansion of the *Daje Kapap Eipi* northern border to encompass *Joropari Kôbie*. Munduruku territorial delimitation does not happen on the base of presence/absence of archaeological sites alone, it also follows other culture-historical, political, ecological and demographic criteria. For instance, the presence of non-Indigenous traditional communities on that part of the river, since the late 19th century, and living in relative cooperation with Indigenous villages is another factor that, if it is not precluding, at least it relativises an expansion in that direction. Notwithstanding, the material confirmation regarding the existence of Muraycoko sacred writings in *Joropari Kôbie* implies a decisive meaningful reconfiguration in the ontological status of that landscape, increasing a need for its protection.

The present time is not disconnected from the past. Muraycoko left a territorialized cultural heritage that must be protected. The paintings and petroglyphs he has produced are materialisations in the landscape of the Munduruku sense of place and historical consciousness. It is not necessary to destroy ancient ways of existence and their sacred places to ascertain that the future has arrived. It is necessary to keep the main essence and, in the case of the Amazon, Munduruku is not the essence, and neither is *pariwat* civilization. True essence is reciprocity and mutual respect among socioenvironmental diversities. Muraycoko gave a key for understanding and perpetuating these relationships, a key for recording thoughts, talks and

knowledge across history. In the past, he was enigmatic and laconic, however, along our journey in time we have grown aware of how powerful his method was/is in terms of territorialising Munduruku history through *wuyta'a be surabudodot – ibararakat*.

Acknowledgments

We are greatly thankful to the editors, Andrzej Rozwadowski and Jamie Hampson, for the fantastic invitation to participate in this volume, thus creating this amazing opportunity for Munduruku researchers to publish a preliminary account on their relationship with rock art sites. We are grateful to the Munduruku leaderships and elders who allowed us to make public a version of the Muraycoko narrative, specially to Mr. Adriano Saw, the major Munduruku historian at the middle Tapajós basin, and our main living source. We dedicate this chapter to the memory of Mr. Suberalino Saw Munduruku, a renowned Munduruku historian and *Sawre Jaybu* village leader. His village is one of the main Munduruku resistance focus outside the *Daje Kapap Eipi*. He dreamed and fiercely fought to integrate all the smaller separated Indigenous lands of the middle Tapajós river into a contiguous territory. He hoped our work would be of help to this objective. So do we.

Authors' biographies

Jairo Saw Munduruku is an esteemed Munduruku teacher and researcher based in the *Daje Kapap Eipi* territory, middle Tapajós River (PARIRI Indigenous Organisation). His research topics involve Munduruku myth-history, Indigenous Education, and epistemology. Jairo is a key contributor to the development of

the Munduruku Education System. In 2018, he was acclaimed by the Brazilian Rock Art Association (ABAR) as one of the first Indigenous rock art researchers in Brazil.

Eliano Kirixi Munduruku is the first academically trained Munduruku anthropologist, with a degree from the Federal University of Western Pará (UFOPA). His research topics include visual anthropology, myth-history, and Munduruku's contemporary history. Currently teaching in the Indigenous school of the Sai Cinza Munduruku village in the upper Tapajós River, he plans to do a Master's degree soon. Eliano is an associate researcher of the Visual Anthropology and Archaeology of Image Laboratory (LAVAI-UFOPA).

Raoni Valle has an undergraduate degree in History, an MSc degree in Prehistory, and a PhD in Archaeology. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Anthropology and Archaeology Program of the Federal University of Western Pará (UFOPA) since 2012. His research topics involve rock art, archaeology and ethnography. Raoni has developed intercultural research with various Indigenous peoples in Amazonia since 2005. He also coordinates the Visual Anthropology and Archaeology of Image Laboratory (LAVAI-UFOPA).

References

- Bowser, B. and M.N. Zedeño 2009. *The Archaeology of Meaningful Places*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Clark, A. and D.J. Chalmers 1998. The extended mind. *Analysis* 58 (1): 7-19.



Mr. Jairo and Mr. Suberalino Saw together during our 2015 fieldwork in the sacred savannah fields in the outskirts of *Sawre Jaybu* village (Photo: Raoni Valle, 2015)

- Datta, R. 2017. Traditional storytelling: an effective Indigenous research methodology and its implications for environmental research. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14(1): 35-44.
- Hill, J.D. 1988. Introduction: myth and history, in: J. D. Hill (ed.) *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*: 1-17. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Kirixi Munduruku, E. and L. Karo Munduruku 2018. *Daje Kapap*. Documentary film. Lavai – Laboratório de Antropologia Visual e Arqueologia da Imagem – PAA/Ufopa, Santarem, Pará, Brazil.
- Rocha, Bruna C. and V. Honorato de Oliveira 2016. Floresta Virgem? O longo passado humano da bacia do Tapajós, in D. Fernandes Alarcon, B. Millikan and M. Torres (eds) *Ocekadi: hidrelétricas, conflitos socioambientais e resistência na Bacia do Tapajós*: 395-415. Brasília, DF: International Rivers Brasil ; Santarém, PA: Programa de Antropologia e Arqueologia da Universidade Federal do Oeste do Pará.
- Saw Munduruku, J. and R. Valle 2015. As Paisagens Sagradas de Muraycoko na Área de Impacto Direto da UHE São Luiz do Tapajos, Itaituba, PA. Relatório para o MPF em Santarém, PA. Pariri – Organizacao Indigena Munduruku do Medio Tapajos; Lavai – Laboratório de Antropologia Visual e Arqueologia da Imagem – PAA/Ufopa, Santarem, PA.
- Semken, S. 2005. Sense of place and place-based introductory geoscience teaching for American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduates. *Journal of Geoscience Education* 53(2): 149-157.
- Severi, C. 2002. Memory, reflexivity and belief: reflections on the ritual use of language. *Social Anthropology* 10(1):23-40.
- Taçon, P.S.C. 2019. Connecting to the ancestors: why rock art is important for Indigenous Australians and their well-being. *Rock Art Research* 36(1): 5-14.
- Tawe, F., J. Ikopi; L. Alves, ed. by M. Burum 1979. *Aypapayũ'ũm'ũm ekawên: Lendas mundurukús (Histórias dos Antigos Mundurukú – Português)*. Volume 3. Brasília, DF: Publicação do Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Tocantins, Antônio Manoel Gonçalves 1877. Estudos sobre a tribu 'Mundurucú'. *Revista Trimensal do Instituto Historico Geographico e Ethnographico do Brasil* tomo XL, parte segunda, 73-161. Viewed online 20 August 2019, <http://biblio.etnolingustica.org/tocantins_1877_mundurucu>.
- Valle, R. 2012. *Mentes Graníticas e Mentes Areníticas – Fronteira Geo-cognitiva nas Gravuras Rupestres do Baixo Rio Negro, Amazônia Setentrional*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, University of São Paulo.