

Ethnoarchaeology of Mortuary Practices: Relationship Bodies in the Carib-speaking Neo-Tropics

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Abstract

Death is not the end, but rather a beginning. Drawing on historical sources and ethnographic fieldwork with the Wayana Indigenous People of French Guiana, this essay explores the interrelationships embodied during mortuary practices and personal treatment of the dead. This research emerged from questions raised during the archaeological excavations at Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, and, in turn, contributes to the study of burial practices in Caribbean archaeology. More broadly, an understanding of Wayana mortuary practices, illustrated with exceptional photographs and indigenous narratives, is to further the conceptualization of the complexity, wide variety and individualization of personal treatment of the dead, and the interrelationships with ancestors and other social others in Guiana, Amazonia, and beyond.

Key words: Amazonian Indigenous Peoples, Caribbean, Guianas, mortuary practices, interrelationship bodies, ethnoarchaeology.

Etnoarqueología de las prácticas mortuorias: relación de cuerpos en el Neo-Trópico de Habla Caribe

Resumen

La muerte no es el final, sino más bien un comienzo. Basándose en fuentes históricas y trabajo de campo etnográfico con el pueblo indígena wayana de

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la Guayana Francesa, este ensayo explora las interrelaciones incorporadas durante las prácticas funerarias, mortuorias y el trato personal de los muertos. Esta investigación surgió de preguntas planteadas durante las excavaciones arqueológicas en Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, y, a su vez, contribuye al arqueo-thanología caribeña. Una comprensión de las prácticas mortuorias de los Wayana –ilustradas con fotografías excepcionales y narrativas indígenas– tiene como objetivo promover la conceptualización de la complejidad, la amplia variedad y la individualización del tratamiento personal de los muertos y las interrelaciones con antepasados y otras personas de relevancia sociales en la Guayana. Amazonia y más allá.

Palabras clave: *Pueblos Indígenas Amazónicos, Caribe, Guayanas, prácticas mortuorias, cuerpos de interrelación, etnoarqueología.*

Ethnoarchéologie des pratiques mortuaires: les corps relationnels dans les néo-tropiques caraïbes

Résumé

La mort n'est pas la fin, mais plutôt un début. S'appuyant sur des sources historiques et un travail ethnographique de terrain, auprès du peuple Wayana en Guyane française, cet article tente d'explorer les relations entretenues par les représentants de cette ethnie avec leurs morts. Née de questions soulevées lors de fouilles archéologiques sur l'Anse à la Gourde, en Guadeloupe, ces problématiques nourrissent encore les réflexions sur l'archéo-thanatologie caribéenne. Au travers plusieurs photographies inédites et de récits amérindiens, un éclairage tente d'être posé sur l'éventail des pratiques associées au défunt et à ses restes. À l'influence des traditions sur les pratiques funéraires et mortuaires, ainsi que leur impact sur le quotidien des Wayanas, les relations mutuelles avec les ancêtres et les autres l'Autrui, dans les territoires de Guyane, Amazonie et au-delà.

Mots clés: *Peuples indigènes d'Amazonie, Caraïbes, Guyanes, pratiques mortuaires, corps d'interrelation, ethnoarchéologie.*

Few ethnoarchaeological studies probe this aspect of culture [i.e., mortuary practices] and its expression in material things... [and, then again, these studies often] seek patterning in mortuary practices that relates to social structure and status.

David Nicholas and Carol Kramer,
Ethnoarchaeology in Action (2001, p. 378).

Introduction

Hundred years ago, Justus Gonggrijp (1920-1921, p. 16) concluded his summary on the traces of the original inhabitants of Suriname with a statement that he had attended the excavation of two human remains, an adult and an infant of about 4 years old, behind the plantation Jagtlust facing Paramaribo. The adult was lying on its back with the arms crossed in front of the chest, and with the legs raised high and crossed. The child leaned forward, with forced over its back a ceramic vessel, which, according to Gonggrijp (*ibid.*) resembled contemporary indigenous pottery. The child's skull protruded from under this vessel. Gonggrijp mentioned further that near Paramaribo's main square, three feet under the ground, had been excavated a human skull and collarbone below a ceramic vessel. Nonetheless, these exceptional findings and mortuary practices mentioned by Gonggrijp were not further studied.

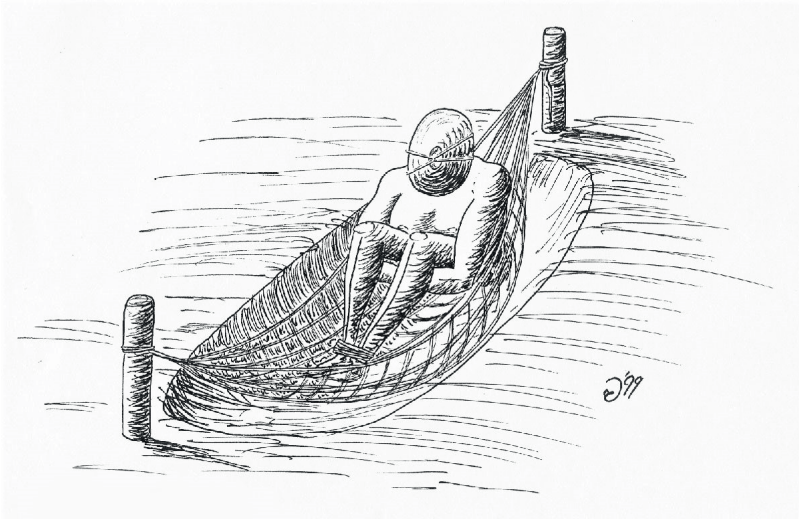


Figure 1. Sketch of a deceased person in a hammock with a ceramic vessel tied in front of its face (Drawing by Renzo S. Duin, 1999, inspired by burial F219, Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, excavated in 1997).

Drawing on historical and ethnographic studies from the Guianas in conjunction with archaeological data from the Caribbean, this chapter explores mortuary practices and personal treatment of the dead in the neo-tropics. Mortuary practices (principally burial location) have been studied in Caribbean archaeology, for instance on Puerto Rico where a shift was observed from burying the dead in the central plaza to the disposition of the dead in domestic contexts (Curet and Oliver, 1998; Siegel, 1999). Multi- and interdisciplinary studies further the conceptualization of the complexity, wide variety and individualization of personal treatment of the dead in order to gain insight into the complex of taphonomic processes, grave inventory, indigenous belief systems, and ancestor worship in the Caribbean (Duin, 2002; Hoogland and Duin, 2010; Hofman, Hoogland, and Duin, 2010). In-depth ethnographic studies among Amazonian Indigenous Peoples are constructive to model an understanding of relationship bodies, interrelationships with social others (human and non-human, including the dead), and indigenous mortuary practices. In this study I focus on the complex mortuary practices among the Wayana, an indigenous Cariban-speaking people living in the frontier zone of Brazil, Suriname and French-Guiana. I am fully aware that between the archaeological and the ethnographical case-studies there is a spatial distance of about 1000 miles, and a temporal distance of about 1000 years. Then again, deep historical links between the Lesser Antilles and the Guianas exist as exemplified in the indigenous cariban terms as “burial place” (*onamótobou* [Breton, 1666, p. 360] = *ëtonamtop* in present-day Wayana) and “village” (*aóthe* [Breton, 1666, p. 401] = *ëütë* in present-day Wayana). Moreover, burial in a seated position, with the arms crossed, and the body covered by a ceramic vessel, was reported by André Thevet in 16th century in the area of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Figure 2), thus potentially indicating a pan-Amazonian Indigenous practice and ideology. Rather than searching for sheer analogies, this article aims to reflect upon the interrelationships with ancestors and other social others, and the complex and varied mortuary practices performed by Indigenous Peoples in Amazonia, the Guianas, the Caribbean, and beyond.

This article is a case-study based implementation of the “anthropology of death” (Robben, 2004) and the “archaeology of the body” (Joyce, 2005; Fowler, 2004). Physical manipulation of skeletal remains is intrinsically related to social relations and society’s eschatological beliefs in the afterlife, the soul’s journey towards the spirit world, as well as the behavior of the living, reacting to phenomena like illness, sickness, death and the transformation of the corpse into a skeleton. Bodies are constructed, de-constructed, maintained, and altered in social practices through life and after death. As demonstrated in the ground-breaking study by Anthony Seeger, Roberto da Matta, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1979), the production of the person (*pessoa*) is rooted in an embodiment (*corporalidade*) of social relations. I have to emphasize that

a “body” refers to the corporeality of an individual human body as well as it denotes larger social bodies as society, community, and various other cultural groupings. The former is a carnal body, a “substance body,” objectively studied by physical anthropology. The latter is a social body, a “relationship body,” situated in subjectivity.



Figure 2. Burial practice in 16th century Brazil (André Thevet, 1558, p. 82).

Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, French West Indies, Lesser Antilles

First, I will briefly outline how this study emerged from archaeological excavations in the Caribbean. As all ethno-archaeological studies, this study is grounded in archaeological questions. In the summers of 1995 till 2000, I participated in the excavations of Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, first as a Master student (Duin 1998), subsequently as a Sector Manager. We excavated and recorded a total of 2401 features, including postholes, pits, hearths and burials – among which a total of 79 burials, comprising some 83 individuals (Duin, 1998; Hofman *et al.*, 2001; Hoogland and Panhuysen, 2001; Kraan, 1998; Roetman and Timmermans, 2003). It is not the intention of this article to present a detailed physical anthropological description of the burials, pathology, missing bones, and additional eco- and artefacts in grave contexts. I anticipate that this ethnoarchaeological study on mortuary

practices bringing together archaeological questions, historical sources and ethnographic observations will continue to inspire archaeologists working in the Caribbean, as have my earlier contributions (Hofman, Hoogland and Duin, 2010; Hoogland and Duin, 2010).

The excavations at Anse à la Gourde raised archaeological questions which I attempted to answer in my ethnoarchaeological studies with the Carib-speaking Indigenous Peoples (Kalinya-Terewuyu and Wayana) in French Guiana. My research was focussed on architecture and settlement patterning, yet where possible I attempted to gain further insight into the burial practices. Not expected, yet very exciting was when Wayana reacted with a resounding “we do that too!” upon seeing one of my sketches based on archaeological mortuary practices at Anse à la Gourde, some 1000 years ago and some 1000 miles away (Figure 1). My multi- and interdisciplinary on architecture and settlement patterning bringing together archaeological questions, historical sources and ethnographic observations (Duin, 1998, 2009), is still inspiring archaeologists in the Caribbean and Guianas today (Hofman, Rostain, Mans, Hoogland, 2021).

The special character of the archaeological site of Anse à la Gourde emerges from the abundant and delicately worked ceramics, lithics, shell and coral artifacts, and from the many complex burials that have been excavated. The very long occupation history of the site, ranging from the end of the Early Ceramic late phase (Cedrosan Saladoid: AD 400-600) until the end of the Late Ceramic early phase (Troumassoid: AD 600-1250) and the beginning of the Late Ceramic late phase (median date AD 1350) demonstrates the great local and regional importance of this archaeological site (Hofman *et al.*, 2001, 2010) for which I have posited an archeo-astronomical explanation related to hurricane prediction (Duin, 2018).



Figure 3. A bundle of bones amidst two burials with ceramic vessels in front of the face (Photos by Renzo S. Duin, 1995).



Figure 4. Example of the variation in mortuary practices at Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe (Photos by Renzo S. Duin, 1995-2000).

In 1995, a trench was opened to gain insight into the stratigraphy of the site. In this trench, less than two meters apart, two burials surfaced with a ceramic vessel in front of the face (F50 and F108 [originally: F51]) with a bundle of bones (F95) located between them (Figure 3). Later that year, and during following years, four other burials with ceramic vessels were excavated: two with a vessel in front of the face, and two with a vessel over (part of) the body. Not only had the first burial (F50) a ceramic vessel over its cranium and part of the body, this burial also contained a second cranium (F50B). What did this all mean? Why were ceramic vessels covering the face or body, and why was there an additional cranium in the burial pit? The ceramic vessels did not seem consistent with male, female, or child burials (Kraan, 1998). There was just too much variation for a too small sample to apply statistical analysis in order to deduct an explanation for these non-conventional mortuary practices. There was nevertheless consistency in some burial practices, such as bended arms and legs, and a seated, semi-seated, or dorsal position. Burial F50 was not the only burial at Anse à la Gourde with additional human remains (F50B). Burial F349C, for example, is an individual buried with two additional crania (F349A and F349 B). The opening of the trench in 1995 was intended to gain insight in the stratigraphy of the site, yet this trench raised numerous questions pertaining ancient burial practices in the Caribbean.

Once again, this is not an exhaustive report on ancient burial practices at Anse à la Gourde, but rather to argue for the potential of a relationship body perspective in Caribbean archaeology based on the burials encountered (Figure 4). Where physical anthropology allowed understanding of the taphonomy of individual graves (Hoogland and Panhuysen, 2001), which may be understood in the light of the rites of passage (Kraan, 1998), we have to further an understanding of the interrelationships materialized within these burials.

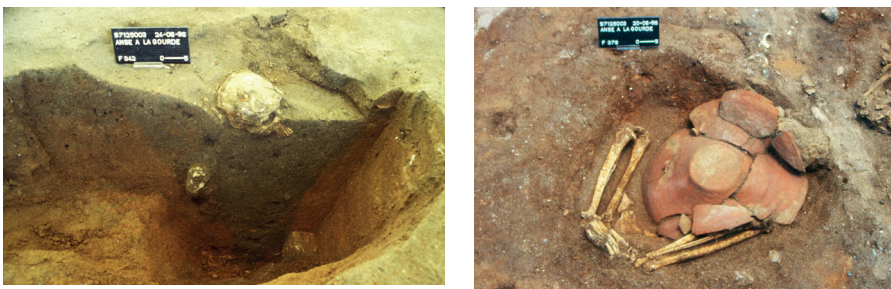


Figure 5. Further examples of the variation in mortuary practices at Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe: left: secondary burial of a cranium in a filled-in post hole below a primary burial (F342); right: primary burial, half sitting, covered by large ceramic vessel which broke when the ceiling of the burial pit collapsed (F378) (Photos by Renzo S. Duin, 1996).

While some burials contained additional crania, as mentioned earlier (F50, F349), one burial contained but a single skull (F197). Some burials (secondary and primary/secondary) contained parts, such as femurs and/or tibia, of other individuals, and one individual missed its own left and right humerus and right radius and ulna). One individual lacked only a right fibula. Several burials lack the skull entirely. In other cases, the cranium was removed and the mandible remained in the grave. Some other burials lack post-cranial body parts. Some burials were placed on top of a single cranium in a (partially) refilled post holes whilst other primary burials were covered by large ceramic vessels (Figure 5). Whatever the reason of removing heads/skulls and/or other bones/body parts, it is without a doubt that the people of Anse à la Gourde were actively involved in manipulating bones and potentially body parts. Removal and repositioning of bones/body parts in various burials at the archaeological site of Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, embodies the conceptualization of relationship bodies.

On relationship bodies

Whether or not additional crania in graves belong to individual burials at the same site where the skull is lacking, there was at Anse à la Gourde an intention of moving skulls from one grave to another. Whatever the individual relationships, it is without a doubt that individual bodies, on occasion, and not as a standardized customary practice, were taken apart (deconstructed) and bones/body parts were re-deposited in a separate pit or added to other graves. These practices materialize the notions of “fractal persons” in the sense of Roy Wagner (1991) and “dividual bodies” in the sense of Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1992), as will be discussed next.

Anthropological studies on the relation between individual and society in Amazonia resulted in three emerging paradigms. In his classic *Individual and Society in Guiana: A Comparative Study of Amerindian Social Organization* Peter Rivière (1984) identified the essential elements and relationships in Guiana social organization as a “political economy of control” (Rivière, 1983/1984). Joanna Overing Kaplan (1983/1984) and her former students Peter Gow (1991, 2001) and Fernando Santos-Granero (2000) described a “moral economy of intimacy.” This paradigm of conviviality focused on the politically laden liminal encounters with social others during rituals whereby the moral intimacy creates a moment of *communitas* in the sense of Victor Turner (1969), i.e., self-identity focusing inward.

As in a structural opposition, “the symbolic economy of alterity” (“*economia da predação*”) by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1986, 1992, 1996), focused on (cannibalistic) rituals that bring social others into the heart of society, i.e., self-identity focusing outward. Rituals are the place of decomposition and

composition (consumption and production) of an individual body (Henley, 2001; Taylor, 1998, 2001). These three paradigms on social reproduction are rooted in the *Elementary structures of Kinship* (Lévi-Strauss, 1949) and the principle of reciprocity wherein kinship terminology is the political means to produce reciprocal relations with other social groups (Lévi-Strauss, 1943, 1968, 1969). In other words: the construction of social order and persons is situated in alterity.

Defining identity though alterity is at the heart of social reproduction in Amazonia, as no community is “[capable] of self-reproduction in isolation” (Fausto, 2000: 948; Henley, 2001; Lévi-Strauss, 1949; Overing, 1983-1984, p. 333; Viveiros de Castro, 1986, 1992). Amazonian social formations are thus grounded in a difference between consanguinity (“insiders”) and affinity (“outsiders”), as discussed in detail in the edited volume titled *Beyond the Visible and the Material: the amerindianization of society in the work of Peter Rivière* (Rival and Whitehead, 2001). Michael Heckenberger (2005) situated the *Ecology of Power*, or the “symbolic economy of power,” in the kaleidoscopic interrelations involving techno-economic, symbolic, social, and political forces concurrently. Being aware that twenty-five years have passed since the classic publications on Guiana social organization (Butt Colson and Heinen, 1983-1984; Rivière, 1984), the mere dichotomy between individual and society (self and group) is situated in Western discourse. The “problem” of the *relation* between individual and society ought to become our focus of investigation as the process of determination of the ‘self’ is inherent to its ongoing relations with the social others, including its ongoing relations with the dead (i.e., with the ancestors).

What Western scholars distinguish as a “substance-body” is perceived by indigenous people as a “relationship-body” (Seeger, da Matta, and Viveiros de Castro, 1979; Turner, 1980, 1995). More fluid, multifaceted, and contesting models of identity were explored in general anthropological theory since the mid-1980s (e.g., Butler, 1990, 1993) aiming to overcome essentialist definitions as sex, tribe, lineage, and the like. What had been perceived hitherto as an autonomous individual, is, from a different perspective, a person who does not simply represent a single unity. Instead, s/he is a social person encompassing elements of other social beings: “fractal persons” in the sense of Roy Wagner (1991) depending on scale and magnification.

Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1992), engaged with this dilemma of the relation between individual and society from a socio-anthropological perspective of “plural personhood” whereby the intersubjectivity emerging in social interaction is twofold: (1) it is a particular partible body in interaction with other bodies; (2) it is a collective plural body encompassing multiple bodies. These two analytical modes of the ‘plural body’ and the ‘singular (dividual) body’ are components of a whole in continuous process rather than disconnect means.

Conceptualization of individual and society is grounded in this emerging body of anthropological theory of the non-innate socially constructed

person situated in a maze of interrelationships. This is thus a complex matter containing multiple layers and situated in a range of interlocking scales. This “relationship body” is not static but rather situated in an open matrix of implied integral relationships, or what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2001) coined the “Grand Unified Theory” or GUT feeling. Concepts of individual and society (personhood or identity) are continuously in the process of reassessment. The concepts of individual and society are situated in internal relationships without preexistence; continuously in the process of reassessment, rather than that they can be objectively defined and identified.

Wayana – not being aware of the theoretical anthropological discourse outlined above – described to me this accumulating process of bodies situated in interrelationships as follows (Duin, 2009: 226, 239; on the Wayana body and corporeal practices see also Chapuis, 1998): a new-born receives part of its visible spirit (*omole*) from the Creator twin residing in the land of the ancestors. Another part of its *omole* is received from an ancestor. Traditionally, at about 4 months of age, a baby (hitherto addressed as *pjūkuku*) receives its ancestral name. Over time, and in interaction with others, the visible and invisible spirit develop (Table 1). Gender differentiation becomes significant at about 12 years of age, when it is time for the child’s initiation (to become *tëpijem*) and are assigned to become a boy (*mule*) or a girl (*jëmsi*). Until then, they are gender neutrally addressed to as *kami* (child. Term of reference for child is *peitopiit*). Wayana marry at about 15 years of age, and have a child the year after. The first-born child is customarily raised by its grand-parents. After about 15 years of age, individuals are referred to in consanguine kinship terminology (such as father or mother of X [name of child]; respectively X *jum* or X *je*), and addressed to according to consanguine kinship relationships, such as *mamak* (1. classificatory mother; 2. mother’s sister), or *papak* (classificatory father), or according to affine kinship relationships, such as *kono* (brother-in-law from a male perspective), *jelut* (sister-in-law from a female perspective), *konko* (1. father-in-law; 2. mother’s brother), or *ëwotpë* (1. mother-in-law; 2. father’s sister).¹ Whereas consanguine kinship terminology is similar from both male and female perspectives, kinship terminology differs in the affine relationships. At thirty years of age, one is considered “knowledgeable” (*tëwantak ikatpë*) and a few years later one is addressed to as grandmother (*kuni*) or grandfather (*tamo*). True elders (*tamusi* and *kunumusi*) are over sixty years of age. Most Wayana do not live longer than sixty years of age.

The body is a continuous process. Dying is a continuous process. Every time a person is sick, one dies a little. When discussing the body and sickness,

¹ To complete Wayana kinship terminology at 0 and +1 levels: *akon* (1. similar other; 2. brother; 3. sister); *tasi* (older sister); *ipit* (1. wife; 2. sister-in-law from a male perspective); *imnerum* (1. husband; 2. brother-in-law from a female perspective); *japo* (father’s brother), *ëwotpë* (1. mother-in-law; 2. father’s sister) (Duin, 2009, p. 227).

the concept of *omole* has to be elaborated upon first. *Omole* is a shadow, a reflection, an image (including but not restricted to a photograph). Wayana say that when one loses *omole*, or if it is taken away, the body will grow cold. Wayana describe *omole* as being like a sweater; without it you will grow cold. At night, as we dream, *omole* departs from the body via the mouth. That is why, according to Wayana, the body feels cold at dawn, because while dreaming the *omole* interacts with other shadows and travels to far-away places. At dawn Wayana warm up slowly near the fire place, so as to let their *omole* return to their body.

Table 1. Wayana terms of address as related to age and gender

<i>Years of age</i>	<i>Male (eruja)</i>	<i>Female (wëlii)</i>
60 +	<i>tamusu</i> (vocative: <i>tamo</i>)	<i>kunumusi</i> (vocative: <i>kuni</i>)
35 +	<i>tamusimanme</i> (vocative: <i>tamo</i>)	<i>kunumusimanme</i> (vocative: <i>kuni</i>)
30 +	<i>tëwantak ikatpë</i> (individual [m/f] who knows, who is respectful)	
ca. 15-35	(an individual is addressed and referred to according to kinship terminology, nicknames, or simply with the generic <i>wëlii</i> [woman] or <i>eruja</i> [man])	
ca. 12-15	<i>imjata</i>	<i>waluhmame</i>
ca. 1-12	<i>mule</i> (vocative: <i>kami</i>)	<i>jemsi</i> (vocative: <i>kami</i>)
Baby	<i>pijukuku</i>	<i>pijukuku</i>

Jean Chapuis (1998: 610) drew a processual scheme of the course of *omole* based upon information provided by the late powerful shaman (*pijai*)² Pileike. What Pileike described seemed to be a fractal body, as the parts of a “new” visible spirit is more than one, but less than two: a “new” *omole* is provided at conception by *Kujuli* (one of the Creator twins) while another part of *omole* is originating from an ancestor bearing the same name as the newborn. After death, the good part of *omole* will rise up to *Kujuli pata* (the land of the ancestors, literally: the place of *Kujuli*) where it can be recycled into a “new” *omole* provided at conception. The person is dead when there is no more

² Due to its ladenness I prefer not to use the term “shaman” but rather the local term *pijai*. It goes beyond the present article to discuss the concept of *pijai* in detail. It has to be mentioned that the Amazonian term “*pajé* or *piaii*” (Whitehead and Wright, 2004, p. 2), “*pagé*” (Thévet, 1557; Narby and Huxley, 2001, p. 13), “*piayé*” (Biet, 1664; Narby and Huxley, 2001: 16), and *pijai* in Wayana, was introduced to the European audience before the term “*shaman*” (Petrovich, 1672; Narby and Huxley, 2001, p. 18).

omole left in the body (*unu* = 1. living body, 2. trunk; *ëkep* = corpse), and this is why the corpse is cold, Wayana expressed to me.

When someone feels that the last part of his *omole* is leaving him, he might choose to reside in his hammock. The so-called fetus-position of the dead (flexed extremities), I argue, is a result of the body growing cold, and the person dying is naturally taking this position trying to keep warm, rather than a symbolic reference to reincarnation or rebirth. The invisible spirit (*akuwali*; after death called *akuwalinpë*, literally: former *akuwali*), remains in the grave with the skeleton (*ëkejetpë*). (Part of) the visible spirit of an ancestor, along with its name, return to earth to be incarnated into a new-born baby... and this is a continuous fractal process.

On Wayana mortuary practices

Mortuary practices are a profound and sensitive topic that cannot simply be dealt with during an initial fieldtrip. During my ethno-archaeological study on Wayana architecture and settlement patterning I participated, amongst others, in building houses (Duin, 1998, 2009). In 1999, while we marked the location for the posts of a new to build house, a pijai stopped by and reminded us that someone was buried at this place we were preparing for construction. This was my moment to ask: “what if we touch the bones of the dead?” This question sparked a vivid discussion on mortuary practices and eschatology of which the highlights are presented in this section. In sum, Wayana have a wide range of mortuary practices including cremation, burial, or left undisturbed in a hammock in one’s house. This wide range of mortuary practices is largely dependent on individual preferences, the last wishes of the deceased, and the assumed causes of death (Figure 6). This broad range will have significant implications for the archaeological record, which is what I focus on in this presentation.

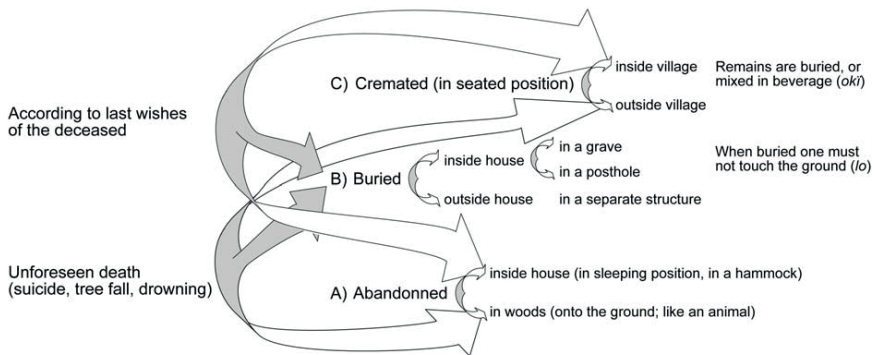


Figure 6. Schema of the broad range of mortuary practices among the Wayana (Duin, 2002).

Causes of death

According to information provided by Jean Hurault (1968, p. 62), only 10% of cases of death among the Wayana of the upper Maroni basin between 1952 and 1964 were claimed to be of “natural causes” (Table 2). The other 90% of cases were attributed to actions by dark shamans (*pijai*), poisoning or spontaneous actions by evil spirits (*jolok*). In most cases (10 cases or 34%) it was said that a shaman (*pijai*) had sent an “evil spirit arrow” (*jolok pile*) causing a stinging pain described as if a knife is stabbed into the body. As this stinging pain specifically occurs in the chest or leg, I have posited that this can be the result of a heart attack, apoplexy, or nerve problem [hernia] (Duin, 2009, p. 243). Next, in eight cases (28%), it was claimed that a *pijai* had sent his invisible spirit (*akuwali* or *akuwalinpë*; the latter sent from the grave). In three cases (10%) it was claimed that a person had died from poisoning, and in two cases (8%) it concerned a shaman killed by an adversary.

Table 2. Causes of death among Wayana between 1952 and 1964
(source: Hurault, 1968, p. 62)

<i>Cause of death</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Actions by a shaman: sending his <i>akuwali</i> (<i>npë</i>)	8	28%
Actions by a shaman: sending a <i>jolok</i> (<i>jolok pile</i>)	10	34%
Spontaneous action by a <i>jolok</i> or <i>akuwalinpë</i>	3	10%
Poisoning by means of <i>hemit</i> or <i>tamojetpë</i>	3	10%
Shaman killed by an adversary	2	8%
“Natural” death (including suicide and madness)	3	10%
Total	29	100%

Kanaima and toimai

Albeit 90% of the causes of death described by Hurault (Table 2) are related to actions by dark shamans, poisoning, or spontaneous actions by an evil spirit (*jolok*), this is not the place to discuss shamanism in depth, other than to address these elements that may result into archaeological signatures. Furthermore, in all reported cases there is no evidence of *kanaima*-style assassinations by dark shamans as reported in Guyana (Butt Colson, 2001; Whitehead, 2001, 2002). Ahlbrinck (1956, p. 62) did mention how Wayana said that a *pijai* from the Jari had sent his *jolok* into the woods with a small bow (*tawioma*) and tiny arrows (*wamaimë*) in order to shoot Wayana out of trees. Even if this evil spirit is invisible, Wayana claimed to hear it sometimes. Even if there is no evidence of *kanaima*-style assassinations by dark shamans as reported in Guyana, Wayana do believe a dark shaman (*pijai*) may be behind

certain deaths and consequently Wayana do have a ritual named *toimai* to establish, after the fact, which *pijai* is responsible for the recent death. Hurault (1968, p. 63) mentioned *toimai*, yet his essentialist task of classification appears rather inadequate as *toimai* is multifaceted, complex, variable, and deictic in that it requires referential context and meaning emerging from conjunctural interrelationships. As there are material signatures to this ritual of *toimai* which may be encountered archaeologically, I will herewith address material aspects of this ritual.

Toimai, which I have loosely translated with “death-swap” (Duin, 2009, pp. 256-261), refers to the highly corporeal ritual of intermingling, exchange, or the swap of the spirit of the deceased with the person responsible for the killing. First, hands and legs are tied and a papaya is stuffed into the throat to prevent the spirits from leaving the body in due process. A bow, broken in two, is jammed through the torso crosswise, whereby the cross represents the sign of the malicious spirit (*jolok*). Next a wide variety of attributes can be placed inside or onto the body, such as animal bones, shell, or even a ceramic vessel, and this is where this ritual becomes of interest for archaeologists.

1. A ceramic bowl can be tied to the head to cover the face of the deceased (compare with Figure 1). According to Wayana logic, following this rite of exchange (*toimai*) the person “responsible” for the recent death will now have his vision blocked. Next, a person who no longer returns from the forest and dies in the forest, is presumed to be the killer;
2. A *konoto* shell (*Asolena sinamarica*, *Ampullariidae*) may be placed at the genitals of the deceased (with the testicles placed *inside* the shell). When the genitals of a person will hurt and swell (similar to a growing prostate) this person is considered the presumed killer;
3. Monkey bones may be implanted into the corpse. After *toimai*, the person who will scratch and pull out his pubic-hair like monkeys do, is the presumed killer;
4. All kinds of animal bones can be implanted into the corpse, in order to make the presumed killer mimic the behavior of animals whose bones were implanted in the corpse.
5. The tongue of the deceased may be pulled by means of a fishhook and cut out the mouth, and a person who loses his or her speech is consequently presumed the killer;
6. For more options and illustrations see Duin (2009, pp. 259-260).

To close the *toimai* ritual, burning hot stones are placed onto the stomach of the corpse of the deceased to release the evil spirit (*jolok*) presumed responsible for the recent death. If in the weeks following a *toimai* ritual a dark shaman (*pijai*) bites his tongue, gets lost in the forest, or behaves according to the animal(s) whose bone(s) are inserted into the body of the deceased, Wayana say this is because of the actions of cutting out the tongue, blinding

the vision with a ceramic vessel, or placing animal bones into the corpse. This person acting accordingly is consequently accused of being the killer and responsible for the recent death. Of particular interest to the archaeologist are the material elements (a particular shell or particular animal bones in the burial pit, or a ceramic vessel in front of the face) of this ritual initiated in a search for the killer or dark shaman responsible for the death.

The burial pit

Dimensions of a burial pit, as encountered in 1938 inside a house, were reported as “[long] the size of a human being [...] over a meter deep [...] with steep walls” (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 48; my translation). The grave, as are other holes in the ground (pits and postholes), were, and are today, cut into the ground by means of an ax and shovel if present. Loose sand is removed using a calabash bowl. The walls of the burial chamber are enclosed with mats (opoto) woven from kumu-palm fronds (*Oenocarpus bacaba*). Burial chambers are covered with sand over planks of tree bark (parts of old canoes as specified by Hurault, 1968, p. 64) supported by several sticks horizontally placed one decimeter below the surface (Ahlbrinck, 1956: 48). Wayana say that it is not good for the body to touch earth and sand. Therefore, the burial pit is lined with mats (opoto) and covered with a wooden framework onto which planks are placed, and the whole is covered with sand. Grave pits are not filled-in



Figure 7. Engraving by Edouard Riou of an open burial pit with a hammock burial encountered in 1878 by Jules Crevaux (1883, p. 238).

with sand. The bottom of the burial chamber may be covered with a floor of split stems onto which the deceased squats (Grébert, 2001, p. 59) or sits on a little bench (*ahmit*, *kololo*) or traditional stool (*mijele*). With the body half seated, half laying, a wooden rest is placed behind the back (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 62). Even when buried in a hammock, a supporting plank is placed behind the head to hold the head in place (Hurault, 1968, p. 63). An open burial pit with a hammock into which the deceased was placed was witnessed in 1878 by Jules Crevaux (Figure 7). As recently as 2021, André “Antecume” Cognat was buried in this traditional manner, seated on a chair, with his “*touque*” (a plastic white waterproof storage barrel) and other personal belongings.

My question evoked by the archaeological discovery at Anse à la Gourde of a burial in a partially filled posthole (F342; Figure 5: top) resulted in the statement that before the arrival of metal tools (axes, adzes, machetes, and shovels) it was hard to dig a proper size pit to bury a person, so the corpse could be wrapped in a hammock and the enveloped body was placed in a posthole that had been enlarged for this purpose. I was indicated that Kulijaman knew a story of a person buried in a posthole, so we went to his village and he recited the following story:

Narrated by Kulijaman (2000) and transcribed in the indigenous Wayana language by Tasikale Aloupki. Translated from Wayana to French by Takwali Kulisa.
Translated from French to English, and edited where needed, by Renzo Duin

0	<i>Pakolo etatpë jaklëken tonamhe</i>	0	They buried where used to be a posthole
1	<i>Ma uhpakële, Wajjana tilëmëphe aptau, tëwëta wohanëmai</i>	1	A long time ago, when a Wayana had died, they did not know how to burry
2	<i>Ëkep tilëmëphe aptau, pakolo etatpë jaklëken tonamhe</i>	2	Once a person died, they buried him in a hole where used to be the post of a house
3	<i>Malalë tonohanëmai tëkepikom tipitipimihe ejahe tiwilimai ejahe pakolo etatpë enek tihe</i>	3	First they tied up the corps for it would fit into the posthole
4	<i>Malonme mëlë pakolo etatpë tilëmëi ejahe peptamepsik ëkep</i>	4	Next they enlarged the posthole in order to contain the corpse that is a little big
5	<i>Enek tilëmëi ejahe anumna hapon lo awatop eitohme. Tohme wanma ëtikomomna lo awatopomna monkala. Malijamna, hapamna, wiwi, tomomna ëhmelëmne</i>	5	They did this for this was less effort. For they did not have tools to dig into the earth. No knives, no machetes, no axes, nothing [no metal tools] at all
6	<i>Masike malëhkulëken ëkep tëkepikom tonamhe ejahe</i>	6	Thus they buried the corpse like this although this is not ideal

7	<i>Tahkuken tonamhe holope tomomna esike?</i>	7	But what to do to bury when one does not have shovels?
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Buried in the house

The following narrative was written down for me by Tasikale Aloupki in 2000, in the indigenous Wayana language, after long conversations with Wayana elders on settlement patterning. Translation from Wayana to French by Takwali Kulisa. Translation from French to English, editing, and additions between square brackets by Renzo Duin.

1	<i>Uhpak kunehak Wajana tipata kom ënikëpïla. Tihñëlä tipata kom tupijemëi ejahe</i>	1	Long ago Wayana did build their villages. They build their village not just anywhere
~	[lines 2-11 are omitted from this publication as they do not specifically relate to mortuary practices.]		
12	<i>Malalë ëkep tonamhe molo pakolotau ëkep tëmamhe ëutë aptau. Wanma ipokela ëutë tëwëtihe tijoloktai aptau</i>	12	When there is a deceased buried in the house, or several dead in the village. The village becomes uninhabitable due to malevolent spirits [jolok]
13	<i>Malalë ëutëtpë tëkëtëmëi aptau ipok lome ëkepimna tëweihem. Lome ëkepïhpe tëweihem aptau wanma ipokelanma. Akuwalinpëhpe ëleleptënma akuwalinpë tom</i>	13	One can built a village on the same place of a former village, but without dead people [buried there]. When there are dead people [buried in the village] it is impossible. There are invisible spirits [akuwalinpë] that frighten us
14	<i>Malalë talanme pakolo epu awalihtau ëkepjetpë timelekai aptau wanma ipokelanma tëtamolekai, malalë tülëmephe ipunak, lome pijasihpe aptau ipok tumaimëi mëklë</i>	14	Also when we dig a hole to place a post, one can touch the bones of the dead. This is bad, one can get ill and even die, but when there is a pijai [healer] it is good, because he [the healer] can make him [who touched the skeleton] better
15	<i>Malalë talanme inëlä ëutëme tülëmëhem talimaimëi "ipokela man helë talon man akuwalinpë ipokela" tikai pijai aptau. Tinomtaimëi mëlä ëutë</i>	15	One leaves the village during construction if the pijai says "it isn't good over here, because there is a bad akuwalinpë [invisible spirit]." One leaves the village
16	<i>Lome pijasimna molo aptau tülëmephe lëken mëklë ëkepjetpë melekatpon</i>	16	But when there is no pijai, he who touches the skeleton will certainly die
17	<i>Uhpak Wajana tomoja ëkep tonamhe pakolotau</i>	17	Long ago the Wayana buried the dead in the hous

18	<i>Malalë tukusipantau ehmelëken ëkepï tapek tonamhe ejahe. Tipatakem lêken emaminumtoponpi</i>	18	One also buried in the tukusipan [community roundhouse], but not anybody. Only the village chief [was buried here], because he constructed it
19	<i>Malalë empataka nutpi tilëmëphe aptau mëlëlä tak tonamhe. Emami nunpïkom taklë lêken</i>	19	Also those who helped him building [the community roundhouse], when they are dead, can be buried in the same place [in the tukusipan]. They only have this right
20	<i>Malonme tatakamo lomom matïhwë aptau ipëitotpi tom mënëh palake talankom tipatakamo pona titëi “ëwekatak mïhen wai wëtïlëmëjai” tïkai tipakolon kom pata upoimëi</i>	20	Then, when all the chiefs are dead, all the others can move elsewhere, some will see the chief of another village to ask “can I settle here with you?” to ask him a place [in his village] to build houses
21	<i>Talankom tipatakam aketëmëja</i>	21	Some built a [new] village for themselves
22	<i>Ëkep tilëmëphe aptau lêken lomona ënonamila tïteimai talïhnau</i>	22	When the deceased is dead, he will not be buried in the ground, but placed outside
23	<i>Lome ëkep pun matatïhwë aptau timëkenma tëtïhe ëutë. Ëutë talimaimëi ëkep-pokin helanma esike</i>	23	But when the body decomposes, the village will smell bad. People leave the village because they do not like this carcass-smell
24	<i>Malalë, pijai tilëmëphem aptau awomi timoi henma lêken Wajjanaja</i>	24	Then, when a pijai dies, the Wayana obey his word
25	<i>Helë katip mënke mëklë tilëmëphem “ïlemëp tïhwë nai eitëk jonamila, talïhnau henai wai. Kujai wilip tanih potëi. Talïhnau aptau wai ipok”</i>	25	The one dying will state: “when I am dead you will not burry me, I will remain outside. When you treason with me then I will not agree with that. When I am outside [above ground] than it is good”
26	<i>Masike mëlä ailëläken tonamhe ejahe ëkep awomitpi, elam hakënma tëwesi komke</i>	26	So they respect him and “burry” his body according to his word, because they are affright of him [affright of the pijai, affright of the “dark shaman”]
27	<i>Enïk palë tom umakapojai kanëkë kaikui istaino umakapojai katop tom. Ailëläken tonamhe mëkja uno.</i>	27	Because he [the pijai] will otherwise make arrive evil spirits, he will make arrive the jaguar, and many others. Because people are very affright [for the evil spirit] of he who has been buried.

When burial takes place outside the house, a structure is constructed to prevent vultures and other scavengers to attack the corpse. According to Daniel Schoepf (1973, p. 13) this mortuary home is called “*mougla-waléman*”, i.e., a wasp nest analogous its shape (*muklawale* is a species of wasp). On the foreground of the photo of this mortuary home are visible the burned remains of the house of the recently deceased (Schoepf, 1973, p. 14). Archaeologically it will be quite the challenge to distinguish this specifically erected mortuary home from a dwelling in which a person is buried.

Grave goods

As the land of the ancestors is said to be plentiful, Wayana do not take food with them to the afterlife, nonetheless, a dying person may ask for a gulp of cassava beer to complete the long journey to the land of the ancestors. Several arrows and a good bow may be placed next to the recently deceased (or jammed into the roof above his grave) with the intention that the visible soul (*omole*) can hunt and fish in the land of the ancestors. Items that are expected to be encountered in the land of the ancestors, such as gourds used as water containers, potteries, basketries, and the like, are intentionally broken, destroyed, and/or thrown in the river. Modern items that are anticipated not to be encountered in the land of the ancestors, may be requested to be placed in



Figure 8. The burial site of grandfather Tasikale (a collapsed tomb onto which was placed a metal chest with metal pots and strings of red glass seed-beads which remained on site) (Photo by Renzo S. Duin, 2003).

the tomb. A dying person may ask for personal ornaments (such as his pumali feather crown), utensils and tools. “Then he died. He awakened: ‘No, I forgot my knife, get me my knife!’ Then he died. He awakened again: ‘No I still want to drink a little, get me some cassava beer!’ Then he died” (Tasikale, pers. comm. 2000). In this case the person awoke from his deathbed to request his knife, as he was uncertain if this metal trade ware, introduced in historical times, would be available in the land of the ancestors. As Tasikali senior, the grandfather of Tasikale, was not sure if metal objects and glass beads would be available in the land of the ancestors, he requested a metal chest filled with metal pots and strings of red glass seed-beads to be placed on top of his grave, as can still be seen today (Figure 8). Moreover, that the depression into which the metal chest is found is a result of the collapsing of the ceiling of the open burial pit. Archaeological signatures of such personal requests may be the presence of items from, for instance, non-local stones in the grave (if the deceased originated from another place) and in post-contact times even European items such as metal ware and glass beads.

Not facing the rising sun

Wayana eschatology has ramifications for mortuary practice. Regarding the positioning of the body, Ahlbrinck (1956, p. 62; see also de Goeje 1941, p. 117) gave a direction of the head facing the setting sun (West), yet Chapuis (1998, p. 620) specified that a bad person is always facing the setting sun, so his *omole* will not get lost in the labyrinth, yet a good person does not have a prescribed direction of burial.³ Wayana told me that the deceased may face a direction of choice, except facing the rising sun. They further explained that the rising sun with its shimmering light will blind a person, which will prevent him to properly see his way to the land of the ancestors. The *omole* will be blinded and the dazzling soul will lose its way up to the afterlife. When the eyes of the deceased are blinded by rising sun glare, the visible soul (*omole*) will get lost and never find its way to the land of the ancestors (*Kujuli pata*). The corpse is well decorated for the voyage to the land of the ancestors, the same as if this person was to travel to another village on earth.

Cremation

Although there is a variety of burial practices, burying is not the only means to treat the deceased. Cremation provides a direct ascend for *omole* (shadow, visible soul, carnal body) to the land of the ancestors by means of a column

³ “S’il s’agit d’une personne bonne, on l’enterra soit sans orientation précise soit le visage tourné vers le soleil levant....S’il s’agit d’une mauvaise personne on l’enterra toujours le visage tourné vers le couchant, afin que son amole (*sic*) se perde à jamais dans le labyrinthe” (Chapuis, 1998, p. 620).

of smoke rising up. The previous Wayana paramount chief Amaipotĩ, son of Twenke, has requested to be cremated. He told me that he wanted to be cremated in order to quickly arrive in the land of the ancestors in order to gather some of his ancestors and return with them to earth, in reference to the narrative of an Uplui who returned to earth after being cremated (Duin, 2009, pp. 487-490). It would be too long to include this narrative here.

There are few historical descriptions of a cremation. In 1876, Crevaux (1883, pp. 153-155) witnessed a cremation among the Wayana whereby personal objects were placed on the pyre to be burned with the deceased, and the house of the deceased was burned as well (Figure 9). Sixty years later, in 1937, personal objects were burned on the pyre as well (Ahlbrinck, 1956: nrs. 13 and 14 facing page 80; de Goeje, 1941: between pp. 118-119). In this case the recently deceased was seated inside the pyre with her back supported with a plank, similar to a person sitting inside his burial chamber. Due to the rich descriptions, photographs and film, the 1937 cremation will be discussed in detail in a moment.



Figure 9. Engraving by Edouard Riou of a cremation with the Wayana witnessed by Jules Crevaux (1883, p. 154).

After cremation, the remaining ashes are collected in a ceramic vessel or a basketry container (Hurault, 1968, p. 63). Schoepf (1973, p. 12) named this urn: *îetpeiné* or in modern Wayana orthography: *jetpě eni*, which literally means: “bone container”. It appears that the preferred type of pottery to be used as urn (secondary use) is the *kalimata*, a vessel with a restricted neck

which is used to redistribute cassava beer. This ceramic vessel or basketry container is subsequently buried under the house of the deceased (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 63; Cognat, 1989, p. 225; Grébert, 2001, pp. 58-59; Schoepf 1973, p. 12), under the community roundhouse (Duin, 2009, p. 236), or guarded at the crossbeams of the house of the deceased (Crevaux, 1883, p. 155). Burial of the ashes remaining after cremation literally ground the ancestors in the Wayana landscape.

Endocannibalism

Reincorporation for the deceased may consist of a return to the land of the ancestors, whereas re-incorporation for the next-of-kin may consist of a communal meal. What better than combining the re-incorporation of the living with the re-incorporation of the dead: communal meals wherein the deceased is incorporated by the next-of-kin; also referred to as endocannibalism. According to a testimony dating back to 1769, Wayana are said to have “burn[ed the cremation remains] to ashes on a ceramic griddle. These ashes are crushed in a wooden mortar. They are passed through a basketry sifter, and thrown into a large vessel full of common beverage. They drink this beverage with the ashes during the same day, while they perform the ceremonies that are substantiation of their lament” (Tony, 1843, pp. 230-231; my translation).⁴ By means of such ritual communal meals, ancestors are literally embodied within the next generation.

In the 1930's, Wayana told Claudius de Goeje (1941, p. 119) that *tamojetpë* (the bones of the ancestors; *tamo* = grandfather, *jetpë* = bone) were mixed in a drink as ‘medicine’ (*hemit*). Perhaps Wayana abandoned this practice when people got sick or even died after drinking cremated bones crushed into powder and dissolved in beverage. That the bones of the ancestors could be used to poison other people was brought to my attention by Tënepo, another renowned *pijjai* when I discussed Hurault’s statement that in three occasions (10%) death was due to poisoning by means of *hemit* or *tamojetpë* (Table 2; Hurault, 1968, p. 93):

A long time ago, Wayana did not speak of *hemit* (charm). They only spoke of *tamojetpë*. They cremated the bones of their ancestors, and crushed them into powder, to poison other people. The *tamojetpë* is also named *taphem*. They removed the bones of the ancestors and placed them as a handle for the *olok* feather headdress. The handle of the *taphem tamo*. This was all made very

⁴ “On retire tous les os, on les fait calciner sur un platine de terre cuite, on les pile dans un mortier de bois, on passe ces cendres dans un mortier de bois, on passe ces cendres dans un tamis fait d’arrouma et on les jette dans un grande vase plein de leur boisson ordinaire. Ils boivent cette boisson avec les cendres dans le courant de la même journée, en faisant des cérémonies pour témoigner leur regret” (Tony, 1843, pp. 230-231).

beautifully. Therefore they (*taphem*) are imitated during the traditional dances, for people to see them. A calabash (*tutpë*; *Lagenaria siceraria*) is placed as head. Then the feathers are placed on the basketry body of the *olok*. Then they dance with this. There are thus two kinds of *tamojetpë*; (1) for empoisoning other people, and (2) as the handle of the *taphem* (Edited excerpt from Duin, 2009, pp. 493-495, lines 39-60).

In this context I have to mention that the *taphem* or *tamojetpë* adorned with an elaborate feather headdress (*olok*) is displayed during ritual gatherings commonly known as ‘*maraké*’ (Duin, 2009, 2012). Actually, two *taphem* are exchanged during a ritual battle during the course of a dance named *tapsem tïwetkai* (presentation of the *taphem*) at the eve of the *maraké* (Hurault, 1968, p. 93). During this dance, one Wayana stands in the middle of an arch of dancing men, each with the hand on the shoulder of the preceding dancer and in the other hand a green twig. The central man holds a *taphem* with an old *olok* feather headdress (de Goeje, 1908, p. 144). When dancers dance with *taphem*, they literally dance with the ancestors. In case no genuine human bones are attached to the handle of the *taphem* (*tamojetpë*), Wayana metonymically dance with ancestors. This basketry cylinder holding the bones of the ancestors, once deposited in a small pit, may elucidate archaeologists on the bundles of bones encountered in archaeological context.

Abandonment

Next to burial and cremation, Wayana may abandon the recently deceased. The body may be left behind in a hammock inside the house, as if sleeping. The latter occurred on the Upper Maroni as recently as 1999, upon the last request of the afore mentioned *pijai* Pileike. When I returned to the Wayana in 2000, Tasikale told me that this *pijai* – as Wayana do not name the recent dead, Tasikale referred to Pileike as “*he from across the river*” – had requested to be left alone; laying in his hammock in his house. Intrigued, I asked if I could see “him from across the river”. Tasikale then told me it was better not to visit that place because Wayana are very frightened of *akuwalinpë* (the spirit of the deceased dwelling in the grave), especially because Pileike had said that all Wayana who would land here (and visit his place) would certainly die. Before he passed away (at the age of 73), Pileike requested all residents from his village to move across the river to the neighboring village of Twenke (compare with de Goeje, 1941, p. 118). So I was not allowed to visit this place, and I was not able to see what Henri Coudreau (1893, pp. 119-120) witnessed over a century ago just south of Pililipu: a skeleton hanging in, and enveloped

by, a hammock rocking in the wind.⁵ Tasikale's father Aloupki however stated that it is not good to be seated in a grave: it is better to be buried while lying in a new hammock. There are Wayana testimonies that another *píjai* was left behind seated with his head above the ground while facing the river, as he was fond of the vista over the river. Thus are the last wishes of Wayana.

Abandonment in the forest or mortuary practices taking place outside of the village occur when Wayana suspect foul play from evil spirits in case of unexpected death, such as falling from a tree or drowning. A warm body expresses the presence of *omole*, therefore Wayana conclude that these sudden causes of death are a result of an intervention by an evil spirit (independently or sent by a *píjai*) removing the person's invisible spirit (*akuwali*) while leaving behind a lifeless body. This lifeless body without *akuwali* is left behind in the forest, buried outside, or cremated outside the village. The latter are precautionary actions to prevent evil spirits from entering the village. The place where occurred the "killing" (i.e., the removal of the person's invisible spirit) is subsequently avoided, for Wayana are fearful of malevolent spirits (*jolok*).

This is not to say that all Wayana at all times are fearful of the dead. While discussing these mortuary practices with Tasikale he stated that he is eager to exhume the skull of his maternal grandfather, because he had never seen his grandfather who carried the same name. Grandfather Tasikali had passed away before his grandson was born almost 50 years ago, and his name Tasikale was given to his grandson. Until present, we have not succeeded in identifying grandfather Tasikale on ancient photographs. During our conversations, Aloupki, Tasikale's father, stated that it is not good to play with the bones of the dead, and even with Aloupki passed, Tasikale still has not exhumed the skull of his maternal grandfather Tasikale. Tasikale told me that he has the intention to place the skull of his grandfather in a basket and hang this basket in his house with the purpose of seeing the face of his name-giver. Even though the skull of his grandfather has not yet been exhumed, this intent may be of interest for archaeologists who have encountered exhumated skulls (removed from the body or skeleton) and/or isolated skulls. Once again, albeit somewhat different, an example of deictic relationships requiring referential context and meaning emerging from conjunctural interrelationships.

A case study of two cremations in the Wayana village of Taponte, Aletani (1937)

Two cases of cremation have been well documented by Claudius H. de Goeje. These cremations occurred in the Wayana village of Taponte along the Aletani

⁵ Jean Hurault (1968, p. 64) wrote that in 1964 Toulissima [= Tulisime], another powerful *píjai*, had been left in his hammock under the *tukusipan* of a recently abandoned village at the mouth of the Tampok River.

where de Goeje conducted his linguistic studies of the Wayana language and culture. This rich historical ethnographical material has remained largely unknown and unexploited as the sources are written in Dutch and mostly unpublished. The following is based on accounts, de Goeje's personal diary and photo albums housed in the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, film footage by de Goeje housed in the Eye Film Museum in Amsterdam, the publication of the 1935-1938 Border Expedition and de Goeje's 1941 publication. Elsewhere I have described the role of de Goeje and the Border Expedition (Duin, 2009, pp. 89-94). What follows next is a reconstruction of the two cremations that took place in a Wayana village based on the aforementioned sources.

The cremation on July 25, 1937

On July 25, 1937, when the Border Expedition arrived in the Wayana village of Taponte, the cremation was already in progress (van Lynden 1939, p. 849). Claudius de Goeje had joined a provision convoy for the Border Expedition and had arrived three weeks prior, on July 7, in this village which is located on the right or French bank of the river Aletani, border between French Guyana and Suriname – a border which is until present (2023) still in dispute. Some of what de Goeje reported to van Lynden, the expedition leader, has been included in the published report of the Border Expedition (van Lynden 1939), yet the full extent of the event can only be appreciated by including de Goeje's personal diary, photos and film footage, all unpublished.

Van Lynden wrote that de Goeje had reported to him that the woman had passed away at 4 am the night before and that the cremation began at 9 am, yet that the weeping had already started before death of the woman and continued all night (van Lynden, 1939, p. 849). In his personal diary, de Goeje specified that the lamenting by Taponaike, seated next to the hammock with his sick aunt, took place from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm and started again at sunset (entry on July 24). In his photo album, de Goeje wrote that the name of the deceased woman was Mayawan, widow of a *pijai* or "medicine man", and aunt of Taponaike (a series of ten photographs in RV inventory number A-117-2; Figure 10; see also de Goeje, 1941: four photographs between pages 118 and 119). Village leader Taponte was absent as he visited another village to be treated for a *jolok pile*, yet upon hearing the weeping from his village he decided to return to his village. In his personal diary, de Goeje specified that after the woman had passed, she remained lying in her hammock surrounded by her family members who were weeping and lamenting. That morning, the people in the village were discussing to bury the woman in an abandoned village across the river, yet Juhpali did not feel well and therefore it was not possible to bring the deceased across the river to bury her. He further added

that a Wayana woman stated to him that “it is always when the white man come that there is *kwamai* (cold, etc.) and the Indians die” which topic has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Duin 2021).

De Goeje further reported to van Lynden that, and I quote with additions in square brackets based on de Goeje’s publication (1941, pp. 116-117; see also the 1937 film by de Goeje): “early in the morning, all possessions of the deceased, such as calabashes and cooking pots [as well as other pottery, containers, and spinning utensils] were broken into pieces [with a machete] and thrown into the river [by her husband] under ongoing lamentation [this property is destroyed to prevent the evil spirit *jolok* to return]; the corpse was cremated with all her jewelry, beads and buttons, strings (of beads) and wearing her (beaded) apron and with a cloth covering her head” (van Lynden, 1939, p. 849). The cremation of the corps with all her jewelry will leave little to nothing to archaeologists, yet the intentional breaking of material objects, including pottery, may be recovered in an archaeological context.

A little later that day – de Goeje did not specify at what time – wood was brought into the plaza, and a woodpile or pyre erected in front of the house of the woman who had just passed away (Figure 10). In his 1941 publication, de Goeje (1941, p. 118) described how a floor was made from the special wood (*tepimo* and *etuwe* according to Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 62) and two pieces were set at an angle so as to support the back of the woman. Her feet were directed towards the west. Then firewood was placed around the body as a cage; or as Ahlbrinck (1956, p. 62) poetically described: “like a bird in his nest.” This construction differs significantly from the setting depicted in the engraving by Edouard Riou (Figure 9). The pyre was lit at the feet’s end, only a few hours after death. While the cremation went on, a hammock and several other personal belongings were thrown on the pyre to be burned as well. In his personal diary, de Goeje specified that the deceased was placed in the woodpile facing west. At 9:40 am, Juhpali pours some petroleum on the woodpile and ignites the pyre. The lamenting continues from all houses in the village.

De Goeje took several photographs (Figure 10) and aided in keeping the roof of the nearby house wet to prevent it from burning. At around 11 am, de Goeje withdraws to his hut near the waterside where he observed the arrival of the Border Expedition fleet. Around 4 pm, the pyre is reduced to ashes with pieces of burned bone (Figure 10). The lamenting stops around 6 pm. In his diary entry of July 26, de Goeje mentioned that the lamenting awoke him around 4:30-5 am. That morning the ashes were buried in the house of Taponaike. Taponaike and the grandson of the deceased cut their hair. The cutting of the hair of close relatives of the deceased is still a practice with Wayana today. As a result, on the subsequently taken photographs, we see Taponaike with his head shaven (Figure 10: bottom center). De Goeje (1941, p. 117) later noted that a man who had contributed to the cremation, got a chest

pain which he attributed to a *jolok pile* sent by the *pijai* husband who disliked his widow being cremated.

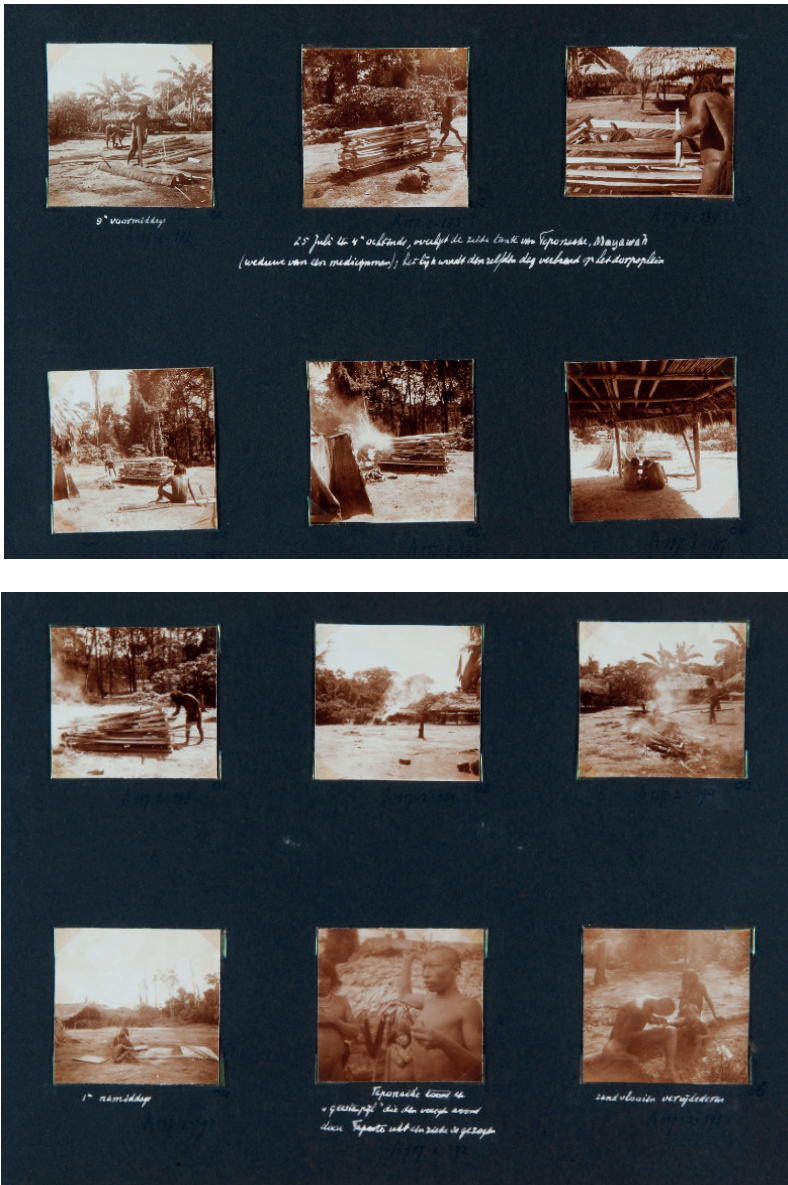


Figure 10. Cremation at the village plaza on July 25, 1937 (2 pages from the photo album from Claudius H. de Goeje. Collectie National Museum van Wereldculturen. RV-A117-2).

The cremation on August 8, 1937

Two weeks after the above-described cremation, another cremation took place in the same Wayana village. The health situation of a Wayana woman, who on July 28 had been diagnosed by the doctor of the Border Expedition with pneumonia, had severely deteriorated. On August 5, de Goeje mentioned in his diary that a canoe arrived in the village of Taponte: it is Nameyai with his family, including his wife Telelupta who had been diagnosed with pneumonia. The family would stay in the village for the next few days.

In his diary entry on August 8, de Goeje wrote that the lamenting began at dawn, yet the woman still moved and is not dead yet. Around 7 am, Nameyai, the husband of the deceased woman, together with his stepson Yakuman, arrived at the waterside with various personal items such as enameled bowls, a cooking pot and a calabash which are all slashed in pieces with a machete. De Goeje, who has his hut at the waterside, then joined Nameyai and Yakuman back to the village where the woman lay in her hammock... she had passed away. Nameyai threw himself in the hammock with his deceased wife, embraced her, lamenting and weeping. The deceased is wearing her glass beads (*kahulu*), a nice *kamisa* (apron), a mirror tied around her neck, and a knife on her lap. Around the house are many intentionally broken calabashes and pots.

Just as two weeks ago, Taponaike, Twenke and Wenalu bring wood for the pyre. Once the woodpile is ready, they carry the corps to the pyre where she is set on a low bench, feet towards the west, and with her back leaning against two slant pieces of wood (Figure 11). Personal items, as the mosquito net, basketry items and a calabash were placed in the wood pile. An opoto-mat, a cassava press (*tinkii*), and a calabash were placed on top of the pyre and a newly painted wooden ladle (*anekatop*) was stuck trough these objects in order to secure them. At 8:30 am the woodpile is lit (Figure 12). Nameyai, the husband of the deceased, is often lying on the ground lamenting.



Figure 11. The preparation of the pyre for the cremation van Telelupta on Augustus 8, 1937 (from the photo album of Claudius H. de Goeje. Collectie National Museum van Wereldculturen. RV-A117-2).



Figure 12. The cremation of Telelupta on August 8, 1937 (from the photo album of Claudius H. de Goeje. Collectie National Museum van Wereldculturen. RV-A117-2).

Taponte, the village leader, had withdrawn to the upper floor of his house. Today we would say he implemented a self-imposed social distancing as he was sick again. On July 28, Taponte was diagnosed with a *sinusoides frontales* and de Goeje had given him some aspirins. Or perhaps this was out of respect, as Ahlbrink (1965, p. 47) had stated that Namijei [Nameyai] was the leader of an earlier village of Taponte.

The photo album from de Goeje (Collectie Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. RV-A117-2; and loose photographs under inventory number: TM-10019492 - 10019504) contains thirteen photographs of this cremation that took place on August 8, 1937. De Goeje specified in his diary that none of the Wayana present commented on him making photographs and filming the event. However, they asked de Goeje to fire three salvos with his gun, “*just as for the white men*”.

During this second cremation, Wayana performed a ritual to chase away the evil spirit *jolok*. If this evil spirit would stay, more people were certainly going to die (de Goeje, 1941, p. 118). Twenke manufactured two arrows tipped with sharp bird bones and shot these into the partly-burned corpse. A square basketry pepper drying mat was thrown several times through the smoke



Figure 13. The cremation on August 8, 1937 (Photographs by Claudius de Goeje: Collectie National Museum van Wereldculturen. TM-10019492 t/m 100119504).

rising from the pyre. Then they asked de Goeje to fire two additional shots, one in the chest, and one in the lower body of the smoldering torso. One of the onlookers declared to “see” the *jolok* depart from the scene, and Taponte, who due to his sickness had remained inside his house, declared he had seen the *jolok* leave the body with a shattered jawbone and a destroyed lower body. Later that afternoon, de Goeje was asked once more to use his gun, this time to shoot at the green zone next to the village as Taponte had heard the evil spirit moaning: “ëuh, ëh, ëh” (de Goeje, 1941, p. 118). A few months later, Wayana declared to de Goeje that a *jolok* from the widow’s abandoned house had visited a neighboring house at night, jaguars roamed around the village, and dogs barked. On February 14, 1938, after de Goeje had already left the village, village leader Taponte passed away and soon after the village where the two cremations had taken place was abandoned.

In 2000, after I had shown the 1937 footage filmed by Claudius de Goeje to the Wayana, they said that it is not good to cremate the body, as in the old days people were cremated while still being alive. This may also have been influenced by the editing by de Goeje, as we see the sick woman arriving and being supported to get out of the canoe. In the next shot, we see the woman being placed in the wood pile, with the two-day interval being excluded from the edited film.

Wayana skulls collected (1939) and donated to the Tropical Institute, Amsterdam

The aforementioned 1935-1938 Border Expedition encountered a band of nomadic hunter/gatherers (Meuldijk, 1939, p. 872-876), and, back in the Netherlands, a proposal for a survey of the rivers Oelemari and Loë was developed to discover and describe these “*wild Indians, terror of these rivers*” (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 136). Father Willem M. Ahlbrinck was appointed leader of the expedition. It is during this expedition that they encountered an abandoned village with several open graves from which two skulls were removed during a subsequent expedition. The published expedition reports provide some insight into the collection ethics and practices in Suriname during the colonial era. The expedition reports were published in Dutch and therefore largely understudied and therefore quoted in length (translations from Dutch by the author, Renzo S. Duin).

The 1938 Ahlbrinck expedition

Mid-October, 1938, while struggling upstream against a rapid in the Loë creek, members of the expedition detected behind the trees on the bank a clearing which appeared to be of an abandoned farm field belonging to a nearby

abandoned Wayana village in which were located several burial pits, and I quote in length (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 11, 48):

What a surprise, when we, first following the clear creek, then crawling under cotton trees and roucou shrubs [*Bixa orellana*], along cashew trees, slowly going uphill, suddenly at the top, high above the woody weeds, see arise the striking dome of a large Wayana building [monta or tukusipan]. The house is stunning and perfect, of the kind of roundhouses as we know well from many photos. It is empty. We continue walking for now. Is it definite that there are no people here? A second, large building, square. Several smaller huts [are present as well].

The small huts have decayed. In one of these a pit has been dug: four steep walls as with a grave; proportions of a human being. It is definitely a grave, but why is it open? Or was it left open? Why was it dug? About halve a yard next to the grave is a depression in the ground. We enlarge this a little. First, we remove sand, then pieces of tree bark. We see at the bottom: a skeleton, the pelvis, the spinal column of a human being! Now it is clear to us. The Wayana dig for the deceased—as they have done here at least—a pit of about a meter deep. Across this pit they place three sticks. But these sticks do not lie on the rim of the pit, but about ten centimeters below. Over these sticks is a layer of tree bark. Over the tree bark a layer of sand. The dead in the grave thus has an open space and at about a meter above him is the seal of a decimeter thick, of tree bark and sand. This cover had fallen into the pit with the first grave, the walls remain intact. [...]

We return and visit the beautiful, large domed building. Here too we are surprised. We stand in front of three graves: two of adults, one of a small child. Everything is as with the first two graves. Although the ceiling shows holes, it has not yet collapsed. Obviously, we leave the graves untouched” (Ahlbrinck, 1956, p. 48; my translation).

The 1939 Geijskes expedition

Whereas the Ahlbrinck left the graves untouched, perhaps resulting from his ethics as a Roman catholic clergyman, a following scientific expedition was requested to collect skulls from these graves. During the 1938 expedition, Ahlbrinck was able to record and photograph the preparation of arrow-poison (*urali*) and Prof. Dr. Gérold Stahel of the Agricultural Experiment Station (Landbouw-proefstation) in Paramaribo commissioned Dr. Dirk C. Geijskes to return to the Wayana and collect the living plants needed to prepare this arrow-poison. Mid-August, 1939, almost a year after Ahlbrinck, Geijskes returned to this abandoned village on the Loë creek. Next to collect plant material, Geijskes was apparently also commissioned to recover one or several skulls from the graves described by Ahlbrinck (Geijskes, 1957, p. 276).

As evidenced in his own publication, Geijskes was very much aware that the Wayana Indigenous People may not have appreciated the removal of skulls of their ancestors. In his own words: “*When it is time, we will concoct something to get rid of them for a while*” (Geijskes, 1957, p. 277; my translation). Although Geijskes preferred to undertake a three-day trip to the Loë creek with expedition members only, they were joined by several Wayana. Not to arouse suspicion, the expedition members could not deny the Wayana to participate in this excursion.

The creek is still without rocks, hills appear in the surrounding land. It is about noon when we perceive stone plates at the left bank. Next to them is a branch of the river. We enter this [creek] and have arrived at the landing place of the former village where Ahlbrinck had discovered the graves. After strengthening the internal human being, we set out to prospect. In the first round, domed building, that is entirely empty, apart from a round painted plate [maluwana (Duin, 2006); this painted wooden disk was also mentioned by Ahlbrinck, 1956, pp. 48-49], are two graves, both open [no mention of the child's grave]. Nothing can be seen in them, are they empty? Behind another hut are two other overgrown graves. While [the Wayana] Atoe and Medie are searching for all kinds of edibles at the abandoned farm field, Smitje [the Saramakan Maroon Lodewijk Schmidt van Gansee (Duin, 2020)] and I [Geijskes] inspect the first two graves another time. By means of a stick we find in one some bones; chances are that a skull is present as well.

The Indians return from the garden plot and we join them to the boat [canoe]. We shall first make camp for the night. I [Geijskes] commission Atoe and Medie to cut some stems and leaves [for our shelter], many and nice okay, because rains are coming! [A long search for leaves would provide Geijskes for the needed time to exhume some skulls]. Meanwhile, I commission Smitje and Wijngaarden [two Saramakan Maroons] to the graves, armed with an empty tin of rice and a shovel. I stay at the campsite with Adiamë, wife of Medie, not to arouse suspicion. In the meantime, a dark sky emerges from behind the forest. [...]

When the rain lessens, Smitje and Wijngaarden return. They have 2 heads! One complete with lower jaw, the other damaged on the sides and without mandible. Successful, our expedition has found its rewards once more. The tin of rice in which the skulls are located, is covered with grass and weeds so the Indians will not question it” (Geijskes 1957, pp. 278-279; my translation).

The skulls remained hidden during the return trip. The next day, the expedition returns to the village of Wapodimiet (Wapot umit), where the round domed building (monta or tukusipan), the has just been entirely covered with new palm fronds. Based on his recent excursion on the Loë creek, Geijskes stated that “Wapodimiet [Wapot umit] is already housed in his future mausoleum and cradles in his hammock” (Geijskes 1957, p. 280). Without

consulting with the local Wayana Indigenous People, Geijskes concluded his summary of results by mentioning the two “Oajana” [Wayana] skulls for the collection of the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. A few days later, on August 25, the radio announced that the Germans are at the gates of Dantzic and the war is about to begin (ibid., p. 285). Because of World War II, there was a delay of delivering the skulls to the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

Donation of the skulls (1948) and anthropometric studies

According to the original ledger of the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Geijskes in 1948 donated these two Wayana skulls (TM series 1809, number 1 and 2) together with a collection of bones from a shell-ridge in Paramaribo (TM series 1809, number 3). Jouke Tacoma in his PhD thesis titled “American Indians from Suriname: a physical-anthropological study” refers to this collection as the “Geijskes-collection” nevertheless only accounts for the skulls excavated at the Hertenrits and from Kwatta (Tacoma, 1963 p. 63). Tacoma compared the archaeological material with data collected by Drooglever Fortuyn and Lichtveld on living populations of respectively Wayana (Drooglever Fortuyn, 1946) and Arawak and Caribs (Lichtveld, 1954). No mention however of the Wayana skulls collected in 1939 and in 1948 donated by Geijskes to the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

Earlier physical anthropological studies on Indigenous populations from Suriname were already conducted in the late 19th century. Inspired by the *Société d'Anthropologie*, founded in 1859 by Paul Broca, Roland Bonaparte in his “*Les habitants de Suriname: notes receuillis à l'exposition colonial d'Amsterdam en 1883*” (Bonaparte 1884) published tables with physical anthropological data collected from Indigenous, Maroon and Creole peoples from Suriname on display at the 1883 International Colonial and Export Exhibition in Amsterdam. Dr. Henri Ten Kate complemented this table with additional physical anthropological data from coastal Indigenous populations collected in Suriname in 1885 (Ten Kate, 1886, 1887). This physical anthropological data included total height, horizontal index of the head, diameter of the head (transversal and antero-posterior), and various shapes and colors of nose, hair, eyes and skin following the classification developed by Broca.

Regarding the archaeological Kwatta Tingiholo material from Suriname, the context is described as: “some large and complete pottery vessels, filled with black soil, and others filled with human bones... Skeletons in a stretched position, and others in a crouching position were recovered from this [excavation unit]. One of the skeletons in a stretched position had the skull at some distance from the vertebral column, probably so that the head could be covered by an upturned pottery bowl” and in the original plan of the excavation unite drawn by Piet Bolwerk of the Surinaams Museum,

Bolwerk has written “*bowl covering skull*” next to skeleton S-15 (Tacoma *et al.*, 1991, pp. 16, 49), yet when Tacoma studied these skeletal remains, S-15 was absent (*ibid.*, p. 55). In the plan view of excavation unit 6, Bolwerk has further specified the finding of a “*lizard or cayman made from shell*” which is not further mentioned. Little to nothing is said about taphonomy processes or mortuary practices among present-day Indigenous communities in Suriname. The various radiocarbon dating samples center around 1050 +/- 100 BP (GrN-8249: Tacoma *et al.*, 1991 p. 77) which corresponds with about 950-1050 cal. AD. These radiocarbon dates indicate that the broad range of mortuary practices in Suriname, including crouching and stretched positions, burial in urns and covering skulls with pottery bowls, goes back at least about 1000 years.

The main focus of the physical anthropological study of the archaeological material from Suriname was if there had been artificial modification of the cranium: tabular “flat-head” deformation or conical shape *deformation circularis* (Tacoma, 1963; Tacoma *et al.*, 1991). In his 1963 dissertation, Tacoma defended a statement of caution to the use of cranial indices (such as transversal and antero-posterior diameter of the head) as a reference material, since it can be assumed that artificial deformation of the head had been in vogue among the Indigenous Peoples of Suriname (Tacoma, 1963: Thesis statements).⁶ On this occasion, I would like to take the opportunity to briefly address skull modification among the Wayana. During my research visits among the Wayana of the Upper Maroni River (from 1996 to present), I have on several occasions witnessed childbirth and subsequent ritual practices. One of these post-partum rituals included skull modification. In the weeks following birth, the Wayana mother sat the new-born every morning on her knee, with one hand placed on the frontal bone and her other hand placed on the occipital bone with the fingers up onto the parietal bones to massage the head. The Wayana explained to me that this was to make the head beautiful and round (pers. comm. 1999). As this is an intentional act, I advocate to include this as a method of skull modification, most likely this act to shape the head round is to distinguish from ancient practices resulting in flat-heads or conical heads. However, this Wayana skull modification to make beautiful round heads is of an order not easily observed in the archaeological record, nevertheless it is an intentional practice of skull modification.

Matatop Luwekwao (the village of the dead at Loë creek)

Wayana oral history accounts of a village located on the Loë creek where several Wayana died in a single event and buried hastily in the village (pers.

⁶ Stelling 1: “Er moet worden aangenomen dat kunstmatige deformatie van het hoofd ook bij de Indianen in Suriname in zwang is geweest; dit betekent dat voorzichtigheid is geboden bij het hanteren van de schedel-indices als vergelijkingsmateriaal” (Tacoma, 1963).

comm. Elina 04/10/2022). The location and the genealogical data correspond with the aforementioned village from where skulls were recovered. It concerns the village named Olosiwalahpan, though better known as *matatop* referring to the many bodies that were left in the village to decompose.

Many Wayana had been invited to participate in the festivities of an *eputop*, a ritual more commonly known under the term *maraké* (Duin, 2009, 2012). Wayana were dancing, singing and drinking. Amongst the visitors were Maipo with his wife Tailu and their two daughters Ekinau and Kumakau. The village of Maipo was located at the mouth of the Loë creek, near the Aletani. They had to paddle upriver, spent the night halfway, and arrived the second day in the village where the festivities took place. The village was located on the righthand side when going upriver. The festivities, dancing and drinking lasted the entire day.

The next morning, however, people began to vomit. Maipo was the first to die, and he was buried in the communal roundhouse (*tukusipan*). Other people were vomiting as well, and began to pass away. The cause of this great dying remains unknown, yet may be related to food poisoning, potentially due to ill-prepared cassava beer. Some people were buried in the *tukusipan* as well, others were buried in their houses. Many Wayana die that day, yet not everybody is buried, at the end, some are just left behind on the ground to rot. Maybe up to a dozen people died that day. There is mention of a white man (*palasisi*), a friend of Maipo, who was present that day, yet his name is not remembered. People return to their homes. Tailu returns with her two daughters to the village of Maipo at the mouth of the Loë creek, near the Aletani, yet Maipo remains behind in *matatop* (the place of the decayed people), buried in the *tukusipan*.

Many decades later, Kumakau with her daughter, her son-in-law, and with her grand-children, made yearly visits to the Loë creek, the beautiful creek where she grew up, and where it was good to have pick-nicks and a holiday. Her children and grand-children remember how Kumakau always began to cry when they passed by Olosiwalahpan, the now abandoned village where her father and many other Wayana had died. They spoke in low voice when passing by the village, and did not go ashore, as many *akuwalinpë* (the spirit of the dead) roam around in *matatop* (the village of the decayed people).

Maipo and Tailu were the parents of Ekinau and Kumakau. Ekinau was the wife of grandfather Tasikale, mentioned earlier in this article. Kumakau was the wife of Janamale who in the 1950's was the *granman* or chief of the Wayana. Janamale, together with Atoe, Medie, Makalé, and Santé, joined the 1939 expedition when they returned to Paramaribo (Geijskes, 1957, p. 281, 284). In the 1940 census, Lodewijk Schmidt included Tailu as a resident in the village of Janamale (Duin, 2020, p. 156), yet Maipo is not included in this census, confirming he had passed before 1940. It has been the descendants

of Maipo and Tailu and their families who have hosted me during my visits of the Upper Maroni Basin from 1996 to present. Most likely they never told me about *matatop* before as they knew that I as an archaeologist was eager to visit ancient villages, yet they did not want me to visit this ancient village where many people had died. It is most certain that one of the skulls recovered in 1939 during the Geijskes expedition from the grave in the *tukusipan* in the abandoned village was the skull of Maipo who had passed a few years prior and was buried hastily on the day that many Wayana died.

Concluding reflection

This ethnographical and historical outline of mortuary practices among the Wayana provides a framework of complex and varied indigenous Amazonian mortuary practices that allows us to further a conceptualization of exhumed heads, flexed position, tied extremities, ceramics placed in front of the face, animal bones in the grave, among others, as encountered in archaeological contexts. A multitude of disciplines is needed to further our understanding of the complexity of indigenous mortuary practices; similarity, variety, and individualization of personal treatment of the dead in past societies on mainland South America, in the Caribbean, and beyond. Archaeologists excavate and catalogue the grave inventory. Physical anthropologists describe the human remains and may provide an understanding of taphonomic processes. Ethnohistory and ethnography may provide insight into indigenous belief systems. A ritual such as the *toimai* performed by the Wayana Indigenous People will leave archaeological signatures which we may not recognize from an exclusively western perspective.

The question whether the Late Ceramic age people from Anse à la Gourde, Guadeloupe, conducted similar mortuary practices as contemporary Wayana in French Guiana is actually an inversion of how this study unfolded. In 1999, based on my archaeological experience at Anse à la Gourde and my ethno-historical research on the Guianas, I had sketched a body half seated in a hammock with tied arms and legs and a ceramic vessel tied in front of its face (Figure 1). As discussed earlier, during my ethno-archaeological research on architecture and settlement patterning, I participated in building houses. After we had been warned for a grave at the site prepared for construction, I placed this sketch amidst a series of historical drawings and engravings which I discussed with Wayana. When the sketch of the body in his hammock came along, Wayana asked: "Where did you find this drawing, *because we do this too!*" I explained the archaeology at Anse à la Gourde, and what had been found. This sparked a dialogue on Wayana mortuary practices as outlined in the present article. When discussing mortuary practices, we should not forget that, even after death, the corpse remains (part of) a relationship body from

which bones can be taken with the intent to be reburied, possibly with other human remains. We must not forget that the carnal body (a substance body), objectively studied, is a social body ([part of] a relationship body), situated in subjectivity. The body is an ongoing process emerging from interrelationships... and this continues after death.

To give the final word to the Wayana who have passed, I here present the story of a Wayana elder who requested to be buried in the central plaza as narrated in 2000 by Kulienpë (recording time: 11 minutes; narrated in the Wayana language, transcribed by Ronnie Tikaime; translated to French by Takwali Kulisa; translated to English by Renzo Duin. Notes and additions between brackets are by the author). Not only does this narrative conceptualize Wayana mortuary practices, it also provides insight in the interrelationships between people during mortuary practices, and the subjectivity of being buried in the plaza.

0	<i>Alili eitoponpë</i>	0	The story of [the man named] Alili
1	<i>Alili pijai kunehak, Alili. Masike kunilëmëp tipëken mai pijaiwe iwesike. Talanme tilëmëpkaneke. Mëlëkatip</i>	1	Alili was a pijai [due to its ladenness and discrepancy with the definition of 'shaman' I prefer the local Guiana term pijai]. Then he is dead, the other one killed him for he was a pijai. Maybe he had killed somebody. It is like this
2	<i>Ëtikatohm? Tanme jolokpïlehpe, tanme kuwamai. Ëtikom, tanme jemnë, tanme tuwalëla</i>	2	Why [had he died]? Maybe it was because of the evil spirit arrow, maybe it was kuwamai [influenza (Duin, 2021)]. Unimportant what, maybe by fever, one does not know [how Alili died]
3	<i>Masike kunilëmëp tamo, ehëtinpi Alili. Masike mëlëpëk wekalëjai. Ma kunilëmëp tamo</i>	3	Then the grandfather is dead, his name was Alili. Therefore I'm going to tell this. Well, grandfather is dead
4	<i>Ëh, tiwuhlepsik, tapsik tinikhe? Tanme tinikhe, tanme tinikhe tinikhe, tanme 4 awaina, tanme 5 awaina</i>	4	Eh, sometime later, how many nights? Maybe one time sleeping, maybe two times sleeping, maybe four days, maybe five days
5	<i>Ma, tamo kunilëmëp. "Ma ilëmëpjai," tikai tokon noja, Aluwakalija</i>	5	Well, grandfather is dead. "Well I'm going to die," he said to his brother, [Alili said] to Aluwakali

6	<i>“Īlēmēpja; masike konampok. Konamkē epeitoja. Konampok mihen molo, lamnapo hewai, pakolotao. Helawai mon he lamnapohe,” tīkai Alili tokon noja, Aluwakalija</i>	6	“I’m going to die; therefore I want to be buried. You are going to bury me with your helpers. I want to be buried over there, in the middle of the village, inside the house. I want to be there in the middle,” said Alili to his brother, to Aluwakali
7	<i>Masike “Mētawohanēmeilep pehe,” tīkai akon. “Mētawohanēmeilep pehe pakolotao, lepeikē tipakolok lepe manahe, sin lepe kupakolon nu, tukusipan nu. Helē tao lepe eikē?”</i>	7	Next “You are going to be unhappy,” said his brother. “You are going to be unhappy inside the house, or when you have your own house, but that is our house, the tukusipan [community roundhouse]. So you will stay in there?”
8	<i>“Uwa, helē tao helawai, peitopit mēnmēkja. Onohtompēk peitopit mēnmēkja, ētikompalēpēk,” tīkai Alili</i>	8	“No, I do not want to be in there, for there will be children who will arrive. Children who will search for red dye, searching something” said Alili
9	<i>“Pīlolop hewai. Kapuleīnai kapulēpoi,” tīkai mēklē tokonoja, Alili</i>	9	“I want to be in the plaza. Do as I say,” he, Alili, says to his brother
10	<i>Malonme “Īlēmēpjai. Masike hemalē jeni imelekapok, jeni imelekapok hemalē. Molo lamnapo,” tīkai inēlē</i>	10	Next “I’m going to die. Thus start digging today, start digging today. Over there in the plaza,” he said
11	<i>“Ahpelanai, eikē tījaipētukepētuku nai. Eikē mahekohek manai,” tīkai Aluwakali tokon noja Alilija, tilēmēphem mīja</i>	11	“Be without yarns, and be aware of the spirits. For you want to be buried like this,” said Aluwakali to his brother Alili, [he said] to him who is going to die
12	<i>Malonme tawai ipeitokom moja. Waken, tawakephe. Ma makakaneha? Uwah, nēsik anumalēpona man</i>	12	Following the helpers start digging a hole. Finished, ended the dig. Well, is it finished? No, not yet, it will be finished tomorrow
13	<i>Ēh. Mēlēhnē tīkohmamēmēi, tawainai. Maka. Atpēkaneha ēhmelē pētuku</i>	13	Eh. Night falls, and it dawns. Done. All is ready and well prepared
14	<i>“Jeni mītēu japuluka mipetukwatēu kanawatpē. Kanawatpē helēken wai. Tīhahka tom helawai wīkanepēhe,” tīkai inēlē. Masike upak kanawatpē tīpetukwai pētuku enī eneka tīhe</i>	14	“In order to cover the pit, prepare planks of an old canoe. I want the [planks of] old canoes. I want the planks like this,” he said. Then the old canoes were prepared to cover the burial pit properly

15	<i>Malonme, "Ma, këlëkpa, këlëk. Masike këlëpok mëlëme. Tîtëi inëlë, tipantëkë tihutih tikai inëlë. Ènetsehnëpsik kunehak tamo Alili. Masike tîtëi inëlë tënija. Mëlëkatip</i>	15	Next, "Well, take me, take me. Therefore take me like this." He goes, he walks step by step. He still sees a little his grandfather Alili. Then he goes near the grave. It is like this
16	<i>Masike, "jakonopsiken nilëmëpjaha, jakonopsiken wenimanmei, mihen lêken na"</i>	16	Then, "My brother is going to die, I am going to burry my brother in the grave, with respect"
17	<i>Aluwakali tēhamai alëlihtao</i>	17	Aluwakali weeps when he takes his brother
18	<i>Ulë tîtëi ulëhnë; ulëhnëpsik</i>	18	He goes, still alive; [Alili is] still a little bit alive
19	<i>Malonme, "ënikjapëhja? Këpëikë! Ènik ne japeinemehle mëje jenijao," tikai inëlë, tamo Alili</i>	19	Next, "who holds me? Hold me! Who is going to hold me down in the hole," he said, grandpa Alili
20	<i>"Ïtëkëh," mëklëkja tikai, akon matikai. Aluwakali matikai: "Ïtëk apëita ëtamu!" tikai</i>	20	"I'm leaving," he says, the brother to the other one [his friend]. Aluwakali said to his friend: "Go and hold your grandfather [in the grave]!" he said
21	<i>Malonme tîtëi ohwelo mijanhak sike. Som, ejaptailë tëpëihe. Kilik kai, opsatuk. Apëinehnë taptunuke sike helë katip, taptunuk. Mëlëkatip</i>	21	Then the other goes into the deep pit. Standing-up, they take him by his arms. One is jumping into it. In this manner he supports him, they arrange with a stick behind his head. It is like this
22	<i>Masike tipetukwai ejahe ëheja tihe ipuputom</i>	22	Thus they arrange well his legs and his feet
23	<i>"Tahenai man, huwa hewai, huwa pëtuku," tikai inëlë. Pëtuku ipupu tipetukwai. Mëlëkatip. Ah maka aptao, makaka meha</i>	23	"Place them there, and that is what I want, and like that it is good" he said [He is not dead yet!]. They arrange well his feet. It is like this. Once it is done, it has finished
24	<i>"Mëtapupojaka hemalë?" tikai</i>	24	"Do you want [that] we cover you today?" he said
25	<i>"Kaputëk, kaputëk! uhpak wai tîtëi," tikai inëlë. "Uhpak wai tîtëi! Kaputëk, pëtuku kaputëk</i>	25	"Cover me, Cover me! I have already left" he said "I have already left! Cover me, cover it well. [With opoto-mats alongside the wall and the planks of the canoes above]
26	<i>Lo helapitë wai. Jeneimë tihwë ëja aptao, lo hewai," tikai inëlë</i>	26	I do not want the ground yet. When you are going to see me [in three days], I want the ground [to cover the grave]" he said

27	<i>Tin lo, tin lo, eni awatpë. Mëlëkatip</i>	27	He places some sand, he places some sand, there is no longer is a hole [visible]. It is like this
28	<i>Malonme tapuhe tolop pëtuku sin eni. Helëkatip eni, lome tanënapşik, kanawatpë huwa. Kanawatpë huwa, kanawatpë. Masike pëtuhku tihe lomna</i>	28	Then the cover the burial pit well with earth. Like the hole over here [the narrator indicates a nearby depression in the ground], just a little bit [a depression], and with [the planks of] an ancient canoe. And a piece of a former canoe, and another plank of a canoe. Thus they have well done it without ground [without filling the burial chamber]
29	<i>Malonme; "Ma ëhalë tëkële!" tënijak taputihwë. "Ëhalë tëkële. Kupanai katëinaji, awapnaji!"</i>	29	Next; "Well, you will leave," he said in his covered burial pit. "You will leave. Do not break my ears, stop!"
30	<i>Tëhalëimëi tot, onamitpon kom, tulululu, iwekitpitom tëhalëimëi. Maka</i>	30	They, the people who buried him, leave one after the other, all relatives leave. End
31	<i>Malonme tinikhe inëlë. Mëlë tikohmamhe inëlë, petoh. Anumalë petoh, anumalë petoh, anumalë petoh, ëhelowaa tinikhe</i>	31	Then they sleep. The night is very dark, the evening (7 – 8 PM). The next morning, the following night, the following night, after three nights sleeping
32	<i>Moloinë akon noja; "Ma, helë ailë kenekële kunka jakonpoh. Masike hene tatën nule jakon nopsiki, tanme nimata</i>	32	Then he says to his brothers; "Well, this is the day, our brother wanted us to see him. Thus let us see our brother, maybe he has rotten. [Thus the family had been outside this village during these days]
33	<i>Talanme këtakametëhe ipokinke," tïkai mëklë, akon, tamo Aluwakali</i>	33	Maybe we will be intoxicated by the smell," he said, the brother, grandfather Aluwakali
34	<i>Malonme temekhe tot, tulululu, ëhmelë</i>	34	Then they arrive, one after the other, all [arrive]
35	<i>Moloinë tapu waimëi powep; imna, imna huwa</i>	35	Then they lift the cover; nothing, and nothing
36	<i>Akename tonamhe taptunuk, mëlëm nahle aptunutpi tomom. Nahle ahmitpi tomom, nahle itamit enpëşik, tanme kuluwakaphap tanme. Mëlëkom momnahle</i>	36	First when they had buried him he had a backrest, but the backrest is no longer there, all has disappeared. The bench is no longer there, nor are the cigarettes, maybe not even his trunk maybe. All his belongings he had taken with him

37	<i>Ma, itëtoponpi tënei mihja: lonailë mèlaimë nawatpi katip mihja, mèlaimë nawatpi katip pëtuḥku</i>	37	Well, they see where he has left: the hole is like the burrow of a giant armadillo. Really like the burrow of a giant armadillo
38	<i>Lomnahlä ailë tëhetpëtse. Opsatun tïkai ënunomna tëwëtïhe. Tawai nai pëtuḥku</i>	38	They descent to the bottom without anxiety. They dig well
39	<i>Ankomhak sike, ankomhakëla</i>	39	It is already midday, not even midday
40	<i>Tanme mon iwehanu kunma tihwë lëken, tëneimei imnahle. Upunak mijälëken. Lome ilomonmela itëtop. Huwa hapon tupjehapon, mëlëkatip itëtoponpi</i>	40	Maybe they continue just above, they no longer see anything. Where he has left is not horizontal. But there no longer is earth where he has left. And it is at an angle downwards, but really straight where he passed
41	<i>“Eh, maheka kunehak jakonopsik, ahpelanma jakonopsik pijai men. Ma, jakonopsik ahpelanma,” tïkai akon, tamo Aluwakali</i>	41	“Eh, my brother wanted to be like that, my brother really was a pijai. Well, my brother really had spoken the truth,” said his brother, grandfather Aluwakali
42	<i>Masike tëtāhamai ëhmelë akon, iwekïtpi tom, hemele kuwililik tïkai tëwëhamoi</i>	42	Therefore all his brothers are sad, also the family, all cry and weep
43	<i>“Uhpak jakonopsik nïtën, tan nëlanma man jakonopsik. Ahpelanma kunehak jakonopsik pijajime,” tïkai inëlä</i>	43	“A long time ago my brother has left definitively, he no longer is here. It was the truth and my brother was like a shaman” he [Aluwakali] said.
44	<i>Masike tëponomai tëkelehelë lo enpi. Tëponomai mëimëi lëken. Tëponomaimëlëken tëpetunuk tom ënilïla. Sin palankatom ënilïla. Èhmelë tuwuptëimëi lëken</i>	44	Thus he covers the hole with earth. They just cover the hole. They fill it up and they place nothing in the pit. They do not place planks. They just fill [the former grave] completely
45	<i>Uhpak tïtëi mëlëkatip kunehak tamo Alili, pijai menma</i>	45	It was grandfather Alili who is gone for a long time, he really was a pijai
46	<i>Ma huwalëken tamo patatpë ekalëtpë ija</i>	46	Well, it is like this the story of the former village of my grandfather ends
47	<i>Maka</i>	47	The end

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