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KNOWLEDGE IN PLAY: THE CREATION OF THE VIDEO GAME *HUNI KUIN: YUBE BAITANA*

ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to present the experience of the development of the video game *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana*, by anthropologists, programmers and artists from São Paulo (SP) and the Huni Kuin (Kaxinawá) people of Rio Jordão (AC), aiming to describe its construction process, as well as the knowledge, creativity and transformations undertaken in the project. Through the presentation of issues, such as ways of knowledge circulation, copyright, registration and the use of technology among indigenous peoples, the article intends to question the constitution of the new object, its potential uses and users, as well as certain legal, educational and anthropological implications.

keywords

Kaxinawá; Video game;
Creativity; Technology;
Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The article will reflect on the creation of the computer game titled *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana* (the ways of the *jiboia*¹). As a brief introduction, the project emerged in mid-2012 from readings of ethnographies (Yano 2010, Lagrou 2007, McCallum 1996), with descriptions of the Kaxinawa symbolic universe, from where inspirations for early ideas of the game emerged. The purpose of the project was to develop an electronic game that addresses the culture of the Kaxinawa people (or Huni Kuin², as they call themselves) in order to provide an experience of exchanging indigenous knowledge and memories through the language of video games. The proposal of the game was to provide players an immersion in the Huni Kuin universe, so that they could get in touch with the various knowledge of this people – such as songs, graphics, stories (myths) and rituals – enabling them to circulate through a wider range.

The production of the game was a collective creation of the *nawá*³ (non-indigenous) team of researchers and technicians, as well the Huni Kuin involved in the project, who sought a permanent effort of translation between cultures, media and formats. In this way, trajectories were traveled that range from myths and stories to the scripts of the levels, from Huni Kuin graphics to digital art, from songs to drawings and animations, from cosmology to game mechanics and different forms of gameplay. The project had as a characteristic the interdisciplinarity, since in its execution were integrated knowledge of Anthropology (Amerindian Ethnology), Computer Science, History, Narratology, Audiovisual, Plastic Arts, Digital Arts, Music, Game Design, Animation, Electrical Engineering, Renewable Energies (Solar Energy), as well as knowledge that goes beyond academic boundaries and their disciplinary divisions.

1. The game *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana* (the paths of the *jiboia*) is an achievement of the game development team Bobware, the audiovisual producer *Etnolhar* and the indigenous collective *Beya Xinã Bena*. The project was supported by the *Rumos 2013/2014* edict of Instituto Itaú Cultural and a small grant from *Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* (IEB/USP). The work was authorized by *Fundação Nacional do Índio* (FUNAI), *Assessoria Especial dos Povos Indígenas/AC* and *Associação de Seringueiros Kaxinawá do Rio Jordão* (ASKARJ).

2. The *Huni Kuin* reside mainly (about 12,000 inhabitants) in Brazil, in 12 indigenous lands and in urban territory. They are the largest indigenous population in the State of Acre. Another portion, smaller (2,500 inhabitants), lives in Peru. Their language, *Hatxã Kuin*, belonging to the *Pano* linguistic trunk, is practiced widely in five indigenous lands, according to Joaquim Kaxinawá (2014).

3. According to the same author, “the *Huni Kuin* refer to non-indigenous people through the expression ‘*raku nawá*’ (people dressed), that is, people wrapped in cloth, but currently the expression most used to refer to non-indigenous is “*nawá*” (Lima Kaxinawá 2014, 24).

Until the release of *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana*, in April 2016, the *Huni Kuin* had no games in their portfolio of audiovisual productions. However, they already had relevant film production, such as *Xinã Bena – Novos tempos* (2006), *Huni Meka – Os cantos do cipó* (2006), *Já me transformei em imagem* (2008), *Filmando Manã Bai* (2008), *Katxanawa* (2008), *Nuku Inu Shinupabu Burã* (Nós e os brabos) (2011) and *Nixi Pae: O espírito da floresta* (2012). The Yawanawá people, who live in the same state (Acre), have films like *Yawa: The Story of the Yawanawa People* (2004) and animations - a format closer to videogames - such as *Awara Nane Putane* (2012), and *A gente transforma Yawanawá – A força da floresta* (2013).

To date we haven't found records of other games made with the collaboration of indigenous peoples in Brazil, although there is an incipient production in this decade in other countries. The best-known case is *Never Alone (Kisima Inŋitchuŋa)*, a game made by Upper One Games with the Inuit, people of the Alaska region, and released for major gaming platforms such as Playstation 3 and 4, Wii U, Xbox One and iOS. In addition, we found in Brazil few electronic games (with non-indigenous themes) developed in academic scope⁴, but until then there was no similar initiative in the University of São Paulo.

RESEARCH PATHS

For the creation of the game a preliminary research was carried out in order to articulate possibilities of game mechanics and content elements to native concepts through the study of ethnographies. The dissertation of Ana Yano (2010) was the main reference for this initial elaboration. The concepts of *yuxin*⁵ and *yuxibu*⁶ as worked by Els Lagrou (2007) and the concept of death for the *Kaxinawa* as described by Cecilia McCallum (1996), were also important in the elaboration of the proposal.

4. In *Universidade Estadual da Bahia* (UNEB), for example, *Búzios: Ecos da liberdade and Tríade: Liberdade, Igualdade e Fraternidade* were produced. With the support of the *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco* (UFPE), there is *Xilo*, a game that explores Northeastern Brazilian woodcuts.

5. According to the anthropologist Els Lagrou (2007, 347), "one of the meanings of *yuxin* is the quality or energy that animates matter. In this sense, all living beings "have" *yuxin*. It is the *yuxin* that makes matter grow, which gives it consistency and form. [...] *Yuxin* is a quality or movement that connects all interrelated bodies in this world."

6. According to Lagrou (2007, 59) "The *yuxibu* are plural or the superlative of the *yuxin*, spirit or soul, possess agency capacity and point of view, intentionality. These *yuxibu* beings are not limited by form, they can transform at will and can transform the shape of the world around them."

The game began to take shape in 2012, through meetings with some *Huni Kuin* in southeastern Brazil, both in the academic environment and in rituals of *nixi pae* (ayahuasca), where contacts were established that allowed the project to commence, even without a financial source. In January 2013 the first collective efforts began, which included establishing the work team, fostering indigenous partnerships, drafting proposals for edicts, bibliographic research and initial tests.

Although the game project was an initiative of one person, the construction process was collective. Besides the ethical and anthropological issues involved in this case, it is generally agreed that developing an electronic game in solitude is almost impossible (unlike some non-digital games such as board or card games). In the production of electronic games there are several skills involved, such as game designing, management, programming, illustrating, animation, scripting and sound engineering, which require specialized knowledge. Still, *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana* can be considered a simple game, with a nucleus of production composed by few people: an anthropologist who acted as producer and game designer, a programmer, a digital artist and five other anthropologists (with the functions of consulting, video editing, sound reconstruction, screenplay and installation of solar energy systems), as well as indigenous researchers, artists and filmmakers (about 30 collaborators).

With the beginning of the development of the game, a GDD (Game Design Document) was created with pertinent information such as: history, gameplay, mechanics, description of levels, conceptual art, characters, enemies, interface, platforms, minimum requirements, controls, etc. From then on the prototyping of the game began, with the programming, implementation of mechanics and tests of digital art and sound. Most of these activities occurred simultaneously (except translation, which took place at a later stage, and soundproofing, at an intermediate stage).

A key part of the game's creation methodology was the four ethnographic incursions to the *Huni Kuin* villages in Acre (in the *Kaxinawa* indigenous lands *Alto Rio Jordão*, *Baixo Rio Jordão* and *Seringal Independência*), where drawing, singing and storytelling workshops were held in order to elaborate the thematic proposal of the game, as well as visual and narrative content production for each level. These incursions lasted an average of one month each and involved the participation of two to five team members. During the workshops, there was a direct involvement of the *Huni Kuin* in the elaboration of the script, choice and narration of the stories, recording of the songs, capture of sound effects, translation into the indigenous language and narration of the cutscenes, as well as drawing the artworks, which are entirely inserted in the game.

figure 1
Illustration
workshop
(Photo: Nadja
Marin, 2015).



The drawings were made by everyone who attended the workshops, without distinction as to their greater or lesser ability in the execution of the activity. Nor did the drawings suffer significant selection of the team, since practically all were included in the game in the form of cutscenes (according to the scenes that each matches in the narratives). With this, a mosaic of drawings of different authors and qualities were formed which maintains a common style, *Huni Kuin*.

Based on the stories chosen by the group⁷, the *Huni Kuin* themselves chose older people, knowledgeable of the contents and details of the stories, to tell them in *Hãtxa Kuin* language and later in Portuguese. In general, narratives in the indigenous language had a significantly longer duration than in Portuguese (averaging more than one hour), with a greater wealth of detail.

In addition, as demanded by the youth of the communities, audiovisual workshops⁸ were held in which participants practiced filming, script preparation and editing of audiovisual content. The short videos made in the workshops, which tell about daily life of *Huni Kuin* culture, such as food, paintings, medicines and fishing, are available on the game's website⁹.

With the experiences and workshops, a considerable amount of ethnographic material was gathered, both in terms of audio (traditional songs and those with new arrangements and instruments, as well as the sound effects), and visual such as photographs, videos and drawings, which have become reference for the creation of objects and animations of the game.

7. The pajé Dua Busê tells that the *Huni Kuin* people have more than 50 stories, of which five were chosen.

8. Directed by anthropologist Nadja Marin (USP and University of Manchester).

9. The game is inserted in an electronic platform (<http://gamehunikuin.com.br>) that contains complementary information in order to promote a deepening in the topics covered, besides to take advantage of the research material and to avoid an overload of written material inside the game. In addition to the free download of the complete game, videos of storytelling, images of the development process and presentation of project participants etc. are also available on the site.

figure 2
Song recording
(Photo: Alice
Haibara, 2014).



The chants (in *Hatxã Kuĩ* language), which are fundamental to various activities of village life, such as in *nixi pae* rituals (*huni meka*), planting and harvesting (*katxanawa*), were used in the audio composition of the levels and on occasions of the onset of the “special powers”. A partnership was agreed with the Norwegian-Brazilian band, *Amazon Ensemble*¹⁰, which allowed the use of their songs on the game’s soundtrack.

The material carried out in the workshops was taken to São Paulo to edit and format images and sounds in order to make them insertable in the game. This work involved animation, music editing and creation of sprites, backgrounds and sound effects. In the same way, it was necessary for some Huni Kuin to come to São Paulo – especially Isaka¹¹, on three occasions, but also Ângelo Ikamuru and Tadeu Siã – in order to work in extra production of audio material (storytelling and recording songs in studio), drawings and the translation of the whole content for Hãtxa Kuin.

THE GAME

Although games are now one of the most popular forms of entertainment, there is no way to understand them as emptied forms of meaning. To ignore this is to lose sight of the extent of its effects. Electronic games have practical effects on the tasks of creating meanings and can be powerful tools for the circulation of content. In a contemporary world scenario, where games of large companies (mostly North American, Japanese and European) dominate the market and there’s little space for independent creations, we saw the opportunity to develop a game with Brazilian indigenous themes. Given this, developing content

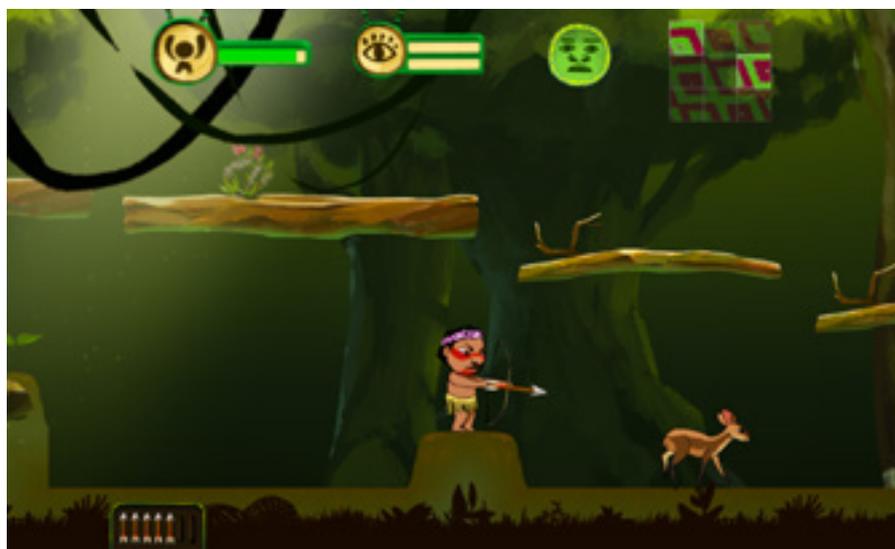
10. This group is also involved in this movement of new creations with the Huni Kuin. They already had developed a project in the same village (São Joaquim / Center of Memories) where the game’s workshops took place, which originated a CD titled *Mae Inini – Power of the Earth*, signed by *Amazon Ensemble & Huni Kuin People*.

11. The narration of the cutscenes was made by Isaka in a home studio in the city of São Paulo. The whole translation of the game from Portuguese to Hãtxa Kuin was also made by him.

related to social movements and local themes is both a challenge and an opportunity provided by this new time, in which there is, for example, greater accessibility to game development engines¹² and a possibility of dissemination through social media without high costs.

The game *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana* is presented in two-dimensional visual (2D), side-scroller¹³ platform and developed through a free version of *Unity3D* software. The game is narrated in the *Hãtxa Kuin* language and subtitled in four languages: Portuguese, English, Spanish and in the native language. It contains five stories of the *Huni Kuin* people: *Yube Nawa Aĩbu*, *Siriani*, *Shumani*, *Kuĩ Dume Teneni* and *Huã Karu Yuxibu*, each containing several levels, which correspond to the scenes of each story.

figure 3
Game screen
(Illustration:
Talita Hayata).



Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana works on computers running Windows or Mac OS (both desktops and notebooks, but not on mobile devices such as mobile phones and tablets). It has a mouse and a keyboard (optional joystick) as controls. To play its necessary to walk with the character (forwards and backwards), jump on platforms and obstacles, pick up items like food, medicines and pieces of drawings [*kene*]; escape from thorns and thornbushes; jump over holes and wooden trunks; hunt tapirs [*awa*], pacas [*anu*], deer [*txashu*], wild pigs [*yawa*] and birds [*isku*], shoot arrows [*txara*], beat with the club [*binu*] and hurl the spear [*haxĩ*], among other movements and confrontations with special characters.

12. Seven years ago, the development kit for PlayStation 3, for example, cost about \$ 500,000. The *Unity3D* version we used from 2013 to 2016 was free.

13. There are other games known in this genre, such as *Super Mario Bros.* (1985) and *Sonic: the Hedgehog* (1991).

One of the central points of the game's functioning is the approach of the character's relationship with domains (such as water, forest, sky) from Kaxinawa cosmological conceptions of *yuxin* and *yuxibu* (Lagrou 2008), which involve matters related to the corporeality, materiality and spirituality of this people. To introduce these terms, the anthropologist Kenneth Kensinger (1995 *apud* Lagrou 2007, 348) maintains that:

Yuxin is the life force, agency, consciousness and intentionality of every living being. It is both one and multiple and no one can ever name these ephemeral beings as they permeate the body they animate. In this embodied state the *yuxin* is perceived as a body. It is the body of the person who thinks, their heart, their fingers and their skin that know.

Déléage (2005 *apud* Yano 2010), in general, proposes that it is a category of perception and/or ontological: everything that exists is permeated by matter and *yuxin*, and the specificity of living beings, spirits and animals – results from the relationship between the two. The living have a body and innumerable *yuxin*, but they are, fundamentally, body [*yuda*]; the *yuxin*, in turn, possess a body, but they are, above all, *yuxin*, which implies their capacity for transformation (Keifenheim 2002a, 99-100).

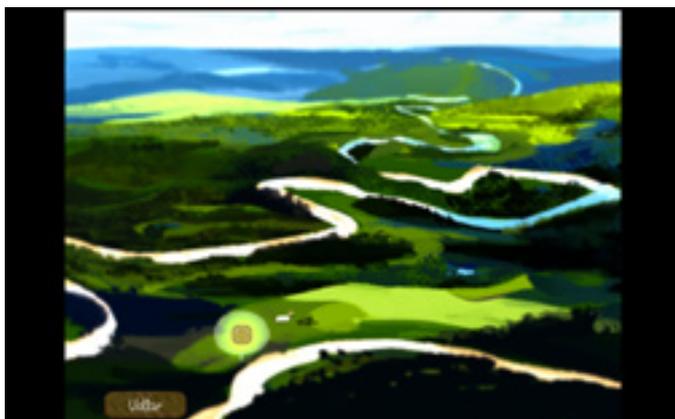
According to Yano (2012) and Lagrou (2009), the body of the Kaxinawa person is composed of a series of *yuxin*, in which stands the *beru yuxin*¹⁴ (located in the iris), which travels separately from the physical body (of flesh and bone) in dreams and in *nixi pae* journeys, and is definitely detached when the individual dies¹⁵. Compared with the concept of *yuxin*, Els Lagrou (2007, 351) states that:

Being *yuxibu* means possessing extraordinary transformative powers. These animals can change shape when they want and then be seen not only as animals when they are actually humans, but as beings who are more than human (p. 351). They are demiurges, masters of transformation. They are *yuxibu* because they are more *yuxin* (agency, power) than body and therefore need not be connected to a specific body to act in an *embodied* way in the world.

14. According to Agostinho Ikamuru (*apud* Lagrou 2007, 316), “the *bedu yuxin* is our thought. Our weight is due to the fact that we eat meat, if not, we would be light. You think of Belgium and it's already there. This is your *bedu yuxin*. But we have to travel to see. The *bedu yuxin* moves through the air. This is what the vine (*ayahuasca*) teaches us”.

15. Haibara (2016, 61) points out that this *yuxin* would not detach itself in dreams and sessions of *nixi pae*, but only at the moment of death.

figure 4
Level selection
screen, Rio Jor-
dão (Illustration:
Talita Hayata).



One of the main mechanics of the game consists in controlling two *yuxin*, *beru yuxin* (iris *yuxin*) and *yuda baka yuxin* (body of flesh and bone *yuxin*), which act differently in the world, as shown by Els Lagrou:

The *yuxin* of the body is designated *yuda baka yuxin* (body shadow *yuxin*). It is the shadow, the reflection of the person in the water or in a mirror, the image captured by the photograph of people and things. During the day or at night, the world known by the eye *yuxin* is a world of images. For something to become *embodied* knowledge, other senses should help to root this perception of the surrounding world through the skin, the ears, the hands, the body (Lagrou 2007, 312).

Thus, in the game there is specific food for the *yuxin* of the body [*yuda baka yuxin*] and for the *yuxin* of the eye [*beru yuxin*]. Edible foods – such as banana [*mani*], manioc [*atsa*], peanut [*tama*], corn [*sheki*], papaya [*barã*] and meat [*nami*] – restore the character's flesh and bone body [*yuda baka yuxĩ*] life force. “Medicines” [*dau*], such as the vine [*huni*], queen leaf [*kawa*], tobacco [*dume*] and ashes [*mapu*] of certain trees strengthen the *beru yuxin*, enabling pajelance skills when the player triggers the “special”.

To trigger the effect of the *nixi pae* and get access to the world of *yux-ibu*, the player has to join both beams of vine and queen leaves. In the case of *dume deshke* medicine, it's necessary to collect tobacco and ashes from trees such as *murici*, *cumaru* [*kumã*] or *tsunu*. In altered states caused by the character's ingestion of such substances, gravity acts otherwise (less, in the case of *nixi pae*, and with more pressure, in the case of *rapê*), their attacks have increased power and their vital energy is restored at a greater speed, precisely because of the medicines' agency.

There are chiefs [*ibu*¹⁶] of levels, such as the boa *Yube*, who can only be defeated through the use of such substances, since such beings possess such strong regenerative properties that, in case of “normality”, would be invincible.

In the *Huni Kuin* world, everything that is alive, such as animals, plants and humans, belongs to entities called *Yuxibu*¹⁷, such as the “owner of the waters” [*Yube*], the “owner of the sky” [*Inka*], or the “owner of the Forest” [*Ni*], for example, embodied by animals such as the boa [*yube*], the hawk [*nawa tete*] and the jaguar [*inu*], and trees such as samaúma [*shunu*], among others. We tried to operate a translation of this concept for the game mechanics. Thus, if the player draws much vital energy from the forest, it will leave *Yuxibu* mad. The character, in this way, must maintain a good relationship with *Yuxibu* (not killing too many animals in a short time), otherwise the latter will take revenge, turning “passive” animals into enemies, making their flesh rotten and elevating their attributes such as life points, attack and range.

The graphics [*kene*] received by the *Huni Kuin* women in dreams and visions (Lagrou 2007, 193) were also used in the constitution of the mechanics. In the game, the character can collect pieces of *kene* scattered through the stages, assemble them as puzzles and thus gain access to certain items, such as handicrafts (bracelets, bands, vests, gowns, etc.), which give several bonus attributes to the character.

STORIES OR MYTHS?

From the beginning there was a long discussion about the game script. There were basically two proposals: one focused on the chronological history of the indigenous peoples in Acre (which we will call a *historical* approach) and another on the stories of the ancient [*Shenipabu Miyui*], which we will call here a *cosmological* approach. It was previously known that this decision would have a decisive impact on the project, such as functions of the game and the production of specific assets (human beings, urban settings, etc.).

16. Creator, parent, guardian, owner (Lagrou 2007, 215).

17. According to Haibara (2016, 40), “the notion of ‘owner’ or ‘master’ is very present among several Amerindian thought regimes (see for example Seeger (1981), Gaillois (1988), Viveiros de Castro (1992), among going beyond the expression of only a relation of property or dominion, these categories designate modes of relationship, which are constituents of Amazonian sociality and characterize interactions between humans, between nonhumans, between humans and nonhumans, and between people and things (Fausto 2008, 329).”

The first proposal then would be to base the game's script on the narrative of the so-called "five times"¹⁸, as portrayed in the film by Jose de Lima Kaxinawá (Zezinho Yube), *Já me transformei em imagem* (2008). This is a history generally experienced by the indigenous peoples of Acre related to the process of colonization and syringe extraction. We can summarize the five times as follows:

1. *Time of the hut*: life in the village before contact with the *nawa* (white man).
2. *Time of the raids*: invasion of the rubber tappers, war between the different ethnic groups and the colonizer.
3. *Time of captivity*: exploitation of indigenous labor in the rubber plantations;
4. *Time of rights*: fight with the National State to achieve specific rights for indigenous peoples, such as demarcation of land.
5. *Present time*: strengthening of culture, return of rituals, differentiated education, struggle for land increase.

This approach would emphasize a traditionally more educational character on the history of the indigenous peoples of Brazil and, in theory, would have a greater appeal for appropriation in conventional schools as complementary material, especially in Acre. However, during the first workshop on the indigenous land, a meeting was held to define the focus of the general roadmap in which the choice was made for the cosmological approach, *ie* the stories of the ancient [*shenipabu miyui*]. Then each one of the stories was chosen: *Yube Nawa Aĩbu*¹⁹ (Woman-Enchanted Boa), *Siriani*, *Shumani*, *Kuĩ Dume Teneni*²⁰ (Tobacco Smoke) and *Huã Karu Yuxibu*²¹.

18. The formulation of the five times is the product of a training course, in which many indigenous teachers were present and therefore it spread in several villages. Such denomination indicates the effects of the encounter with our History, that is, it is an indigenist construction and not the effect of a common experience. This terminology, therefore, has a very recent history and is linked to the work of the NGO *Comissão Pró-Índio* (CPI/AC).

19. Versions of this story are also published in other works (Langdon 1996, Ibã Kaxinawá 2006, Lagrou 2007, Haibara 2016).

20. A version of this story is also published in *Shenipabu Miyui – história dos antigos* (2000).

21. A version of this story is also published in *Una Hiwea – Livro Vivo* (2012).

So history that we came, by chance, emergence of the *ayahuasca* beverage. I'm going to do this game with *ayahuasca*, because we Huni Kuin and even the *txai* already can tell this story. Do then, to work five times will change. And we also have singing. Today we organize the music, there is the geometry too, the *kene*, body paintings, there is weaving, right? So that's a game, as we're talking about animation game, I think that's what gives us the power to even develop our own knowledge of doing. [Ibã Sales, interview, 2013].

Both the Huni Kuin and the *nawa* team participated in the process of choice. We mainly interfere in predicting which stories would be most interesting to be adapted to the language of video games. For example, stories that have more dialogue and less action might not be so much fun in the game. Others already feature more diverse elements, such as animals and enchanted beings, as well as parts of the storyline that open up different gameplay possibilities. With the choice of stories, a detailed script of each of the stages was elaborated with the participants of the workshops, based on the long narratives of the elders, both in Hãtxa Kuĩ and in Portuguese.

The script of the game as a whole and the stories are related to the processes of acquiring Huni Kuin knowledge. In the first sequence of levels, corresponding to the story of *Yube Nawa Aĩbu*, the character learns to trigger the special power of the vine, the *nixi pae*. In the second *Siriani* story, in addition to using the club, the player learns about the graphics patterns [*kene*]. In the third story, which tells the adventures of a little enchanted forest being named *Shumani*, he also learns about the use of annatto [*mashe*] and jenipapo [*nane*] paintings. In the fourth story, *Kuĩ Dume Teneni*, the player learns to use spear and gather tobacco and ashes from trees to prepare *rapé*, so he can use his power to confront forest animals like the harpy eagle [*nawa tete*], the black monkey [*isu*], the Giant Owl [*Pupuwan*], the Scorpion-King [*Nibu Baka Pianan*] and other enchanted beings such as *Yuxin Shurubu Pianan* and *Pinu Taka Pinushun*. In the last story, *Huã Karu Yuxibu*, the player learns about the emergence and classification of medicinal plants and the secret of immortality.

Such stories have no logical sequence or explicit interconnection with each other (except certain versions of *Yube Nawa Aĩbu* and *Huã Karu Yuxibu* that would amend each other, but this is not the version present in the game). Amerindian narratives are generally not thought or executed in linear thread, but when one passes to our forms of expression, be it a text, a game or a film, the multitemporal, multilocal and multivoical aspects tend to be eliminated in favor of linearity. We thus create a general narrative related to important knowledge for the formation of

figure 5
Pajé Dua Busē
organizing
the drawings
(Photo: Nadja
Marin, 2015).



the Huni Kuin person (true person), in which we deliberately link one story in the other. The need to learn about the vine, in the first level, for example, becomes fundamental to advance in the other levels, since the player will need to use this knowledge to proceed. In the same way it happens with the assembly of the *kene* (in the second level), etc.

In the plot of the game, the main characters are a couple of twins who were conceived by the *boa Yube* in dreams and inherited its special powers. A young hunter and a small artisan, throughout the game, go through a series of challenges to become a *pajé* and a master of drawings [*kene*], respectively. In this journey, they acquire skills and knowledge of animals, plants and *yuxin*; they enter into communication with visible and invisible beings of the forest, to become, finally, true human beings [*huni kuin*].

One of the challenges of drafting this script was to escape the false opposition between myth and history. Thus, in the form that the game is presented, the character begins in the present time, where everyone is in a village, wearing clothes and playing musical instruments like acoustic guitar and maraca. In the sequence, the character is transported to the plane of the stories through the blow of a *pajé*, where he acquires knowledge and returns, later, to the present time. In this way, we try to propose that the agency of myths, which are alive in everyday life, are responsible for updating relationships.

So first thing I wanted to thank about the relationship of our *Shenipabu Miyui*, which is so important, so sacred, of

every word, every story that comes bringing these writings from the source, from the emergence to this day. [...] Both this *Yuxibu* who's here together, we'll thus congratulate *Kuĩ Dume Teneni*, to congratulate *Huã Karu Yuxibu*, [...] That's *Yuxibu*. *Yuxibu* transforms some things. Some things of joy. Not a few bad things. Brings healing... That was a cure, yeah, a huge joy. – Tadeu Siã, speech, 2016.

The most notable effect of creating this game is certainly not to freeze myths, to supplant other variations nor to change “traditional” forms of movement in the villages. First, because the only option to actually create something would be to rely on one of the existing versions of the stories²². Second, because we understand that the version contained in the game does not currently have the power to significantly change the circulation dynamics of such knowledge in the indigenous lands – considering the limited number of computers, the lack of familiarity in handling these technologies, among other factors. In this case, the versions coexist and communicate, rather than supplant themselves.

TO WHOM DOES KNOWLEDGE BELONG?

The development of the game raised several questions, such as the authorship and authority of the knowledge present in the game. It's clear that each story present in the game is not the same as any oral version of such stories (such as those told by the elders), but another version, in the sense indicated by Lévi-Strauss in *Mythologiques* (1964). In the game, the stories (presented in the form of levels) are transformations of a story told in a specific time and moment. The argument, then, of when collective benefits are required due to the use or appropriation of a given story, presupposes an exclusive domain and usufruct over knowledge – the knowledge of “the story”, in singular. We might thus think that such history, as a general and abstract term (if it may exist), would not belong to a village, a river (Jordão) or even a people (Huni Kuin). It should be remembered that other Pano-speaking peoples (such as the Yawanawá, for example) narrate very similar stories, such as the origin of the use of the vine [*uni*].

However, in practice there is an intense dispute over the authorship of these knowledge. *The Huni Kuin Federation*²³ at a given time of meetings and discussions about the game claimed that the stories contained in the

22. Unless the proposal was to present several versions of the “same” myth, what we didn't find interesting in terms of gameplay and content.

23. The *Federação do Povo Huni Kuin do Acre* (FEPHAC) is an organization created with the intention of representing the Huni Kuin of the 12 indigenous lands in Brazil (although this “representation” is questionable).

game would belong to “the entire Huni Kuin people”, requiring extensive consultation and extension of benefits to all Kaxinawá indigenous lands, independently of the direct collaboration of each people with the project. After several conversations, which we clarified the lack of resources and time to achieve such coverage, the Federation’s council requested only a few copies of DVDs for distribution to other indigenous lands, as well as participation in eventual negotiations involving the sale of the game²⁴.

We then defined that the copyright of the game belonged to the collective *Beya Xinã Bena* (New Time Culture), a group formed by the indigenous participants during the first game’s workshop in 2014. Such a collective, which does not yet have a formal registration, was founded with the aim of collecting, promoting and disseminating the audio-visual productions (linked to digital technologies) of the Huni Kuin of Rio Jordão. This can be defined, therefore, as a collective of indigenous audiovisual productions. The name of the game (*Yube Baitana*) was also decided in a meeting, by decision of the group.

The participation of the São Paulo team in the group was oriented in the sense of offering support and training to the indigenous people who wish to create, edit and display their own materials, assisting them in organizing and providing content during the training courses and workshops held in the villages and also when they travel abroad. The team has created a channel on *Vimeo*²⁵ and other on *YouTube*²⁶ where such productions are hosted and available for free.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TECHNOLOGY

Although it has become common to hear cries of “live the videogame!” during the sessions of *nixi pae* on the occasion of the launch of the game, it is necessary to first clarify that the great majority of Huni Kuin is unaware of what a video game is. Possessing objects such as computers, recorders, projectors, camcorders and cameras is still a reality for few people, even though there are now a considerable number of cell phones in the villages. In fact, in most of them there isn’t even electricity.

24. According to Dominique Gaillois (personal communication), it is one thing to think to whom the stories belong from considerations about how they circulate; and another thing is to know who and what these “who” are demanding in return. These are two very distinct things, which tend to be confused. One thing is the anthropological issues related to authorship, another are the effects of the notions of copyright and image rights, also different things and that generate complexities in very different terms than the questions of authority, which can be analyzed anthropologically.

25. <https://vimeo.com/hunikuin>

26. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOFStNKXSrcAmykJ3Gai_Cg

With this project, the São Paulo's team bet on a combination of cultural elements and practices with certain digital technologies, aiming to offer better conditions for the indigenous people to develop and promote their work. It's frightened that this is an earlier demand of the Huni Kuin themselves, who have directed efforts on several fronts for this purpose. At the end of 2015, for example, due to political pressure in FUNAI and in the Ministry of Culture, satellite internet points were installed in three villages²⁷ (*São Joaquim*, *Três Fazendas* and *Lago Lindo*), while in the municipality of Jordão, non-indigenous (and also indigenous) residents have very limited access to this type of communication.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PACT

Different from the books *Una Hiwea – Livro Vivo* (2012) and *Una Isĩ Kawaya – livro da cura do povo Huni Kuĩ do Rio Jordão* (2014), which were originated from the idea of a *Huni Kuin* – in this case the pajé Agostinho Manduca – one of the initial concerns was whether the project to create a video game would make sense for this indigenous people. After all, how to talk about video games with them even if there isn't even electricity in the villages? Would they glimpse something with the project? After all, why would the Huni Kuin be interested in an electronic game?

During the field experience, we've quickly noticed a Huni Kuin fascination with technology. In many cases we've heard the following expression: "We, the Huni Kuin, own the science. You, the *nawa* (white people), own technology." From a broader perspective, the alliances that are built between these two peoples, as in the case of projects and journeys related to pajelance, open the way to these exchanges of knowledge and instrumental between "the science of the forest" (medicines) and "the instruments of the white people" (technologies).

A kind of *ethnographic pact* (Kopenawa and Albert 2015) was then built around the implementation of allegedly long-lasting benefits²⁸ in the villages. Considering that the Huni Kuin who participated in the project are co-authors of the game, it was decided to reserve a part of the money for the development of the game for the installation (and maintenance) of solar energy systems in the villages. This was a demand of the local people themselves, who chose it as one of their main needs today, along with water piping and the construction of artesian wells. So, because of this project, we had the opportunity to install solar energy systems in nine villages, lighting houses, creating small points of culture and

27. When we're there for the last time, only one of them (*São Joaquim*) was working.

28. Except in very specific cases (such as the payment of the translation services and narration in the indigenous language that were made in the studio), no cash was used.

restoring those that already existed in the region. The idea was also to strengthen local productions with so-called digital technologies. Thus, both training workshops were offered in the two construction workshops of the game and at the time of its launch, training courses in audiovisual (filming and editing), introduction to computer science and maintenance of solar energy systems for the participants.

This dream is wonderful to me. For me it's a joy. When we got this point, it was almost all dead. Battery was over; it wasn't working anymore. [...] That we don't want because the point of culture cannot die. While the Huni Kuin people are alive, our culture is alive. Culture point is us, it's our culture. This equipment is brought to help register and do some things to show to the world. - Tadeu Siã

Due to the weather and resources, and analyzing the proportions of the region, the seven central villages²⁹ were chosen: *Novo Segredo*³⁰ (group 1), *Três Fazendas* (group 2), *Novo Natal* (group 3), *Boavista* (group 4), *Astro Luminoso* (group 5), *São Joaquim / Memories Center* (group 6) and *Lago Lindo* (group 7). The village *Coração da Floresta*, led by the pajé Dua Busê, was also benefited. Where there were already culture points (from the Ministry of Culture via *Rede Povos da Floresta*), cases of the villages *Novo Segredo*, *Três Fazendas* and *São Joaquim*, it was up to our team to restore them (installing new batteries, replacing burned charge controllers and power inverters), equipment (cameras, notebooks, projectors and recorders) and install previously non-existent³¹ lighting channels. Where there was no culture point, the effort was to inaugurate initial versions, installing in each village a basic solar energy system, with solar panels, batteries, controllers, inverters; as well as the illumination of houses.

figure 6

Maintenance of solar energy systems' workshop
(Photo: Nadja Marin, 2015).



29. In *Jordão* region today there are 34 villages, which are spread in three indigenous lands.

30. This is not *group central*, but *Pão Sagrado* village.

31. The project for the creation of *Pontos de Cultura* of the Brazilian government privileged the installation of computer equipment, such as desktop computers, and not the villages' illumination, so that the houses were left without lighting (except the house of the culture point itself).

On their own initiative, residents promptly named the newly created “culture point”. It’s estimated that this project contributed to the illumination of one hundred houses in eight villages, in which 500 to 1,000 people live, as Tadeu Kaxinawá states:

Here on earth, we need this important partnership to give more strength to this work, how to work on audiovisual, as we call the point of culture. What is *culture point*? I told all this young men to immediately name each point of culture where there’s light, you can already put the name of each culture point. But from now on, the *Rede Povos da Floresta*, Ministry of Culture has approved 150 points of culture, nowadays, txai Ailton Krenak is in this area moving there in our Acre, in Brazil. So we’re here with the boa, with this way there, to receive this equipment, to bring another three or four where it was installed that light, we will bring this equipment. Our fight is to bring, with Ministry of Culture, with this project. I’m also participating as a delegate from the Ministry of Culture with *Huni Kuin* people here from Rio Jordão. I was chosen, signed... Txai Benki, me and Txai Iskubu, from Breu. So I’m not following in Brasilia, but we are here connected, some things Yuxibu, *nixi pae* and everything, we are following and searching. With this struggle, with that bit of my knowledge that I’ve committed, there’s Internet. In three villages in the indigenous lands there’s Internet. It’s committed that we had this training, and Josias, I and all of us have been following this. If I had not been a filmmaker, if I had not been aware of this area of work, this video game job had not happened. You know that the boss, Siã, did not allowed: “We do not want the video game to happen, this project looks like it’s a children’s project, yeah, and we’re not kids,” he said. “No, this is not a child. This project for me is important. It’s bringing information, it’s bringing some solar panels from the indigenous lands ... So, Siã, what do we need? Do we take alcohol or do we take important person to put light on?”, “No, that’s important. We will do it because we have school, we have the children to work”. Until Siã released, together with us, this project happened. So the project brought something important for us, for students, for women, for young people. [...] In my view, that’s it. [...] For me it was very good, it was very *kuxipa*, the boa, *Yuxibu*, *Huã Karu*, *Ikamuru*, all of us, *nixi pae*, our health, our joy, the *Huni Kuin* encounter. [...] This work was not only for me from here in Memories Center, it was for three indigenous lands, for 3,019 people, this very important work. - Tadeu Siã

HOW MUCH IS KNOWLEDGE WORTH?

Since the first moment, it was said in the villages that the project would not generate a salable product. The ethnographic pact itself was built on this agreement. However, in the assemblies during the game's launch, a discussion about a possible sale of the game came back to the fore, since in the project of the book *Una Isĩ Kayawa* it was decided, precisely in an assembly in the event of its local launch, for its open marketing.

The São Paulo's team never had the intention of launching *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana* commercially. What made possible its free availability was the approval of the project in the *Rumos 2013-2014* edict of *Instituto Itaú Cultural*, and a small amount provided by the *Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* (IEB-USP) that funded part of the first trip, allied to a team (both *nawa* and *Huni Kuin*) who worked most of the time with low or no remuneration. Although there was no prohibition of these edicts about a possible sale of the game, there was an active proposal of the São Paulo's team in refusing to sell it. In line with *free software* and *creative commons* license ideals, the team's primary goal was to circulate game content as widely as possible without many barriers (such as physical or digital purchase). Nor the *Fundação Nacional do Índio* (FUNAI) authorized for marketing at any time. Another reason was to not give space for production of illegal copies since, according to data from the *Fórum Nacional contra Pirataria e a Ilegalidade*³², 82% of games in Brazil are pirated.

REGISTER AND TRANSFORMATION

Some news³³ that reported the game wrongly stated that its main objective would be “to preserve the culture of the indigenous people”. Without contacting the production team and ignoring some indigenous issues, these journalists ended up reversing the meaning of what was tried to communicate. The discourse of cultural preservation (and consequently of cultural assimilation) is thus very present in several dimensions of this field, whether it is the speech of journalists, indigenous people themselves or people who work more directly with them, or even in school materials of “cultural” or “socio-environmental” dissemination.

At stake here are two distinct conceptions of *culture* and *knowledge*: one that deals with the language of cultural preservation and the other with a language of creation / transformation, this one used in the sense, for example, by Roy Wagner (1981). In the perspective we assume, the game

32. <https://tecnoblog.net/147784/jogos-piratas-brasil-82-do-total/>

33. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/computer-game-indigenous-brazil_us_56d73694e4b0bf0dab343995?9ozuxr

doesn't have the objective to preserve or save anything, but to create something new from the transformation of existing elements. If we recognize that culture is in constant motion, registering, on the other hand, supposes in some dimension an attempt at *objectification* (Wagner 1981). Thus, even though this game may be an initiative, as the Huni Kuin says, for "strengthening" the culture, this does not necessarily imply some form of preservation, but as the anthropologist Adriana Testa reminds us, of translation:

Manuela Carneiro da Cunha explains that the task of translation is not mere tidying up; it's not a matter of "*keeping the new one in old drawers*" (1998, 11), but of relating different codes that are not equivalent. Therefore, although the translation is often associated with the image of the traveling shaman, it is not an act of transportation, nor the transposition of meanings, but an act of creating from the relation between different ones, and, like Luis Fernando Pereira (2008) suggested, the construction of an experience (Testa 2012, 171-172).

In the field, it is common to hear (as in the meeting with the then president of FUNAI) accusatory cries of the indigenous people about an alleged "robbery" or "piracy" of "their culture." This kind of understanding may lead one to believe that a culture can be withdrawn from a place (then stolen) and taken by someone to another place, leaving the "original" place emptied. In the midst of this debate, the presence of the *kene* (Kaxinawá graphics) in the game was also subject of controversy, considering the *patrimonialisation* process currently under way at IPHAN (Maná de Lima *et al* 2014). Despite the extensive consultation processes carried out by FUNAI, there's still a lot of confusion and misunderstanding around this process, which has paralyzed several actions. Again and again, we hear from the Huni Kuin that "the *kene* is paralyzed" or that one cannot touch the *kene*, often because of fear of "misuse", which IPHAN itself does not regulate. As Maná de Lima *et al*(2014, 277) point out, there is a "difference between the idea of 'protection', the term most commonly used by the World Intellectual Property Organization and the *Instituto Nacional de Propriedade Intelectual*, and 'safeguard', a term most preferably used by organs linked to work with culture, such as Unesco and Iphan" (Carneiro da Cunha 2005, 16-17).

According to these authors, the idea of "safeguarding", taken by IPHAN to the villages, was subject of discussions in which misunderstandings proliferated. In its electronic address, IPHAN defines "safeguarding a cultural property of immaterial nature" as "supporting its continuity in a sustainable way. It is to act in the sense of improving the social and ma-

terial conditions of *transmission* and *reproduction* that make possible its existence” (Maná de Lima *et al* 2014, 231-232). However, Testa states that the concept of transmission, such as that used by IPHAN:

[...] emphasizes the idea that something is being transferred, but not the ways of doing or making. The transmitted object is seen as enclosing within itself the result of a production process. [...] This notion is operative regardless of whether it's material or immaterial. In this scheme, the processes of transformation and creativity developed in the experiences of transmission are of little interest, after all what is sought is to safeguard a supposed originality or inalterability of what is a heritage to be transmitted and inherited (2012, 185).

In order to avoid this disagreement around the *kene*, we could have quietly replaced them in the game by coins or rings (as in the classic *Sonic: The Hedgehog* or *Super Mario Bros.*) without significantly changing the gameplay, but this would certainly impoverish and demean the game, since in this case, we would fail to present important elements of the people in question. However, after a few conversations with the *Huni Kuin Federation*, there were no problems in keeping the *kene*, because their council did not consider that the *kene* would occupy a central place in the game.

USES AND PURPOSES

In this last section we will expose the speech of some Huni Kuin about their visions and goals with the production and circulation of the game. After all, the game is for who: for the *nawa* or for the Indians? What potential uses and intentions are there for the game? In the pre-production period, professor and researcher Isaías Sales (Ibã) stressed the importance of creating the game to *register*³⁴ the stories of his people and involve his students in the process of acquiring knowledge related to the formation of the Huni Kuin person. He recalls the ability of the game to engage people of different ages in learning this knowledge through new technologies:

I think this game you're talking about is the biggest movement of the game, both indigenous and non-indigenous, that's what I'm seeing the game. It's not the children's, this

34. The term 'register' comes from the 'projects world', which certainly masks some of the most fertile ideas of the indigenous people. We believe that often where they use 'register', they think instead of 'triggering', 'activating', 'making exist', that is, something in a more forward-looking direction than a concern with registering things of the past.

is a game that takes everything, right; everyone plays. [...] It's just the idea, you know, the one that you are developing from your memory, creativity, many things that are thought of when it comes to school. This is important. [...] They will like it. It's not only the children that will play, it's the adult, practically ... - Ibã Sales, interview, 2013.

In fact, the Huni Kuin show a constant concern to use the game as a didactic material in their schools (where the 'differentiated' teaching is currently practiced), as the teacher Osvaldo Isaka says on the occasion of the game's launch:

This is the first story here of our *Huni Kuin* people [in the form of] a game. We only have our story that the old men told us, there is no such game to see, to play, for the children to see, right. So this one that is important for us. After the release is going to be at school, the boys will see. And we are also thinking if "*Luz para Todos*³⁵" comes here to make it easier. We want to create some room there to put together this game in the computer for children to train too, set some time for them to start playing, to understand the stories of our origin. - Osvaldo Isaka, speech, 2016.

Fernando Siã, representative of the *Três Fazendas* village, says that it would be important not only for a "world-wide" dissemination, but mainly within the indigenous school, in order to confer greater durability to this knowledge:

So, one of the sacred things we have is this boa, which you called the way, right? It gave us that light of walking even really, so we cannot stop, we have to open more, expand more, strengthen more. And not show for the world only, but also show for our future here inside the village itself, inside the school. And then we can strengthen more in the game during the lessons. Because there we reflect the story, the old ones are phasing out and this game is never over, that was there in the world, then other countries, another world. - Fernando Siã.

The Huni Kuin's concern with the school is such that a well-known scholar of this people (and teacher in another indigenous land) said that if the game was not for the indigenous school, it would serve no purpose. Considering also the distancing of older generations from the world of

35. Federal Government's program for the installation of conventional electric energy.

electronic games, the local big chief [*shanen ibu*] initially came to treat videogame as a “joke” or “child thing”, as mentioned in a previous citation. However, this perception was transformed over time, through coexistence and exchanges, when these people could also glimpse the communicative potential of the game beyond the villages.

Let's have this contact, the youngster has to take this contact and give continuity. [...] Because it gave a light, it opened a way. Path of the boa, right? It opened to those young people who have material, whoever wants to work on the videogame [...]. So we are no longer lost; technology is in our hand, we are connected, so let's follow this project. [...] So we are here, our spirits are there and our image, we want to put our stories inside the Internet and show them for the world, for this society to understand better that we, Huni Kuin people, we are citizens as well as human beings, we have wisdom, we have our stories, we have this beautiful identity to show for the world. This is what we youngster and today, new time, we want to show it. - Tadeu Siã

We could provide pertinent anthropological reflections on the importance of the *culture points* and the training of indigenous youth in digital technologies, but one of the main objectives with the game is more simple: to act against the prejudice that plagues indigenous peoples to this day, mainly because the general population is not aware of them. It is still scary how much of the population believes that indigenous people are no longer themselves because they carry a cell phone or wear clothes. With this game, besides seeking a space in the media for national themes different from the clichés of video games, it is intended to enable people, from children to adults, to respect and value indigenous peoples, their culture, way of life and spirituality.

This project, to me, when the light cleared, God left the light, the Sun, cleared all, never paralyzed. It always remains. So you brought the light, and we Huni Kuin, the youngster [...] needs a good camera, this young man needs a good recorder, this young man needs training on how to deal with that light, energy. Learn to deal with camera, computer and turn on light, and think it's heart. If the light goes out, our planet, everything is paralyzed. Although people have no way of communicating [...] So it's coming to our village. So it's coming in our village why? Because Huni Kuin already studies in school, because Huni Kuin already speaks in Portuguese, because Huni Kuin already has white friend, non-indigenous relative, because Huni Kuin has his

qualification, has its own autonomy, has its own culture.
So we have our forest ... – Tadeu Siã

We understand that in the *present time* (or *time of culture*), the Huni Kuin themselves want to relate even more to other peoples and beings. The game *Huni Kuin: Yube Baitana*, as well as other projects of this new time [*xinã bena*], like *Una Isĩ Kayawa*, come in the wake of dreams like the pajé Agostinho Manduca's [*in memoriam*], who envisioned that the best way to make his knowledge alive after his passage would not be isolating it, hiding it or guarding it, but spreading it through the villages and around the world(s). This implies, therefore, the weave of alliances and partnerships with the *nawa* people. The very collaboration of members of the Huni Kuin people for the construction of the game reflects this movement of openness to the other, as his son Tadeu puts it:

This game will spread. All these kids have cell phone, some people have computer. We'll start to deal with it; we'll start to like it. Mostly I liked it a lot. I liked the drawings very much. I liked the assembly very much. I really enjoyed the game. But I have not played yet. I do not know how to play yet. But I'm going to play! Because in our Brazil the game is life, the human being. [...] We've done healing, healing our work, healing our journey, and healing our movement, healing our planet, connected with *Yuxibu*, always continuing to follow it. So much *haux*, much gratitude [to you] and all of you relatives, these relatives who are here. Much *haux!* - Tadeu Siã

translation

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