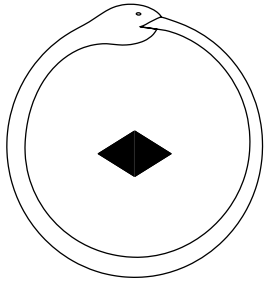


THE ANCESTRY OF
BASKET WEAVING
Berta Gleizer Ribeiro



notebooks
SELVAGEM



THE ANCESTRY OF BASKET WEAVING

Berta Gleizer Ribeiro

INTRODUCTION

“Antiguidade de trançado” [The Ancestry of Basket Weaving] composes the 3rd chapter entitled “Trançado e ecologia” [Basket Weaving and ecology] in Berta Gleizer Ribeiro’s doctoral thesis, *A civilização da palha: a arte do trançado dos índios do Brasil* [The civilisation of straw: the art of basket weaving of the Indigenous peoples of Brazil], defended in 1980 in the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo. Like everything Berta did, her thesis was considered one of the most complete about Indigenous art in the upper regions of Xingu and Rio Negro rivers. She researched the material culture of the *Yawalapiti*, *Txikãõ* and *Kayabi* in Xingu Park, of the *Desana* in Rio Negro and Içana rivers, in northern Amazonas, delving into technological, productive and aesthetic aspects and shedding light over the existing exchange system in those regions. That thesis remains unprecedented in its completeness and still relevant today, regarding environment, ecology, preservation and biodiversity matters, encouraging the creation of other relevant works such as the *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship] (1988) e *Arte Indígena, Linguagem Visual* [Indigenous Art, Visual Language] (1989).

Besides confirming the importance of her work and her legacy for studies of material culture and ethnology of the Indigenous people, it’s worth highlighting this disciplined anthropologist’s engagement and pioneering spirit as well as her enviable work capacity. A pioneer in situating material culture at the same level of significance as other themes historically privileged by ethnology such as kinship, social organization and religion, Berta revealed the artistic aspect in material culture. She treated Indigenous art and material culture as important places for the expression of relations of alterity.

The artefact, central object of the research undertaken by Berta over more than 40 years of professional activity, helps understanding society and culture as a whole, or a given moment of the cultural continuum. Art and life merge and express themselves in any object meant for everyday use or for the realm of the sacred. Both hold, in their design and making, the relation between content and an authorial artistic message. Those are two dimensions of human behaviour materi-

alized in artefacts: the action over matter, that presupposes technological aptitude, and the fruition of beauty and mystery, that gives a second denser dimension to the assortment of Indigenous objects.

Berta observed the rising significance that biodiversity, the environment, the struggle for the land and the Amazon's preservation were taking in the political agenda and amongst the so-called "general public". She writes in her article "Ao vencedor, as batatas!" [To the victor, the potatoes!]:¹

The harmonious interaction between flora, fauna and humans, which carried the cultivation and genetic protection of countless vegetables, explains the preservation of an almost intact biological diversity in the regions inhabited by the reminiscent Indigenous peoples. This biodiversity is one of the most important patrimonial treasures for humanity, and it's up to today's generations to preserve and study it, avoiding its complete eradication.²

Berta opens a proficuous dialogue with other anthropologists and researchers that focus in questions regarding traditional knowledge and the use, management and preservation of natural resources by the Indigenous peoples, the ecological knowledge and their culture's creativity, as it was the case with William Balée, who analysed amongst other works, *Kaapor's* hunting strategies. Other examples are Janet Chernela, who observed, for over three decades, the environmental knowledge of the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin, in particular the *Wanano*; and Darrell Posey, whose research, mainly amongst the *Kayapó*, contributed to the consolidation of the ethnobiology field as well as the recognition and value of Indigenous knowledge.

Her analysis interwaves art, basketry, plumage, plants, people, registered theories in books, articles, films and instruments for the study of material culture, forming a legacy of activism in defense of traditional peoples and biodiversity.

Maria Elizabeth Brêa Monteiro

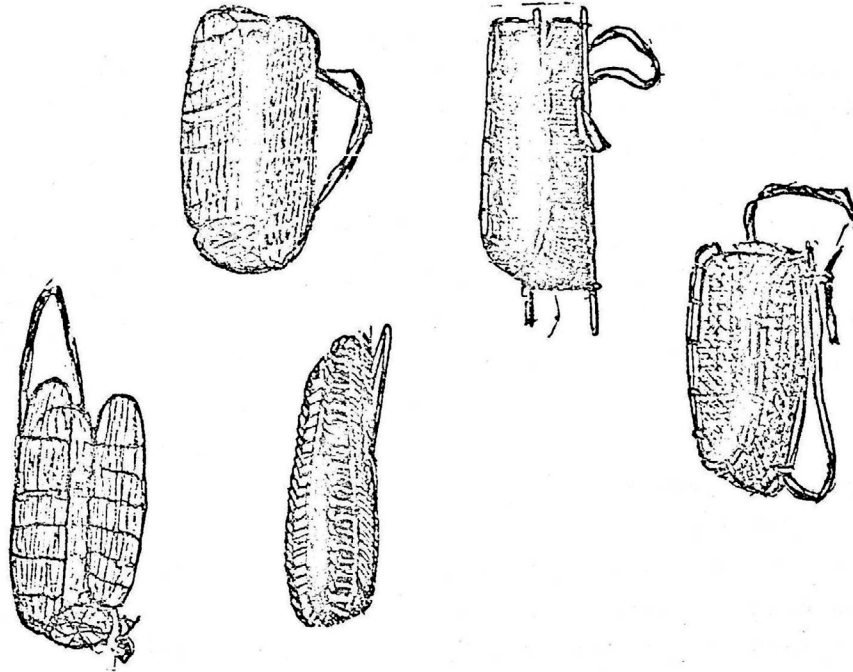
Anthropologist

Technical director of Darcy Ribeiro Foundation

Being pre-literate, the Indigenous people of Brazil could only leave traces of their passage and examples of human creativity – which appeared so prematurely in the scale of human evolution – in the products of their material culture. For ethnologists, they constitute what old written documents are for historians. Archaeologists likewise find in the study of material culture one of the foundational traces for the reconstruction of the ways of living of extinct societies and cultures. Just as paleontologists perform comparative studies between living and fossil species to infer anatomy, physiology and habits of the latter, the archeologists make use of data provided by living cultures to deduce the functioning of societies whose culture they seek to reconstruct.

There is archaeological evidence that the art of weaving was practiced in the Americas since 11 thousand years BC (Adovasio 1976:vii). This author considers that the manufacture of cords and fillet net is the only one to exceed basketry's antiquity amongst the "arts of perishable fibers". According to Adovasio, it was probably brought to the New World as a technological baggage by their first immigrants.

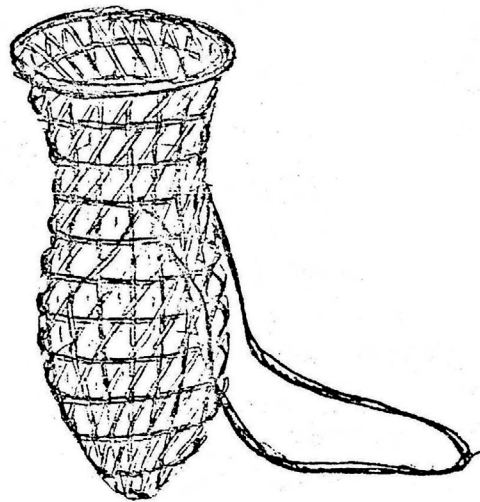
Beyond being extremely ancient, the art of basket weaving also stands amongst the "arts of life", referred to as the ways of subsistence provision by Lewis H. Morgan, for the infinite variety of its shapes, styles, techniques, uses and broad geographic distribution. Therefore, in the Americas this art is found from the arctic and subarctic regions in the south and north of the continent, all the way to the arid regions and those covered by an exuberant tropical flora. (Cf. J.M. Adovasio, Preface to the work of O.T. Mason 1976:vii) This author adds, referring to North American basketry: "so great is the technical and stylistic variety of North American basketry that few have ever attempted to describe, classify, or systematize it on a regional, not to mention continental, basis."³ The author of the work that the aforementioned archaeologist prefaces in its second edition, Otis Tufton Mason, devoted himself to this task in a pioneering and masterful manner.



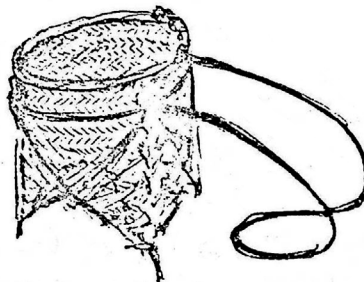
Jamaxim⁴, apud Nordenskiöld 1924



Aturá⁵



Cone-shaped



Quadrangular

Cargo baskets⁶

The weaved objects were certainly indispensable for the transportation of game meat, fish, wild fruits, seeds and other foraged elements that fed semi nomad groups, due to their lightness. Those who ate shellfish, whose shells accumulate in fantastic sambaquis [shell middens] in the Atlantic and Pacific coast, must also have used basketry materials, whose traces were found in rock shelters in the form of "...sandals, baskets, mats and other vegetable fibre goods"⁷. Such was the culture of "hunters and gatherers of the transition period", dated to North and South America between 7,000 and 5,000 B.C.⁸

The emergence of pottery is generally associated with that of agriculture, since the cooking of grains and tubers that, before the discovery of ceramics, was made in an underground oven⁹, or simply by roasting them in the grill, could then be made much more easily in clay pots.

For Marcel Mauss (1967:42), the waterproofing of woven baskets would constitute a transition link between basket weaving and pottery. George Wharton James dedicates a chapter in his book, *Indian Basketry*, to this theme, naming it "Basketry, the Mother of Pottery" (1972:120). He grounds this assertion in direct observations made among the *Havasupai* people, in Arizona, by Cushing, in 1887, in which they cooked seeds, porridge, meat, etc. in baskets internally layered with sandy clay. By waterproofing the basket, according to Cushing, "the seeds or other substances to be parched are placed inside of it, together with a quantity of glowing wood coals. The operator, quickly squatting, grasps the tray at opposite edges, and by a rapid spiral motion up and down, succeeds in keeping the seeds and coals constantly shifting places, and turning over as they dance after one another around and around the tray, meanwhile blowing or puffing the embers with every breath to keep them free from ashes and glowing at their hottest." (Apud James, 1972:18)

According to Mason, the same operation was made with heated stones by the primeval people of Hudson Bay. (1976:282).

In Brasil, von den Steinen noted the use of waterproof baskets amongst Xingu Indigenous peoples. In reporting this fact, he makes considerations regarding the usage of the bowl, the pot and the basket, which, due to their importance, I transcribe below:

One of the things that surprised me the most when I arrived at Xingu was the fact that the ceramic art there was restricted to the *Nuaruak*¹⁰ tribes. The *Bakairí* didn't own a single pot that wasn't produced by the *Kustenau* or *Mehinaku* people. (...)

The *Bakairí* and the *Nahukuá* had *cuias*¹¹ and gourds, which, in turn, were absent among the pottery-making tribes; they would be acquired from the *Nahukuá*, who, either through special care or a more suitable soil, produced excellent cucurbits.¹² Finally, knowing that the *Waurá* produced beautiful pots which were exactly the same shape and size as the *cuias*, imitating the designs applied to them, that the original shape of the pots is clearly that of a drinking *cuia*, and that the pots are equally blackened internally, one can understand the correlation.¹³ (...)

At first the Indigenous pot had nothing to do with the cook, it only served to replace the gourd. With it the women would take water to the farms or camping sites. The resource they would use in lack of gourds is still revealed today through the clay waterproofed baskets¹⁴ used by many tribes. With clay, leaky canoes can also be fixed, the indigenous people smeared themselves with it– the beginning of body painting– and clay itself was transported –certainly the most significant– in baskets, as I was able to observe. With the recurrent lack of gourds, the women were easily drawn to make their clay baskets more solid, applying this plastic material abundantly; in addition they could dispense with the weaving as soon as they understood that the clay shapes, after dried, had in themselves enough resistance. They would expose them to the sun or place them over fire, having a cheaper source of artificial gourds. (...)

But women made this invention only after a sedentary lifestyle had been adopted by the group; the hunter's wife that wandered through the woods could not have replaced the *cuia* by the heavy and brittle pot. Even less likely could the hunter himself have invented the pot. Here we are faced with an analogy on the origin of agriculture. (...)

Originally the pot was just a container, like the *cuia* or, in certain cases, the basket.¹⁵ (von den Steinen 1940:266/267)

Coming from an ethnologist with great capacity for observation, who was the first white man studying tribes with no previous contact with western culture, his observations support the assumption that basket weaving preceded ceramics and made the development of this technique possible.

Another way of waterproofing woven straw pots to serve as containers for storing and transporting liquids is registered amongst the *Ute* and the *Apache*, non-sedentary groups, by Mason (1976:360 and pr. 32, 33) and also amongst the latter by Gene Weltfish (1953:27). The artefact, once finalized, was submerged in pine resin or asphalt. When dried in the sun it would become waterproof. The base of these jar-baskets was rounded or conical so that by fixing the center of gravity at a level, the vase would remain upright, hindering water spillage.¹⁶

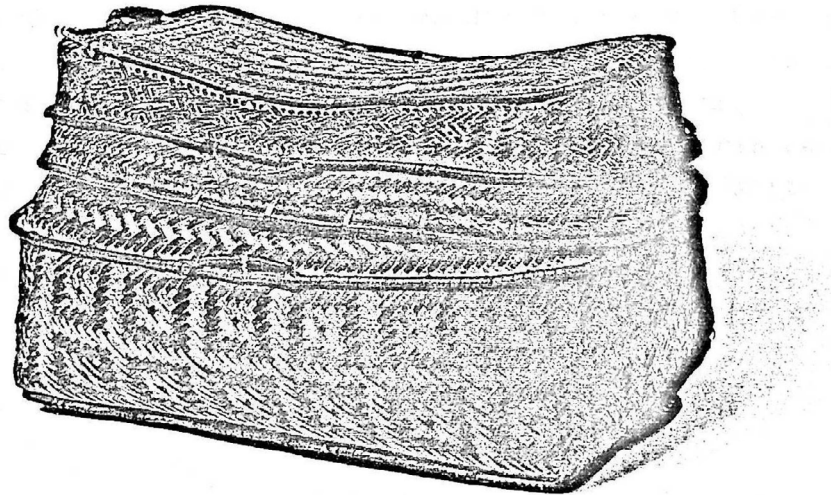
Even though Mason does not categorically states, as George Wharton James does, that basketry chronologically preceded ceramic, he reveals that in some cases, as it is with *Shoshon* and *Apache* People, baskets to carry water (water vessels) were favored for transportation of liquids over ceramic jugs, certainly because they were lighter and unbreakable. Such water vessels were made of a very compact weave that kept water from leaking and were also waterproofed with the gum of the pinyon (*Pinus edulis*) or mineral asphalt (1976:198). He quotes Humboldt's statement about how the Native people of Santa Barbara would present the Spaniards curious vases "covered within with a very thin layer of asphaltum that renders them impenetrable to water."

Both George Wharton James and Otis Tufton Mason quote archaeological evidences that baskets would have been used as molds for ceramic pots:

"In the Mississippi Valley, in Arizona, New Mexico and elsewhere in the United States thousands of pieces of pottery have been found which unmistakably show that the soft clay was modelled around the outside or within some basket form which gave the shape of the vessel." (James 1972:18)

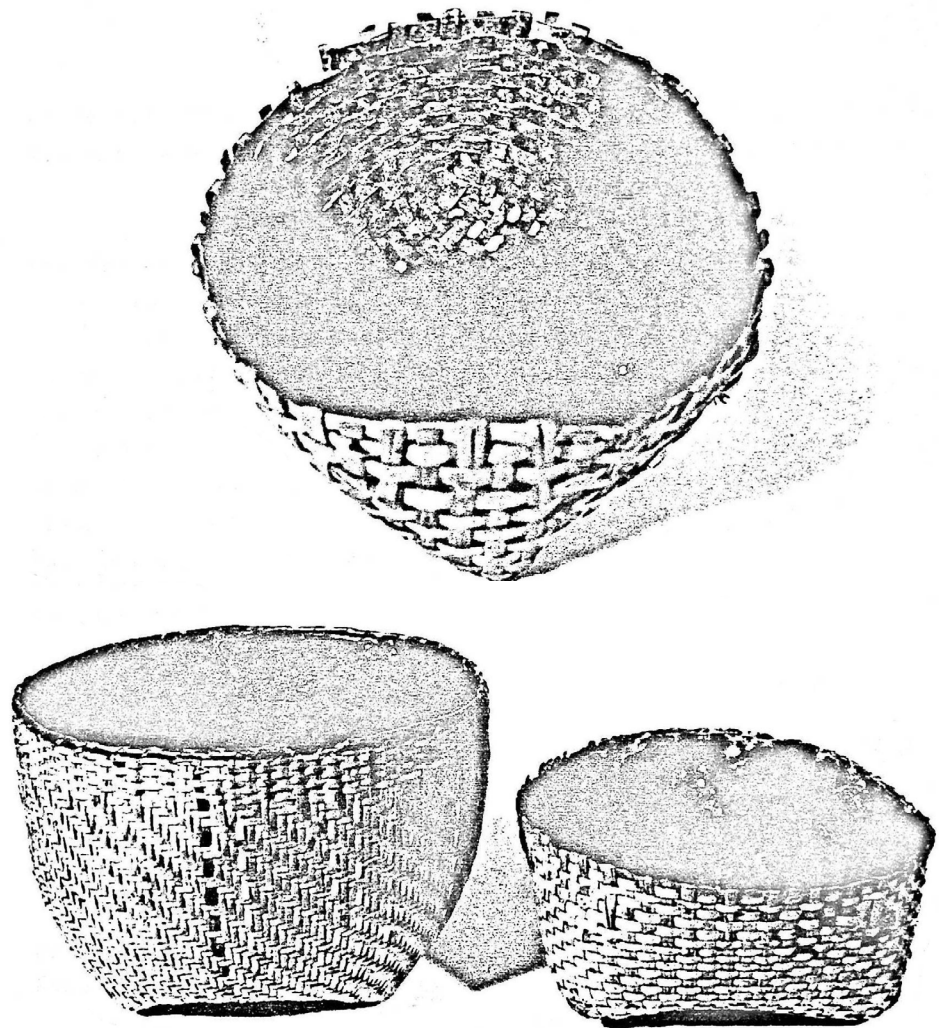
To this James adds that the art of basket-making “was in an advanced stage whilst pottery was still in its infancy.” (Idem) Mason and James reproduced an F.H. Cushing’s engraving (James, op. Cit.: 18; Mason, pr. 106) that shows how the bottom and walls of a ceramic pot were built from a woven mould.

Moisture-proof baskets are mentioned by Walter E. Roth amongst the Indigenous people of the Guianas, whom he studied. Case-shaped baskets woven with *arumã*¹⁷ strips, having double walls amongst which leaves of this plant are introduced. A method for waterproofing baskets for liquid storage is mentioned by Carvajal & Acuña in his famous book about his travels to the Amazonas state. Liquids were kept ‘...in baskets made of rushes, which they cover within and without with a sort of pitch, so that they do not leak in the least.’ (Apud Roth 1924: 142/3).



Telescoping basket¹⁸, probably from the Indigenous People of the Guianas.
National Museum of Brazil collection.

In the National Museum's collection I found waterproofed baskets with *cerol*¹⁹, likely of *Xokleng* origin, similar to those of the same origin found in the Paranaense Museum and in the Museum of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Paraná. (Personal information from Sonia G. Fonseca). Baldus (1970:267) states that the *Tapirapé* sealed the extremities of their pot-shaped baskets²⁰ (*yru*) when they began to deteriorate.



Baskets waterproofed with cerol.
National Museum of Brazil's Collection

Mason disagrees with the theory that basketry necessarily precedes ceramic and the presumption that, mainly in the eastern United States, “...the clay pots were largely moulded on baskets” (1976:354). He states that:

The tribes belonging to the Pima linguistic family produced jars and baskets shaped similarly; but the comparison between a series of Zuñi or Hopi’s pots with a series of their baskets, this does not suggest that one preceded the other and/or favoured its emergence.²¹

He reports that:

Leaving aside the question of whether the basket was the progenitor of the pot, particularly since the same hands often produced both, the basket unwittingly became immortal by helping the pot during its formative stage.²²

It is worth noting here that in tribal societies, the task of weaving is assigned to either women or men. In nearly all Indigenous societies in Brazil, the majority of woven pieces, even those of exclusive feminine use, such as the fans for stoking the fire, the *tipitis*²³, *apás*²⁴ and the sieves for the preparation of cassava flour are made by men. In this respect they differ from North-American tribes where basketry is essentially a feminine art.

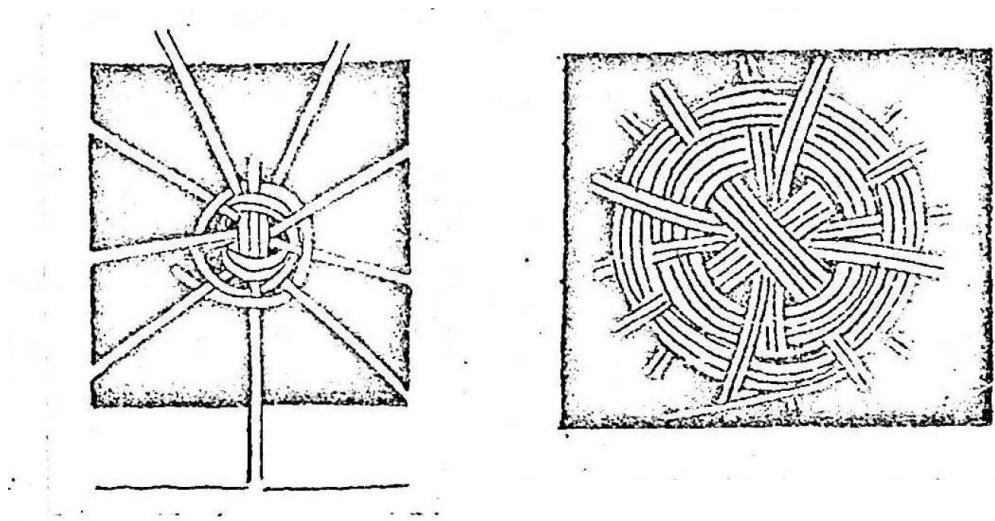
In a study held on craftsmanship among the *Krahó*, Luiz Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira identifies the objects according to the gender of the maker and user of the artefact, as well as the kind of activity it’s intended for: productive, non-productive (adornment, domestic comfort), of the individual’s social identification (gender, age, status), of socialisation (socialising toys), magic and ritual. The author considers that a variant – the interethnic contact and consequent commercialization of certain artifacts – determined less rigidity in the attribution of craft tasks to one gender or the other.

Cardoso de Oliveira highlighted that a characteristic held by *Krahó* Indigenous people's basketry, a technique he calls "tying", primordially employed in the confection of children's toys, specially for boys, and of the *peteca*²⁵ (for ritualistic use) is of exclusive masculine domain. The diagonal crossing technique, made with straw or "rush"²⁶ is also of their domain, with the exception of a kind of cargo-basket (*κοχορό*) made by women and two other (*κοηό* and *hupudi uoka*) also for the transportation of cargo, made of two ripe Buriti leaves with their respective veins, which are solely made by women.

Hence, one can verify that within a total of 33 woven objects, only 3 are exclusively made by women; three others²⁷ are made by individuals of both genders, indistinctively. Therefore, the vast majority – 27 in 33 – of woven objects is produced exclusively by men. Another observation noted by L. R. Cardoso de Oliveira, is that in the case of *Krahó* handicrafts, in the objects created by women, the raw material undergoes a minor degree of transformation, whereas in those created by men it is highly elaborate (1978:22). In addition, the "low productivity" of female craftsmanship compensates for the imbalance in the gender division of work for women's greater involvement in other tasks.

Lastly he verifies a continuum between "absolute rigidity" and the "absence of rigidity" in the assignment of craft work. Greater rigidity is associated with a higher degree of the artefacts specialisation, its ceremonial function and commercial value, as well as the exclusive domain of a certain technique. When it comes to the craft production assigned to the activities the author calls "productive", neither gender's agency stands out more than the other (1978:23/24).

Among the *Borôro* (Lowie 1963:386), the *Apinayé*, *Xerente* (Lowie 1963:487) and the *Krahó*, as we have seen, some baskets are woven by the women, the same occurring among the *Karajá*, although men provide them with the necessary raw material (Taveira 1978:138). The twined basketry of the inland forest-dwelling groups (*Maku*, *Yanomami*) is also made by women.²⁸ The majority of *Mura-Pirahá* basketry (rustic cargo-basket, *tipiti* and fan) is feminine work. The more elaborate cargo-basket of *Cipó-imbé*²⁹ and a square sieve are made by men (Rodrigues e Oliveira 1977:35/36).



Yanomami weaving.

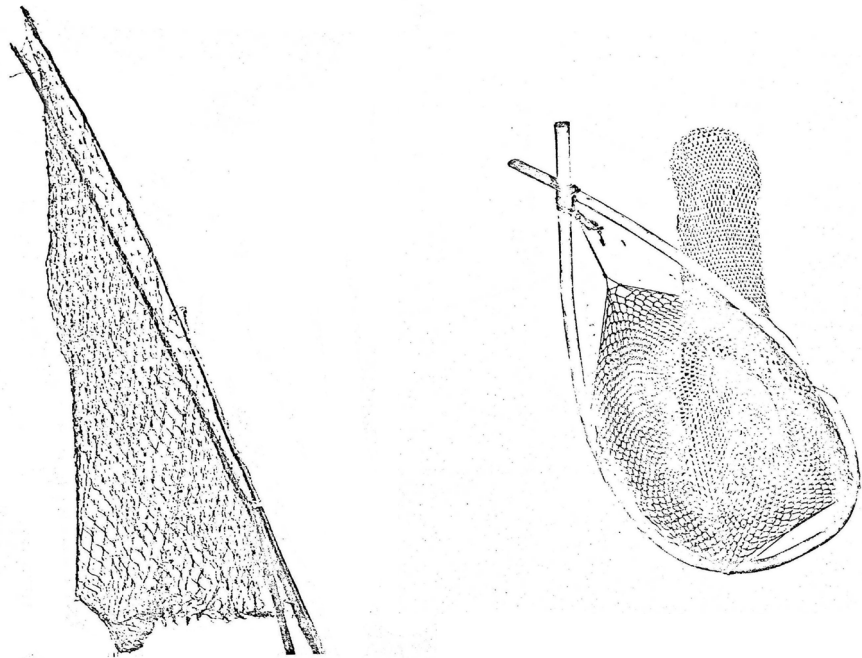
The inventory of that groups material culture, made by the referred authors, goes over 38 elements, comprising guns (7), traps (2), basketry (5), adornments (15, amongst which are 11 different kinds of necklaces used and made by women), children's toys (5), musical instruments (1), *cuiá*, spindle and chisel. From these, 18 pieces are assigned to men, 4 to both genders and the remainder (16) exclusively assigned to women, including the necklaces.

In *Gorotire-Kayapó* society, among 112 objects that make up their material culture, listed by Joan Bamberger Turner (1967, appendix), only two are produced exclusively by women and two others indifferently by women and men. Women are also responsible for the construction of the house, which belongs to them, since the residence is matrilineal.

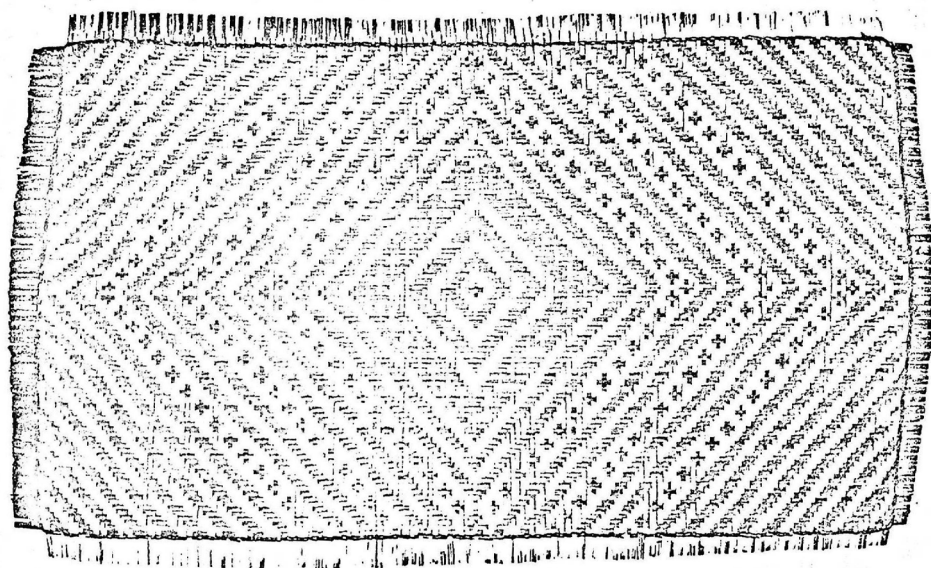
The forest-dwelling canoe groups, with a tropical forest culture, attribute to men the totality of their basketry art, highly elaborate from a technical and artistic point of view.

Among the *Tukano* and *Baniwa* Indigenous people of the upper Rio Negro, I collected 75 items that correspond to their collection of domestic utensils, subsistence supplies, transport, adornments, ceremonial vestments and handicrafts for commercialisation. Of these, 17 are made by women and 56 by men. One item, the *rato*³⁰, is made jointly by men

and women; the *puçá*³¹ is made by either men or women. A survey of handicrafts in Alto Xingu³², according to the division of labour by gender, shows that among the *Kamayurá*, out of 25 items (adornments, ceremonial objects, working tools), 20 are made by men and, of these, 9 are for female use (C. Junqueira 1975:58/59).



Big *puçá* (to the left) and small *puçá* (to the right).



Baniwa mat.

Berta Ribeiro Collection.

As one can see, in the work division between genders, the large part of craft activity is attributed to men. As argued by Joan Bamberger Turner, that is perhaps due to the fact that this activity, like many others – hunting, war, the exercise of political power – that are equally masculine, are connected to the ritual and the sacred, whereas agricultural activities are linked to the secular and profane. In other words, the women's domain is the farm and the house, being more associated with the profane than with the sacred. On the other hand, craftsmanship is not solely dedicated to providing subsistence, it also grants respect and male conciliation and dominance of society, exercised in the men's house,³³ when it exists.

Therefore, one cannot attribute a single economical connotation to the gender division of work. That is, the fact that women are more occupied with the routine tasks of planting, harvesting and food processing, they have less time for more noble endeavours, such as handicrafts. The fact that the creation of ceremonial paraphernalia is a male task reflects their stronger participation in rituals, their predominance in the regulatory power of tribal societies, and their association with the sacred realm (see Bamberger Turner 1967, chapter 8: "The nature of women", pp. 161/167).

1. Reference to the expression found in the novel *Quincas Borba*, by Machado de Assis, meaning “to the victor go the spoils”. (TN)
2. Our translation of “A interação harmônica entre flora, fauna e o próprio homem, que presidiu o cultivo e a proteção genética de inúmeros vegetais, explica a preservação de uma diversidade biológica quase intacta nas regiões habitadas pelos remanescentes indígenas. Essa biodiversidade é um dos tesouros patrimoniais mais importantes da humanidade, e cabe à atual geração preservá-la e estudá-la, evitando sua completa erradicação. (1993: 114)”. (TN)
3. Our translation of “tamanho é a variedade técnica e estilística da cestaria norte-americana, que muito poucos tentaram descrevê-la, classificá-la ou sistematizá-la numa base regional, quanto mais num âmbito continental.(Cf. J.M. Adovasio, Preface to the work of O.T. Mason 1976:vii)”. (TN)
4. Three-sided cargo basket with a flat bottom and a handle for carrying on the forehead or shoulders, like a backpack. Usually woven hexagonally to be lighter. It is used to transport products from the swidden and forest, to carry hammocks and other belongings during trips. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. Our translation. (TN)
5. Spherical cargo baskets equipped with a strap to fasten around the forehead and carry on the back, used to transport products from the swidden and forest and to carry objects during overland travel. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. Our translation. (TN)
6. Generally designates the containers destined to carry cargo, children and sometimes animals. They feature a strap to fasten around the forehead or two straps to pass over the arms, resting the weight on the back. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Indigenous Dictionary of Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. (TN)
7. Our Translation of “... sandálias, cestos, esteiras e outros artigos de fibras vegetais.” (Meggers). (TN)
8. Our Translation of “caçadores e coletores do período de transição” (Meggers)”. (TN)
9. The way of roasting meat-filled cassava cakes (paparutos, in the local language) in underground ovens, with the use of heated stones, is described by Melatti (1975:26/26) for the *Krahô*. Melatti praises its ritualistic importance. Joan Bamberger Turner also registered underground ovens to roast similar cakes amongst the *Kayapó* (1967:93 e 115).
10. Belonging to the *Aruak* linguistic family. In the quoted text the writing of the tribal names was altered in accordance with the ‘Proposed convention for the spelling of tribal names’ of the Brazilian Anthropological Association, published in *Revista de Antropologia* [Anthropology magazine], vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 150/152, Dec. 1954 and vol. 3 no. 2, Dec. 1955, pp. 125/132, São Paulo.
11. The fruit from the calabash tree, *Crescentia cujete*, which, when mature, forms a waterproof bowl, traditionally used to carry water and liquids. (TN)
12. Cucurbitaceae, gourd family (TN)
13. Our translation Translated from the Portuguese version of the original text. (TN)
14. The highlights are mine [Berta’s].
15. Our Translation of “Uma das coisas que mais me surpreenderam quando cheguei ao Xingu foi a circunstância de que a arte cerâmica aí se restringiu às tribos *Nuaruak*. (...) O pote originariamente não passou de um recipiente, como a cuia ou, em certos casos, a cesta. Von den Steinen (1940:266/267)”. (TN)
16. Our Translation of “...ao fixar em um nível o centro da gravidade, o vaso se mantinha em posição erecta, impedindo que a água derramasse Mason (1976:360 and pr. 32, 33)”. (TN)

17. Common name for several plants of the *Ischnosiphon* genus, from the *Marantaceae* family, widely used in basketry by the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, where the plant grows in semi-flooded regions. (TN)
18. Cesto *estojiforme*, box-type baskets with lids, single or double walls with a sheet in between to make them moisture-proof. They have a rigid structure and a defined shape: rectangular, square, or elliptical. Called telescopic baskets (from the English telescoping baskets) and *pacarás*, a word of Karib origin, when the container and lid are identical in shape, the former being smaller in size to allow them to fit together. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. (TN)
19. Paste composed of wax, resin and tallow. (TN)
20. Cesto *vasiforme*, pot-shaped basket present in numerous tribes, used as a fisherman's basket, as a pepper smoker or for storing long objects. (TN)
21. Our Translation of "As tribos da família linguística Pima produziram jarros e cestos de formas idênticas; mas se se comparar uma série de potes Zuñi ou Hopi com uma série de seus cestos, isto não sugere que um precedeu ao outro e/ou propiciou o seu aparecimento. Mason (1976:354)." (TN)
22. Our Translation of "Deixando de lado a questão sobre se o cesto foi o progenitor do pote, mesmo porque as mesmas mãos prduziram frequentemente a ambos, o cesto sem querer se tornou imortal pela ajuda que deu ao pote em seu estágio formativo. Mason (1976:354)." (TN)
23. Extendable cylindrical basket with an opening at the top and two handles. Used to extract hydrocyanic acid from wild cassava. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. (TN)
24. Bowl-shaped basket similar to a half-sphere, with a closed sieve, used as a container, a strainer for liquids and for serving solid foods. Source: Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. (TN)
25. A toy with a rounded base in which a set of feathers fit. Used in *peteca* game. (TN)
26. Buriti's petiole blades. Buriti is a plant from the *Arecaceae* family commonly known as palms. (TN)
27. These are *pane*, a basket for storage made of hexagonal weaving, *kai*, telescoping basket of square weaving and *kuip*, fan made of diagonal cross weaving.
28. Personal observation, among the *Maku*; from Koch Grünberg (1923 III:307 and pr. 23 no. 1), among the *Xirianá*.
29. Native from the Northeast, Southeast and South of Brazil, *Philodendron imbe* is a climbing plant from the *Araceae* family. Source: Michaelis dictionary and Ribeiro, Berta Gleizer *Dicionário do Artesanato Indígena* [Dictionary of Indigenous Craftsmanship]. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo. 1988. (TN)
30. Indigenous cassava grater. (TN)
31. Mesh sieve for catching small crustaceans and small fish. (TN)
32. Upper Xingu, located in the southern part of the Xingu Indigenous Park territory. (TN)
33. A space that marks gender differentiation, reserved for activities, rituals, and political practices of exclusive male domain. (TN)

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Berta was born in Beltz, Romania, in a Jewish family. The family emigrated to Brazil in the 1930s. She married Darcy Ribeiro in 1948, with whom she made her first travels to the *Kaingang* in the south; to the *Kadiweu* and *Terena* in Mato Grosso. In the upper and medium stretch of Rio Xingu, she was with the *Yawalapiti*, the *Kayabi*, the *Juruna*, the *Araweté* and the *Asurini*. The field research continued with the *Tukano* and *Desana* in the upper Rio Negro region. In the villages of Tiquié River she worked for many years with Luis Lana and his father Firmiano Lana, supporting their initiatives to write and illustrate myths, which led to the book *Antes o mundo não existia* [here was no world before], published in 1995. In 1980, she earned a PhD in Social Anthropology from the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo, with her doctoral thesis entitled *A civilização da palha* [The civilisation of straw], which represents one of the most complete studies on Indigenous basketry in the upper Xingu and upper Rio Negro regions, addressing the technological, productive and aesthetic aspects of these arts. She worked with the National Museum of Brazil and the Museum of the Indigenous Populations, where she served as researcher and developer of ethnographic collections; curator of exhibitions in Brazil and abroad. As a professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, she taught classes in the Graduate Programme of Art History, in the subjects of 'Indigenous art in Brazil' and 'Material culture and ethnic art,' and advised students. In 1995, she received the Commander of the National Order of Scientific Merit medal from the Brazilian government. Berta passed away on the 17th of November 1997.

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IMAGENS

In the cover image we see **Baniwa** basketry work made by Antonio Fontes, from **Baniwa Madzerokai** Living School. The images throughout the text were taken from Berta Gleizer Ribeiro's doctoral thesis, *A civilização da palha: a arte do trançado dos índios do Brasil*, [The civilisation of straw: the art of basket weaving of the Indigenous peoples of Brazil]), defended in the Programme of the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Human Sciences, University of São Paulo, in January 1980.

TRANSLATION
CLARA SANTIAGO

Cultivating a presence of eternal curiosity and awe with life, Clara seeks a wide variety of interests and is now dedicated to the mothering of the project **CECAI**, **Centro de Convergências**, seeking to weave art, traditional ecological knowledge, education and community engagement.

REVISION
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Graduated with a master's degree in Anthropology from UFRJ. She is currently a PhD student in Literary Theory at the same institution. As well as researching and writing, she teaches music.

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Translator, singer and songwriter.

The editorial production work of the Selvagem Notebooks is carried out collectively with the Selvagem Translation Group. The editorial direction is by Anna Dantes, and the coordination by Alice Faria. Layout by Tania Grillo and Érico Peretta. Coordination of English translations by Marina Matheus.

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