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# Yanomami football in the high Ocamo (Amazonas State, Venezuela): the Mabetiteri case

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## ABSTRACT

Acuña-Delgado A, Acuña-Gómez G. Yanomami football in the high Ocamo (Amazonas State, Venezuela): the Mabetiteri case. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc.* Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 328-338, 2010. The football taken by teachers, missionaries or the hercians waves to the original peoples of America and practiced at present, constitutes a cultural practice proposed or imposed from the exterior with notable acceptance in the above mentioned peoples, which, in major or minor degree, stamp some personal signs to make it more significant for their own idiosyncrasy. In this work, and on basis of the ethnographic experience, we are going to describe and analyze how it is the football that is practiced in one of the peoples indigenous more emblematic of America because of its degree of isolation to which historically it has been subject. The people Yanomami, circumscribed or exemplified in this case in the shapono or Mabetiteri's community, close to the river Ocamo, will be the subject of our reflection and the motive for understanding how the richness of the human beings is situated in the infinite aptitude to construct senses, and how the uniformity of a global practice in the fund and the forms as it is in the football, can still be interpreted and transformed from the local thing into his deeper sense. **Key words:** FOOTBALL, YANOMAMI, AMERINDIANS, GAME, SPORT, CULTURE.



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## INTRODUCTION

As the coke, the football is a clear exponent of the globalization and few ones are the peoples of the Earth who do not know and don't practise it. Maybe by the school education, the audio-visual ways of communication masses, or because of other circumstantial situations, all, except exceptions, know of the existence of a sports activity in which two teams dispute a ball with the feet with the intention of putting it in a goal. But beyond the sports activity, the football, for the economic, social and political interests that it implies, constitutes a social phenomenon capable of mobilize the whole village and to dinamize his culture in a substantial way.

The football taken by teachers, missionaries or the hercians waves and practised at present, as a general rule has not received the summit that it has in the peoples that originated it in Europe or in those other half-caste peoples that from the own America adopted and developed it, even with a major level of excellence from the original peoples. In the Amerindian minority peoples it is difficult to find cases where the football could be studied as a "social total fact", gathering words of Mauss et al. (1979), as it happens in other contexts or countries (case of England, Italy, Brazil, Argentina or Spain), provided that not all the social sectors are involved in it, and even it doesn't connect with all the facets of the culture; but supposes a cultural practice proposed or imposed from the exterior by different agents, that usually have acceptance in the recipients peoples, who, in major or minor degree, stamp some personal brand to make it more significant from his own idiosyncrasy.

In occasions, this type of new practices with playful-competitive character displace to some traditional practices that loose the social function up to occupe all of its reserved space; other times the space is shared at least during a time; in other occasions the old practices before getting lost completely fuse some parts of their values or of their sense in the new ones, which have more strength for being, among other things, dialog instruments with the national majority society or with the global world that defends the modernity and the progress.

In this work, on basis of the ethnographic experience developed in November - December of 2004, January 2005, and in January - February 2006, we are going to describe and analyze how is the football that is practised in one of the more emblematic indigenous peoples of America according to the degree of isolation to which historically it has been subject. The Yanomami people, circumscribed or exemplified in this case in the *shapono* or Mabetiteri's community, close to the river Ocamo, will be the subject of our reflection and the motive for understanding how the richness of the human beings is in the infinite aptitude to construct senses, and how the uniformity of a global practice in the fund and the forms as the football is, can still be interpreted and transformed from the local into the deeper sense.

## ETHNOGRAPHIC REFERENCE

The Yanomami communities live in the tropical humid jungle and occupy a vast territory of approximately 192.000 km<sup>2</sup> that spreads on both sides of the border between Venezuela and Brazil, though more than the half of the population is of the Venezuelan side, in The Amazon and Bolivar states. In Venezuela the demarcation of the Yanomami territory is still in discussion; at the moment, the mentioned territory is protected as Areas Under Regime of Special Administration (ABRAES), since 1991. Placed inside the Parima-Tapirapecó National Park and the Reserve of the Biosphere The High Orinoco-Casiquiare. The ethnic group Yanomami is divided, from a linguistic point of view in four subgroups: the Yanomami, which lives essentially in the State Amazon of Venezuela; the Yanomam, seated principally in Brazil; and the

Sanema and the Yanam, which are found more in the northern part (State Bolívar) and they are distributed between Venezuela and Brazil (Mattei Müller, 2007: 4). Together they constitute the Yanomami language family (or Yanoama), known initially as Waica, Guaharibos, Shamatairi, Shiriana, etc., before their proper autodenomination were used. The term "Yanomami" means "human person".

In Venezuelan territory, according to the indigenous national census 2001-2002, the Yanomami add a whole of 12.234 members, which supposes 2.2 % of the indigenous Venezuelan population, of those, 12.019 live in rural area and 215 in urban area (Mattei Müller, 2006: 289). Though they constitute the most numerous ethnic group of the State of The Amazon, they do not play a hegemonic role in the regional politics due to their geographical isolation, far from the big fluvial basins, and to the great dispersion in their villages. The fact of living isolated from the urban and suburban centers of creole influence, and the general independence showed to the missionaries, has allowed to the Yanomami to support the cultural solidity that characterizes them, though, not they all are in the same situation, existing a significant margin of intern diversity according the process of acculturation (Barandiarán, 1965; Lizot, 1978; Alabarces, 2003).

The population which we centres our work is placed in the average part of the river Ocamo. Mabetiteri's community relies on 66 persons (31 males and 35 women); numbers (seizures in January, 2006) not stable at all from one year to other one, provided that the movement of population and the fussion and fission processes are a constant.

Far from the mass media and transport that allows them to connect with the rural Venezuelan society and the rest of the world, the ordinariness of the life between the settlers of Mabetiteri passes in a routinary way among the productive labors of subsistence and the shaman practices, that equally can be understood as another dimension more to be able to survive.

With the exception of the visits to parents of other *shaponos* or gone out for some another motive, the *wayumi* practices or incursions to hunt, to go fishing or to gather, the *reahu* or holidays intercominitaries, the funereal celebrations, the *reahu* or intercommunitary parties of the pijiguao (palm fruits), and other festive celebrations; the daily life in Mabetiteri's *shapono* is marked by the different tasks between the morning and the evening, and the distinction of roles according to the sex and the age.

Generally the women work in a more continued way and more time than the man, though this one takes charge of tasks that demand a major energetic expense. In Mabetiteri the men works on his conuco or crop earth in the phase that corresponds to it (cleans, fells, burn, sown, harvest it), they go to hunt, go fishing, also realize improvements in the housing, or make a bongo or another type of craft, arrows, curare (poison to hunt), since the morning until the half day (approximately them 12:00). The women goes to gather to the conuco or to look for wild products, clean the floor of the house, prepare and cook the food, and of course take care of the newborn children. The old people stay in the *shapono* and are assisted by their children or family. And the boys and girls can accompanins their parents and help them in the tasks that are proper to each one, or be attended by the teacher yanomami of the same community, if he remains liberated of other occupations<sup>2</sup>. All this passes in a flexible way, so, also it is possible to dedicate the morning to rest if there are provisions to survive all day, or there are no desire of doing anything. The evening in any case is less demanding with the work and the tasks are more lewd and with a social character more than labour

<sup>2</sup> Every two weeks two religious catholic of Ocamo's Mission rise up the river Ocamo to its middle riverbed to exchange (to trade) with the Yanomamis of the river and stay one day in Mabetiteri's college in order to give lessons and to verify how everything goes well; meanwhile a yanomami with little domain of Spanish takes charge of the children gathered in the school when he or she can and wants.

character, especially for the men. The shaman of the *shapono* takes charge of doing *yopo* (psychotropic product) and the women elaborates *pee*: leaves of tobacco involved and mixed with ashes, which they use during the course of the day and the night (except when they sleep). It is introduced under the low lip of the mouth, which stands out in a pronounced way giving a very singular and typical aspect to their expression. Normally, once the men return to the *shapono*, after having finished his tasks labour and recovered energy with the lunch and some rest, meet in one of the houses, generally the one of the *pata* or boss of the community, which is the biggest, where they get accommodated to take *yopo*, with the chaman or *shapori* as teacher of ceremony. Almost always there is a boy, a young man or woman, an adult or a major person suffering some ailment (the malaria stands out among the youngs), that act as patients in a ritual in which the *shapori* calls for the *hékura* (spirits of the universe) to make them come in his/her help to treat the person; but though there is nobody to cure this day they proceeds invariably to the *hekuramou* (action to attract the *hékura*), to prepare the community of some evil or not to lose the contact and familiarity between them, because always it is preferable to have them as allies. In any case, the therapeutic and social meeting of men affected by the *yopo* happens with more or less assistance, all or almost every day in the evening, and sometimes two and more times if the disease or the dreads because of the potential dangers are abundant. It is, in any case, ritual only for men, placed them in circle, where the women, besides of those who are sick and act in consequence as protagonists on whom the action develops, they are present in the same place, out of the central circle, occupied each one in her task: they rest in the small rowing-boats, with babies, nurse, prepare food, make baskets, recipient of fishing, converse, elaborate more *pee*, etc.; the children run in the same space, play among them; the dogs, also there reunited, bark and fight occasionally; all this sharing the same space, the same house, under the same roof.

In the exterior of the house, partly of the central court is reserved to the sports games that across missionaries and teachers they have managed to learn. The volleyball practised of a mixed way among children and young men or women, with a string fastened between two sticks fixed in the soil, and the football, practised only by the males, even if they are children, young men or adults; they constitute the favorite activities. But, stopping only in the second activity, how is it the football Yanomami de Mabetiteri in its basic elements?

### THE FOOTBALL IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE SHAPONO: MORPHOLOGY OF THE SPORT GAME

About the **elements of the game**, the used **space** is limited only on a side of the central court of the *shapono*, 30 % approximately, used in a polyvalent way to play football, volleyball or any other type of playful activity. Is an irregular area with mixture of clay and sand, which limits are marked in a side by the high grass that grows where it is not often trodden, and in other one for the housings (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Mabetiteri's shapono with central court.

The **time** dedicated to football is flexible, though normally they use generally the evening hours, moment when the labour activity of the young men and adults (horticulture in the conuco, hunt, fishing) diminishes obviously and a margin stays for another type of practices (shamanism, rest, conversation, game). The school children, nevertheless, will have also occasion during the morning to kick the ball and to run by the field if they wish it, into the time of playtime when the school works, or when they want if it does not work.

With regard to the **system of training or preparation**, the physical, technical and tactic preparation are given in an integrated way inside a constant process of education/learning by imitation. To play football is conceived as a totality, the constant run or the sprint is not trained separately to increase the performance, the capacity of execution in the real game; also is not tested the control of the ball, the shot to goal or the strategy, in a deliberate way and in margin of what is the proper game is. Each one practises when he wants and can, though the most fond young men do it often and shows a notable performance to the game, having present the limitations that the environment imposes and the time that they dedicate to the activity. We can differentiate, nevertheless, two levels of game: on one hand it would be the children who begin to learn and to conceive it as a collective activity in which the group as block has to take the forward and put it in the goal, all kicking and going as a whole behind it with pushes. And on the other hand there are the young men who have learned the fundamental scheme and to obtain the goal they are opened in the field, giving more opening to the game, the positions are distributed, at least defensives and offensives, they pass the ball with sense, get unmarked, also use the dribbling and apply tactical and technical aspects to obtain major efficiency in the matches. In general terms, the game is more physical than technical and tactical.

As for the **normative system**, the yanomami football is completely opened for the incorporation or exclusion of guidelines that regulate the game. In Mabetiteri, the <<playground>> occupies an approximate extension of 25 m. of length for 18 m. of approximately rectangular, cleaner of vegetation because it have been more trodden. The height of the grass, generally, is a good indicator of the frequency that is played and where the players circulate more.

The <<goals>> are mobile: with the placement of stones that can be transported at any time to extend or to diminish its width, and even shorten or lengthen the field (depended of how close are situated); also they can be semifixed or semimobile, according to the case, with the placement of two sticks fixed in the soil like posts without any crossbar. The maximum height to which the goal is admitted, when the ball passes between both posts is discretionary, though usually the highest point allowed is the average height of a player (1.60 m. approximately); when the posts are only stones the validation of the goals when these are doubtful is always appreciative and agreed by consensus, though is not usually to see conflicts because of this kind of things.

The <<disputed object>> of the game as it is wherever, is singular and spherical, though it is made with different materials. In relation with the type of goal, a ball can be used not only in good conditions, but also punctured balls that do not bounce and roll with difficulty, rubber balls of different sizes that bounce in excess, plastic bottle, bundle of leaves pressured and tied with roots, or as also we observe paper balls wrinkled and pressured of approximately 10 cm of diameter, tied with roots; curiously, because of the phrases that we could read in one of them, they were pages of the New Testament used by the evangelical ones that are families of the *shapono* and also they are participants, with the captain or *pata* (chief of the community) at the head (Figure 2).

What respect to the <<duration of the game>>, depends on the consideration that has the meeting. The games that diary are played in Mabetiteri pass in a singular time, without rest or change of goals; and it will



be limited by the desires that are had, the lack of solar light, or the agreement to score first a certain number of goals; thereby it is possible to play without interruptions during 15 ' or 20 ', or as it is normal, during 40 ' or 45 or more than one hour. The players in all this time can be the same ones in every team, or are joining to the game of a partial way as they are coming. The number of players must be balanced in equality of force, they can play five against five or five against six, if another one comes they would be six against six. Thereby, nobody stay inactive or as a reserve.



**Figure 2.** Ball of biblical paper.

According to the <<uniform>>, with the exception of the very small *shaponos* and without many interest, the medium and big communities have in general their soccer clothing, consisting on a singlet and short trousers; the colors are very varied and not associated to national and international teams. Every day in Mabetiteri everyone plays with the clothes that has and allows him run with fluency, commonly is played only with sport shorts or underpants, with the torso nude or covered with a thin vest; because they are a few and acquaintance, they can distinguish among them without the uniform. Normally they play barefooted, showing their enormous hardness and resistance of the foot to the friction, with the continuous races, stopped, sprints, innings, kicks to the ball, in which nobody gives the minor sign of pain. Nevertheless, when the *shapono* assist to an intercommunal championship where they have been invited, they dress with the uniform that the *pata* or chief of the *shapono* guards in his house and that they obtained as a present of the Mayoralty of The Emerald to which they belong. The above mentioned clothing is formed by a vest with blue and white lines and blue shorts; and each player can eventually add of his property a few stockings and wearfootball boots if he has<sup>3</sup>.

About what concerns to the <<sanctions of the regulation>>, they normally don't have any manual, so they applied the rules according to the measure of the circumstances. In Mabetiteri's daily game we never observe a referee who decide, the own players are those who apply the norms according to they understanding and regulates the activity, which is marked by the consensus in the decisions; what dictates the first one that takes the initiative in applying a sanction is assumed by all; actually, though it is a

<sup>3</sup> Curiously the only shoes that some man have in their houses are a boots to play football, because normally they walk barefooted.

competitive activity, the only purpose that is in game is to score more or less goals to the other team in an entertaining environment, as it is appreciated by the continuous laughs and jokes that are done.

In any case, the knowledge in major or minor degree the sensations that the official regulation of football imposes to the situations that are given in the game, the types of faults that are sanctioned by more frequency are the kicks (to other player) or the pushes, without bear in mind the outside. As peculiarities observed in the application of the regulation we can emphasize the fact of sanctioning invariably faults in favour of the player who has been damaged in the innings, with independence of the one who had the fault; or the penalty shot from 9 steps of a goal with a length of two meters, being difficult to score.

The <<punctuation system>> to understand the scoreboard is peculiar in the football Yanomami. When in Mabetiteri I ask the players: how was the score? some of them say to me that had score five goals and others (from the same team) say that had score seven goals; sometimes, when the difference was bigger, some were saying that they had score two goals and other twelve goals, but they all were going so satisfied, without the sensation of having lost the match. They all win if they score some goal, which is definitively the aim, the logic that is still kept in the *shaponos* or Yanomamis communities isolated, of the High Orinoco, where the playful component of the football exceeds to the pure competition, where the rival is assumed as a game difficulty that it is necessary to overcome, making it more entertaining. The ball is disputed with the intention of score goals as basic aim, which does not imply that is necessary to overcome the opponent in the final result. Both teams try to score and both make big efforts in the game, but the achievement or the satisfaction is in the own goal as fruit of the well done action or of the fortune, anyhow it is valid. Even when in the game has been imposed as limit to score 10 goals between the two teams, it does not matter that one has scored six and the other one four, they both have scored and had fun. Probably the biggest disappointment comes when one of the teams doesn't score any goal and doesn't cover their expectations, not only winning to the other team, but just of scoring some goal.

Difficult way of understanding a soccer competition if we translate it to the international area, where the important thing is to win in absolute terms and at any price, circumstance that is observed so much in the professional context as also in the amateur and in the student context, clearly influenced by the first one.

This football vision where the most important thing is the pleasure for the physical exercise of the activity in its own, without giving attention to the result, who still persists in communities where the football has been taken with its habitual logic and the community has transformed it accommodating it to their idiosyncrasy and their own understanding, we can observe how little by little has been modified by the most conventional optics of trying not only to score goals, but finally to win the rival scoring more than he do. The exhibition increasingly continued to the global scheme of understanding the football, transmitted by the television, to which many people can accede by the satellite channel<sup>4</sup>, or across the school, makes that the yanomami competition intends also in this direction, as we could observe.

With regard to the **participants**, the <<players>> are all males with diverse ages that goes from five or six years up to the 30 or 35. As a whole we see a group of 9 children from 5 to 12 years, 12 young men from 15 to 25 years, and 6 adults of more than 35 years, though not all of them were available to play at the

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<sup>4</sup> In some Mission communities exists antennas that allow them receive satellite channel, whereas in other Yanomami communities the use of electricity-generator groups allow them generate at least electricity and see in DVD football matches in the screen of the television.



same time. Normally they were joining an average between 8 and 10 players. The principle followed in the distribution of the teams is look for a balance between the parts or decrees that face, which change every day. This way, so, daily they play four against four, six against six, or five against six, and if someone comes they both are on a same level, and if someone leaves before time, depending of the team that he belong, usually they make again a new distribution (to be equalized), but other times they just get more unbalanced (six vs. four). At First they try to balance the *battle*, but once the players are distributed they usually doesn't change the group until the end, even if the best players leaves. Sometimes they finish the match playing five against three or six against four without protests or demands of changes.

When they visit another community a high number of players are met (more than 6 for team) with certain experience, the positions are distributed in three lines and the goalkeeper: defense, midfield and forward line. The smallest, nevertheless, when they play diary they do it without strategy or distribution of positions, they all go in group to the ball there where it falls down, with the only intention of giving it a kick forward to put it in the opposite goal.

The dynamics of the games is full of laughs, more that of commentaries about the game, and when there is some player in the field that stands out on the rest, thing that was in the habit of happening, he is the leader and distributor of the game like a captain, being respected and obeyed by the rest (of his team).

In the daily game of the communities with limited fields and players' shortage, as it Mabetiteri's case, the figure of the <<referee>> is absent, and his function is diluted among all the participants of the game, who decide how to sanction the incorrect actions. In any case, the infractions that are sanctioned are in the habit of being respected by all without discussion, because they all know themselves, forms part of the same community and there is neither any bet nor prize in game that is not the satisfaction of win or score goals. In the daily practice scarcely there is <<public>>. The interested in the activity form part of the game and only a few persons remains contemplating in a continued way the game, though someone pay attention momentary during a few minutes if it attracts.

## THE SENSE OF THE GAME

The football allows to the Yanomami of Mabetiteri compete, to measure up in the domain of a not traditional activity that they turns out to be entertaining and has established itself or is doing it in the daily occupation of the time of many people, specially children and young men. This new activity contributes to the Yanomami a new form of <<competition>>, a competition that far from produce blood and death, it is developed in group, in pacific armony and produces <<pleasant sensations>>. The sports activities generally and the football especially learned from external agents to the own culture, has supposed in this context a discovery to extend the sights in the frame of the interpersonal and intercommunal clashes<sup>5</sup>, with the application of norms that treat the contenders of an igitalitarian way, and are orientated towards the control of the conflict and the violence.

In the community context of those who insert the area of game in the central space, court or eaves of the *shaponos*, as it is Mabetiteri's case, the playful component prevails over the agonistic, the pleasure of the activity in its own, or because of it's good accomplishment is over the competitive factor or the interest to

<sup>5</sup> Apart of the football played in the daily life, the team of Mabetiteri is invited by other *shaponos* Yanomami to play intercommunal championships with trophies included.

beat the rival; this is demonstrated by the expressions already mentioned of children that they do not understand that one of the groups is the only winner, when they have scored four goals or win for four goals and others have scored five or win for five. Everyone has received a particular victory and they all have won something, apart from the satisfaction of playing.

This is an important contribution that the Yanomami mentality has done to the football, though it is known only for them, in view of the geographical and communicative isolation in which they are, a contribution that arises in a spontaneous way as fruit of having understood the football, not in the transcendent and serious plane that it adopts in the last times from a global perspective, but just as a game in which the important thing is to relax and to amuse, especially because they all can win in the competition.

Inside the community area the football serves to assemble the people and to make them together pass a funny time and entertained generating an environment of social humour. Traditionally the custom that assembles every day or almost daily those who participate in the same *shapono* is the shamanism, the *hekuramou* that brings together regularly the men and concerning them, women and children. The football turns this way into an alternative for the daily meeting among the related ones who feel attracted by it, generally children and young men. The new generations have in the evenings, beside taking *yopo* in a collective way, the habit of playing football; this way we estimate it in Mabetiteri, where in the evenings appears these two situations: inside a house a big group of men were taking *yopo* arranged in circle with the *shapori* as center of attention declaring chamanic singings; and out of the house a group of children were playing football, were laughing and shouting goal!; sometimes by an involuntary way both contexts were interpenetrated when the ball enters bouncing for the door of the house and it stopped near to the mother sat in the floor with her son in arms affected of malaria; while the *shapori* pass his hands over the head of the creature in serious or solemn attitude, a child entered hurriedly and took the ball stopped in front of him.

As behavior of competition that demands a great investment of physical effort for the development of the action and the achievement of the aim (to score goals and/or to win), the football serves to unload tension, anxiety, aggressiveness, having so a <<cathartic function>><sup>6</sup>.

If the football is having successful between the Yanomami of the High Orinoco and concretely in Mabetiteri's community, for the practitioners that it moves between the youngest, maybe because it is attractive, interesting and with sense, but in what measure the sense that parts from the football is not constructed on the basis of elements that depart from the own tradition?

In the scheme of Yanomami fight, two males, young men from 14 or 15 years, and major of even more than 70 years, placed in pairs<sup>7</sup> and one in front the other, they hit the same number of blows in an alternative way. One gets three punches in the chest in the side of the heart, and later he strikes of equal way to his opponent, being able to take out the knuckle of the finger heart, to introduce a stone in the fist to damage more, or to simulate that some charm is expelled with the blow. The one that receives steadies itself on the floor with a leg flexed forward and other one stretched behind, presenting the chest with the head in

<sup>6</sup> The cathartic function is favored from the tradition across several cultural practices: the *hekuramou* or shamanism, the *himou* and *wayamou* or verbal clashes, the ritual fight and the war.

<sup>7</sup> In general they are joined in pairs of males of approximate ages, but also young men of 17 or 18 year old can do it with major people of 70 year old, as we had occasion to attend in Mamashatioteri (January, 2006).

highly, prepared to receive, whereas other one loads the arm behind with the closed fist and legs one forward of the other one, prepared to hit. Differently, which receives is placed with the legs separated and the arms flexed up with hands on the nape, leaving the side free, while the other one with separated legs loads the arm behind laterally with the palm of the hand opened to strike the left side.

As it is supposed, after several series of alternate blows, the chests of the adversaries are red and in the sides big bruises appear, or it begins to sprout blood. The combat finishes by the common thing with the substitution of the opponents for other two litigators who will do the same, until there passes all those who had desires to do it to expire with the tradition and to demonstrate to be *waittheri* (strong and brave man); In other occasions the combat finishes with the faint of one of them if it extends in excess, or even with the death of someone<sup>8</sup>, in which case the declaration of war is almost insured. These combats enclose always great uncertainty, they known which is the procedure and how it begins but not how it is going to end. They are given inside the celebration of the *reahu* or an intercommunal holiday and are preceded of the *himou* and *wayamou*, dialectical disputes in pairs between men that take place during the day in the first case and during the whole night up to the dawn in the second one, in all this time they will change the pairs that discuss every 20 or 30 minutes.

Finished the oratorical competition, at the dawn they pass to the ritual fight already explained, which can be extended in more or less time, according to the case, in Mamashatioteri (January, 2006) it lasted two uninterrupted hours. And after it, in agreement to the foreseen someone takes collectively the ashes or bones pulverized of some parent deceased recently that had been guarded in a *totuma* or closed container, to be consumed in a few celebrations. The foreseen, nevertheless, not always is sure to happen, everything depends on the changes that arise in each case. Also there is *reahu*, as it parts from the book of Helena Valero (1984), organized expressly to kill someone or to declare the war to the guest.

Described in big outlines the scheme and context of the ritual Yanomami fight, seemingly not very much or nothing has to see with the game of the football or a soccer championship, but the idea is not to compare, just to understand possible associations and transfers that are done from the traditional area known even the new cultural acquisitions, to make them digestible and useful in the practice, finding sense in them.

In the *himou*, *wayamou*, the ritual fight, and in the football, there is competition: verbal and physical in a case, sportive in other one. Competition that is protagonised by the males, and generates expectation around it. Competition that is given too in pairs, of persons in some cases and of teams in others, which represent often to the communities.

In both cases the egalitarian treatment is saved: in the fight the three alternative blows are respected and in the football there are no privileges in the normative application (or it is claimed). In none of them one gives the surrender, is necessary to complete the series of blows or the regulation time of game, except accident or major reason. In both they try to reaffirm in some sense: As *waittheri* in the fight and as good team in the football.

In spite of all these similarities, it is obvious that the contexts in which every action develops are different, as well as the *raison of being* and it make them incomparable, nevertheless the existing analogies with the

<sup>8</sup> More than because of the strength of the hit, the death in a combat is interpreted as a consequence of the magic action associated to the blow and enclosed in the fist.

experience lived in the tradition help to understand how certain cultural foreign practices, case of the football, find a favourable environment that favours its acceptance.

Of equal way we observe how certain traditional Yanomami logic proper of the sense of the fight, has been established in the logic of the modern football, and it is still possible to appreciate in the places less exposed to the exterior environment, as it is Mabetiteri, we refer again to the fact of win, all with the practice of the football, as they all win with the ritual practice of the fight. In a case the important thing is that each one has assumed the challenge of face to a rival, of punch and being punch equally in order that ultimately both demonstrate to be *waittheri*, of having gained this category; in the other one, the important thing is that they have passed a good time and both have scored the goals that they could in agreement to their force, skill or luck, without there are losers.

How, if accustomed that in the serious and transcendent plane in which is developed the ritual fight, they understand that they all win, that everyone that accepts and passes the challenge has covered his expectations, it is possible to assume in the playful - competitive plane of the football, marked principally by the amusement, which only is one who has this privilege?

The lecture that the Yanomami people does of the football, the playful essence that they make it prevail over the strict competition, does not stop being a surprising feature that makes us think again in the complexity of the human being, in the contrasts and contradictions of their behaviours. With the practice of the football the Yanomami reveal that they are much more than a fierce people (Chagnon, 1968). A brave people that has been capable of re-discover the most humanist dimension, that one that makes everybody win, of a global hegemonic practice that, far now of its romanticism, defends today the idea of winning at any expense, showing, with its virtues, the attributes of a society that, besides name to themself "of the knowledge" and of progress, personifies the most merciless competition and puts to the overdraft different ways of ferocity.

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