

The collection of the Unit Ethnomedicine and International Health

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Introduction

The Collection of the Unit Ethnomedicine and International Health came into existence in 1999¹. It is located in the historical building “Josephinum” in Vienna’s ninth district, where the Department for Cultural Heritage of the Medical University of Vienna has provided space for documentation and storage. It is based on more than 1800 objects and paintings that are in its widest sense related to medicine.

The collection’s inventory can be divided in three different areas: objects related to medical, spiritual and nutritional practises and/or the human body, like zoological medicines, herbal drugs, synthetically fabricated medicines; objects for and against evil magic, medicinal devices, aphrodisiacs, smoking devices, ritual instruments as well as statues and depictions of transcendental beings.² Furthermore—and that’s where the collections special emphasis lies—it consists of more than 200 acrylic and reverse glass paintings manufactured by indigenous artists that illustrate healthcare situations, healing procedures, ritual actions and believes connected to healing, sorcery and mythology. The third area of the collection is constituted of visual media such as photographs and films.³

In the following I present the collections inventory by selected examples. First I introduce two categories of objects, namely animal substances and magical synthetic medicines. Second I present three different styles that can be found among the collections paintings: Congolese urban paintings,

¹ Armin Prinz initiated the first collection-project financed by the “Jubiläumsfonds” of the Österreichische Nationalbank. At this time the department’s employees and students had already collected several items during their fieldwork. The aim of the project was to establish a digitalized database that could serve for further research and teaching purposes.

² Since most of the research of the department’s employees was and still is done in Africa, the largest part of the objects is of African origin, but there are also many objects and paintings from Asia as well as objects and paintings from Latin America and the Caribbean.

³ Much of the footage was taken during research-projects in Senegal, Ethiopia and Tanzania within the last ten years. It is now edited within the scope of the recent and third collection project financed by the Österreichische Nationalbank. Armin Prinz started the production of ethnomedical films already more than 30 years ago in cooperation with the German “Institut für den wissenschaftlichen Film Göttingen”. At that time the focus of his work was on Congolese healing rites.

Tanzanian Tinga-Tinga art and Senegalese reverse glass painting (*suwer*). In the last section of the article I undertake the attempt of a comparative analysis between several selected paintings and photographs.⁴

Zootherapy and the power of “science”

Animal substances

Animal substances from time immemorial were used in different medical systems inside and outside Europe and are still in use today. In some cases they are ingested because of their pharmaceutical ingredients, in other cases they are rather used because of their symbolic meanings. Not everywhere the biological effect of a remedy is given the same absolute priority as in the contemporary orthodox medicine of occidental cultures.

Considering rather the symbolic aspects, the German physician Franz Paullini (1643–1712) recommended against toothaches a compound of excrements of wolfs and dogs together with foul apples and rose oil, wrapped around the calves. Against tooth decay a mush of dogs urine, incense and dogs teeth was suggested. For awakening people from faint, horse excrements should be held underneath their noses and the excrements of oxes wrapped around ones waist should help against bladder troubles (Paullini 1696). The idea behind the medical use of animal excrements was to fight evil with evil or, generally spoken: To cure like with like (*similia similibus curantur*). It was also assumed, that animals and plants resembling human body parts, animals, or other objects, would have special healing powers. Medicinal herbs and animals are marked with clear indications for their uses and the task of the medical practitioner was to recognize them. Hence, this approach is described as “doctrine of signature”. In the historical perspective it is one of the most important modes of medical thinking, and it was expounded in medical texts from the middle of the sixteen hundreds right up to the end of the nineteenth century. Since it can be found throughout different cultures and eras all over the world it can even be described as an anthropological principle (Prinz 1993).

A well-known example that illustrates this fact from a botanical perspective is the walnut. It is supposed to be useful for curing head ailments because it has the signatures of the human brain, as declared by the botanist

⁴ A collection focusing on objects, paintings, photographs and films related to traditional medicine and nutrition is quite unique. A similar institution, the museo di etnomedicina “Collezione A.Scarpa”, exists only in Genoa.

William Cole (1626–1662). Cole again was greatly influenced by the teachings of Paracelsus who himself promoted the so-called *Mumienlehre*—the doctrine of mummies. A mummy could be everything coming out from the human body as for example blood, hair, saliva, urine, etc. Those emissions, so the assumption, would never lose their connection to the body of which they derived from and therefore would also contain the body's sickness. With the help of the mummy a disease could be eliminated, for example through throwing it away: The disease would follow the mummy and in this way leave the body (Werner 1994).

Animal medicines were not only applied in European ancient medicine, they are still in use in medical systems such as Chinese traditional medicine or Ayurvedic medicine. In the former the horn of a rhinoceros is used to increase male power because of its phallic shape, or the shivering cicada serves as a remedy against shivering attacks. The collection possesses a wide range of animal medicines from Chinese traditional medicine and related Asian medical systems. Some consist of the animal as a whole, as for instance seahorses, which are applied in a dry form. They are supposed to help against impotence, urinary incontinence, wheezing and old age debilitation and said to tonify the kidneys and fortify the Yang. Snakes are used in the form of alcohol extractions against stiffness of the joints because of their extraordinary mobility. Other animal substances appear as compounds like the Chinese remedy *Lujiaojiao*, which contains antler glue in combination with turtle glue and monkey hide gelatine. It is indicated for weakness of the body, vomiting, epistaxis, uterine bleeding, blood in the urine and so-called Yin boils. In many cases animal remedies are combined with herbal ingredients, as it is the case for instance with handmade pills from the pharmacy of a monastery in Amdo, Tibet.⁵ Also part of the collection are several dried animal parts as well as whole animals from Mali and Benin. In their traditional usage they are crushed to powder and ingested with milk and honey in order to balance the patient's bodily fluids.⁶

As shown in Fig. 1, animal substances are not only ingested, but also used to encase medicine. A shell of a conch, having the shape resembling an ear, serves as container for a bottle of traditional herbal medicine against ear-aches.⁷

⁵ Collected by Katharina Sabernig in the year 2001.

⁶ Collected by Armin Prinz in the year 2001.

⁷ Purchased by Ruth Kutalek from a traditional Massai healer in Tanzania in the year 1999.



Fig. 1: Shell of a conch used in traditional medicine, Tanzania

The power of “science” in synthetic substances

Synthetic substances with “magical powers” are increasingly popular in all parts of the world. Most of the collection samples however derive from contemporary Latin America and the Caribbean, where synthetic substances in some places already seem to redeem traditionally produced herbal and animal medicines. In the Dominican Republic for instance those magical medicines are available on markets and even in pharmacies. Many traditional healers—especially urban ones—believe that they are “fabricated by scientists”. The synthetic substances, so the assumption, must have undergone a complicate refining process and therefore are more expensive and, of course, more effective. Self-made products of natural ingredients on the contrary are considered brute, “because the plants go directly from their habitat into the cooking pot” (Schaffler 2008: 31). Together with other non-traditional values the system of orthodox Western medicine has penetrated the field of the Dominican traditional medicine as far as its attributes today are also considered preferable by traditional healers. Its acceptance by the upper class and hence assumed special power makes it worth desiring, but at the same time the symbolic healing approach is still very important. As a result industrial made “magical” synthetic substances are well-liked, because they offer both: They resemble biomedical remedies because they have undergone the above-mentioned “complicate refining process”, appear as bottled liquids in fancy colours or as powders and contain a formal package insert with an

exact description of their usage. At the same time they function according to the principles of symbolic healing.

One example of such a substance is a small bottle filled with drops against evil magic (*contra daños*).⁸ They serve against misfortune, accidents, hate and envy from others and disease.

“With the help of these drops damage caused by your enemies is taken away from you and protects you and your family at the same time. Take one spoon full every morning”, indicates the Spanish inscription.

A further example is the “Protection from evil”-spray, an industrial made spray with inscriptions in English and Spanish with the following instruction for usage:

“Shake well. Hold can upright and point nozzle away from you. Aim upwards and spray all areas of your surroundings. Let us pray. Make the sign of the cross. Air refresher, deodorizer. Does not have supernatural powers.”⁹

The object not only transports the values of the upper class in terms of industrialization and modernization, but also carries through its inscription the values of Christianity. A prayer has to be spoken and it is clearly said, that the remedy does *not* contain supernatural powers.

Fig. 2 on the next page shows another magical spray that in accordance with its inscription contains female pheromones and promises increased sensual pleasure. The aerosol can is embellished with a copulating couple—an image that is probably withdrawn from a book on Tantric practises¹⁰. Its content smells pleasant, as usual, when substances are supposed to attract the opposite sex. In terms of symbolism, pleasant smells attract benign spirits and good luck and therefore can be used in love spells as well. Acrid smells are applied to exorcise the evil and to separate couples. In the middle and on the left of Fig. 2 two oil filled bottles are located.¹¹ Besides vegetable oil they contain different objects that stand symbolically for good luck, such as dices, pyramids, horseshoes, seeds and plants as well as a clenched fist, which serves as a symbol of defence. The oil serves as a lotion. The small bottle on the left is a former penicillin vial; it thus stresses the healing properties of the oil through establishing a connection to Western medicine.

⁸ Collected by Armin Prinz on the market of Basse Terre in Guadeloupe in the year 2000.

⁹ See note 8.

¹⁰ Collected in the year 2005 by Armin Prinz in Mexico.

¹¹ Both bottles where collected by the author. The smaller one on the left is from Bolivia, La Paz (2002); the bigger one from the Dominican Republic, Santo Domingo (2005).



Fig. 2: Oil filled bottle with objects related to good luck

Since Muslim countries place much value in female sexual abstinence before marriage, women in Senegal are offered a soap that instead of increased sensual pleasure provides virginity. It is available under the label “virginity soap”, and of course, in order to successfully attract a future husband, it smells very pleasant.¹²

Paintings of indigenous artists: Between contemporary art and ethnographical knowledge

Even though the collection’s paintings are contemporary artworks and not objects that originally had been in medical use, they serve as valuable sources for ethnographical data. They reflect symbolic systems that are shaped by culture as well as each artist’s personal imagination on a certain medical or spiritual subject.

¹² Collected by Armin Prinz in the year 2006.

Congolese urban painting

The most impressive and most valuable paintings of the collection were produced in the Democratic Republic of Congo, former known as Zaire¹³ with such prominent artists as Mosengwo Kejwamfi, known by his alias Moke, Chéri Samba, Bodo (Camille-Pierre Pambu Bodo) and Chéri Cherin (Kutalek 2007a). Congolese urban painting initially was invented to satisfy the literate bourgeoisie in the Congolese cities (Jewsiewicki 1991: 130), but it increasingly develops into a form of art that can be found in well-known international art-galleries. Even though most of the paintings are characterised by contents that are political and critical of society (Kutalek 2007a), some also discuss motifs of sorcery, magic and traditional medicine as well as Christian themes, for example the struggle against “pagan evil”. As Jewsiewicki (1991: 130) states that the prevailing Christian ethic transformed the practice of sorcery and thereby created personal conflicts that have become one of the major themes of painting. “The canvas has become more than a sign, it serves as a sort of ex-voto, a protection against evil—which may compass the social other, including the other gender.”

The styles of Congolese urban artists are characterised by an extensive use of colours. The paintings often remind us of comics or are even designed as comic strips, including speech balloons. In fact, many of the popular artists had been comic artists and board painters before they became artist painters (Parisel and Nzuzi 1995). Examples of urban Congolese paintings are shown below (Fig. 5, 10 and 13).

Tanzanian Tinga-Tinga painting

The collection also covers 73 pieces of Tanzanian Tinga-Tinga paintings; a style that had been named according to its inventor Edward Saidi Tinga Tinga (1937–1972). It is characterised by a charming and decorative appearance and in most cases displays animals and ornaments. As opposed to the urban Congolese art it is considered so-called airport-art, cultural art that has been adapted to the special requirements of long-distance travellers, including size and square format (Brändle 2007: 113ff.). Nevertheless Tinga-Tinga provides insights into traditional imaginations of the spiritual world. The pictures of the famous painter George Lilanga, whose works are represented at all important international expositions of African contemporaries, are an example for a humorous approach to depict the spiritual world. Lilanga became famous with paintings and sculptures of *sheitani*: Traditional spiritual beings from the Makonde culture, which are shown in common scenes of daily life in

¹³ The collection possesses at the moment 55 pieces of urban Congolese art.

Tanzania. They are depicted cartoon-like and not very different from human beings, except that they have only two fingers on their hands, three toes on their feet, extended lips and elongated ears. What Lilanga expresses through his paintings and sculptures, is, “that life is enjoyable as long as you look lightly at the ‘demons’ of all kind that inhabit the labyrinth of our mental and spiritual world” (Gosciny 2001: 7–10).

Other important Tinga-Tinga artists the collection possesses paintings of are John Kilaka, Peter Martin, Job (John Lulandala), Said Mkumba, Mkura, Charinda, Malikita and Mchisa. Fig. 3 shows a painting of John Kilaka¹⁴, who not only sees himself as painter but also as story-teller. Other artists often copy his extraordinary style. The picture tells the story of a delinquent sitting on the left side. He is punished by witches who make him sick. The witches live in Baobab-trees, which all over Africa are considered to be the homes of transcendental beings. They are able to change their shapes and behave contrary to normal humans: They walk backwards, fly, or walk around naked. Sometimes they show characteristics of animals, as to be seen at the bottom of the right side (Kutalek 2007b).



Fig. 3: Painting by John Kilaka, Tanzania

¹⁴ Collected by Ruth Kutalek in the year 2000. Its original measures are 80x110 cm.

Senegalese reverse-glass painting

Besides acryl-paintings the collection contains 42 reverse-glass paintings (suwer)¹⁵ from Senegal. This style was at its peak between the 1920 and 1960s, when suwer still were produced for the Senegalese. Today they are mainly manufactured for Western tourists and art collectors (Bouttiaux-Ndiaye 1994: 9). Common motifs are Muslim religious scenes, mythology, narrated histories and legends, as well as day-to-day scenes. The artist Malainy Sow, better known as Mallo, produced most of the reverse-glass paintings that are part of the Collection Ethnomedicine. Most of them show either bio-medical practises as he sees or values them, or they illustrate traditional healing practices as well as the conflict between both systems. Mallo is able to display the harsh conditions of sickness and treatment with a subtle sense of humour that frequently borders on cynicism. His pictures are provided with dialogues between patient and doctor, with the unspoken thoughts of both, as well as with the critical thoughts of the spectators (Weissenböck 2001a). An example of Mallo's artistry, which discusses the imaginary of the traditional water-spirit Mami Wata, is shown below (Fig. 4).

Towards a comparative use of the collection's paintings and photographs

The collection's paintings and photographs not only work well for insights into local medical and mythological conceptions but also for supraregional comparisons. In the following I present three comparisons between paintings and photographs from different places that lead to interesting insights.

The mysterious path of the Mami Wata spirit

The spiritual being "Mami Wata", the "mother of water", is often imagined as a mermaid, mostly light skinned with long flowing hair. She is at once considered beautiful, protective, seductive and potentially deadly. According to the legend she only comes to the surface to comb her hair (Brändle 2007: 86). Fig. 4 shows a reverse glass painting produced by the Senegalese artist Mallo.¹⁶ The mermaid motif that it displays has its root in European mythology. As the Africans became familiar with it through Portuguese merchants, they adapted and transformed it into the African spirit Mami Wata (Drewal

¹⁵ From the French expression "sous-verre" (under glass).

¹⁶ The reverse-glass painting was bought 2006 by Armin Prinz, directly from the painter Mallo in Dakar. Its measures are 24 x 32.5 cm.

2008). Fig. 5, an acrylic painting from the Congolese urban artist Bodo, is entitled “Hotel Mami Wata”.¹⁷ A man with playing cards spread around him is sitting in front of a hotel named “Hotel Mami Wata”. A snake that was sent by the spirit of Mami Wata appears from a canal besides the street and attacks him. In Congolese imaginary, Mami Wata pre-eminently is seen as a mediator between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Both worlds are separated by water, which is where Mami Wata resides (Drewal 2008: 77). She has the power to make her servants wealthy, but her assistance



Fig. 4: Painting by Mallo S., Senegal



Fig. 5: Painting by Bodo, DR Congo

¹⁷ The painting was collected by Armin Prinz in the year 2003. Its original measures are 144x130 cm.

comes at a terrible price. The man in the picture is persecuted by Mami Wata either because he has told somebody about his secret relationship to her or he did not refrain from sexual relationships, as a pact with her usually demands. Now she punishes him by sucking him down the water (Brändle 2007: 87).

Mami Wata is not only known in Senegal and Congo but throughout large parts of Africa and the New World, where she was brought through the transatlantic slave trade. In her new homelands beyond the sea she was re-established, revitalized and revisualised under different names, among them Lasirén, Yemania or Oxum (Drewal 2008: 60f). In parts of the Spanish speaking Caribbean the African water spirit merged with the Christian Saint Martha of Bethania. She also had been given a new name: “Santa Marta la Dominadora” — “Saint Marta the dominant”. In the Dominican Republic “Santa Marta la Dominadora” is represented in several different forms. The most common motif, which is used during ritual activities (Fig. 6), derives from Europe, where the German artist Schleisinger painted it. His original intention was not to paint Mami Wata; he rather depicted an Indian snake charmer named Maladamatjaute after a photograph that was taken around 1887. The Adolph Friedlander Company published the painting first in 1880; later it became republished by the Indian Shree Ram Calendar Company (Drewal 2008: 67). The Indian prints found their way to Africa, where the motif—just like the European mermaid—was interpreted as Mami Wata. Later it was brought to the Caribbean, where the former Mami Wata again was redefined as “Santa Marta la Dominadora”. The imagination of her as a dominator has its origin in the Catholic legend, in which Saint Martha of Bethania is imagined with a tamed dragon she walks with on a lead instead of having him killed. Today the Catholic depiction of Saint Martha with the dragon (Fig. 7) is rarely found on Creolean altars. It was almost completely taken over by Schleisinger’s snake charmer. Such as Saint Martha of Bethania tames the dragon, “Santa Marta la Dominadora” (Fig. 6) is imagined to tame the snake. Due to her assumed dominating talents, she is often evoked for love spells in order to attach unfaithful husbands to the households that they share with their wives.

Curiously enough, next to Schleisingers painting is also a photograph of the German actress Nastassja Kinski, showing her with a snake that embraces her body (Fig. 8)—ritually venerated as “Santa Marta la Dominadora”. Kinski’s photograph can be found on Creolean altars in the Dominican Republic as well as in Haiti.



Fig. 6: Santa Marta la Dominadora



Fig. 7: Saint Martha with dragon



Fig. 8: Creolan altar, Dominican Republic



Fig. 9: Servants of Santa Marta la Dominadora, Dominican Republic, photographs Yvonne Schaffler

Fig. 9 shows two servants¹⁸ of “Santa Marta la Dominadora” who are “mounted”¹⁹ by her. The man wears a patterned kerchief around his neck, which symbolises the snake; the woman on the left expresses her affinity to Santa Marta through the snake-like patterned skirt that she wears. As shown in the picture, Santa Marta often demands water to bathe during possession-trance. In other cases she squirms on the floor like a serpent. She also manifests herself producing fizzling noises and/or she demands eggs, which indicates her connection to the snake. Once she is present, each servant has the possibility to ask her for favours and for advice. Offerings are made to her in return of blessings and promises to take care of her servant’s personal problems, especially if they are about love and relationship or if the “domination” of somebody is required (Schaffler 2008: 59f).²⁰

The widespread practise of absorbing disease with living creatures

The attempt to pass on disease-causing influences from humans to living birds has been described by the Greek healer Pedanios Dioskurides already during the first century (Dubler 1953: 186f). Gottschalk (1965: 120) and Jungbauer (1934: 23) mention similar efforts that had been undertaken in Germany not very long time ago. An infected finger, for instance, was plugged into the ear of a cat or a dog in order to transmit the infection onto it. The practise of rubbing patients with guinea pigs in order to cure them is still current in the Andes, where the animals are not only used for ritual cleansing but also for subsequent diagnosing. After treatment they are dissected and the inner organs serve for divination (Andritzky 1999: 173ff; Wörrle 2002: 255f).

Fig. 10 shows an acryl painting of the Congolese artist Moke.²¹ A female patient lies on her belly on the floor. According to the painter she does not suffer from a disease in a biomedical sense, but from her inability to find a husband despite her wealth and corpulence. The healer on the right has diagnosed spirit possession and treats her with a chicken. The spirit already left her body and is squeezed on the floor beneath the healer’s bottom. Signs of the healer’s profession are horns, leopard fur around his wrists and ankles and a Red Cross painted on his head, shoulders and back. The leopard fur symbolizes the healer’s ability to transform himself into a leopard. The Red Cross used in the context of traditional medicine shows how well established it is as medical symbol. Other patients with various diseases surround the

¹⁸ By servants I mean people who venerate her.

¹⁹ “Mounted” means ritually possessed. Spirit possession is common in the Dominican Republic as well as in some other Afro-American nations, e.g. in Haiti, Cuba or Brazil.

²⁰ All pictures (6–9) had been taken/where collected by the author in the Dominican Republic between 2003 and 2005.

²¹ The painting was collected by Armin Prinz in 2001. Its original measures are 150x200 cm.



Fig. 10: Painting by Moke, DR Congo



Fig. 11: Patient treated with a chicken, Senegal, photograph Armin Prinz



Fig. 12: Patient treated with a chicken, Dominican Republic, photograph Yvonne Schaffler

healer and his female patient. The woman standing farthest behind suffers from irregular blood pressure caused by sorcery. She is treated with cupping horns that are held to her temples; the people with coloured faces have mental disorders (Weissenböck 2001b).

Fig. 11²² displays a similar action by the Senegalese Serer healer Diam Dog. He beats a chicken around the upper body of a patient and begs the *pangool* (Senegalese traditional spiritual beings) to transfer the disease she suffers from onto the chicken. He uses the same diagnosing technique as traditional healers in the Andes do: He dissects the chicken and searches in its guts for alterations that give him information about the condition of the patient. Afterwards the patient takes a ritual bath with water and the guts are offered to the *pangool* (Prinz 1994; 2001). The third picture (Fig. 12)²³ was taken in the Dominican Republic at the Haitian border. Here it is the Christian-based healing setting that attracts special attention, like the left wall that is embellished by a sculpture of mother Mary or the portrait of Jesus, which is located on the right wall. The healer Lorenzo Reyes rubs the chicken over the patient's body in order to absorb the spirit of a dead person he is possessed of. In contrast to what the Senegalese healer Diam Dog does, the chicken is not hurt during the ceremony. It is not killed after the ritual, but the patient is given a few drops of its blood in order to complete the barter: the life of the chicken is exchanged for the life of the patient (Schaffler 2008: 169f).

Despite the fact that the religious setting defers in all three research-sites and displays either African traditional or Christian characteristics, the actual action of rubbing the patient with a chicken as centrepiece of the cleansing ritual remains the same in all three depictions. Considering the fact that the use of living animals is not limited to African and African influenced cultures, the assumption is obvious that the imagination of the transferability of disease from humans onto other creatures is a common human way of thinking (Prinz 1994).

The transformation of humans into animals

Supraregional parallels are not only to be found between healing methods, but also in the person of the healer. As already mentioned above, the leopard fur on the healer's braces and ankles in Moke's painting (Fig. 10) symbolises his capacity to turn himself into a leopard. The process of such a metamorphosis is depicted in one of Moke's earlier paintings (Fig. 13).²⁴ Here the healer is about to turn into a leopard, as he experiences magical support

²² The photograph was taken by Armin Prinz in 1993 in Simal, Senegal.

²³ The photograph was taken by the author in 2005 in Elias Piña, Dominican Republic.

²⁴ The painting was collected by Armin Prinz in 1998. Its original measures are 131x170cm.

from a transcendental being that stands behind him. The process is half finished; he has already grown teeth and claws of a feline predator as well as a characteristic coat pattern, but is still shaped human.

The very same concept is shown in a painting from the Peruvian artist Milke Sinuiri²⁵ from the Shipibo ethnicity (Fig. 14).²⁶ The healer in his painting receives inspiration by two natural spirits above his head, depicted as a snake and a bird. Unlike the Congolese healer, the Shipibo-healer's vision is provoked by the consumption of *ayawasca* (a psychotropic mixture of *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis*), which is allegorised through a liana emerging from the left lower corner of the painting. The transformation itself is not causally connected to *ayawasca* but to tobacco, since the border between the human and the jaguar is marked by a puff of smoke. The belled jar that outlines the healer's torso has the shape of a *chomo*—a typical Shipibo pottery. The geometrical patterns that cover the snake, the bird and the clothes of the healer are probably related to *ayawasca* visions, since similar geometrical patterns can be seen after the ingestion of the *ayawasca* brew.²⁷

Apart from the ingestion of psychotropic plants that is only part of healing techniques among ethnicities of the Amazon region, both healers are on the point of turning into an animal that is sacred and feared at the same time. While the Congolese healer shapeshifts into a leopard that is endemic to Africa and Asia, the Shipibo healer transmutes to a jaguar, which is native in the tropical rain forest of the Amazon River region.

The metamorphosis into either a leopard or a jaguar symbolises the close relationship to an animal that besides its dangerousness is considered to possess highly magic powers. The superhuman powers a healer thus receives enable him to fight the evil powers that magical harm his patients.²⁸ This fight is shown in Sinuiri's painting (Fig. 14) through two faces that confront each other. One face, looking to the right, emerges to the right of the healer's hand. It is covered with designs in white on black, which are culturally considered positive. The confronting face (which is easier to identify) enters the picture

²⁵ Milke Sinuiri is not only an artist but also a healer who cures his patients through the singing of sacred songs, called *icaró*. Together with Tito La Rosa and Cucha Del Aguila as well as Tavo Castillo, Pauchi Sasaki, and Pepe Chiriboga he recently released the album "Ayawasca—Viaje De Curacion".

²⁶ The painting was collected by Laida Mori Silvano de Brabec in 2007 in Pucallpa, Peru. It's original measures are 43.5 x 60 cm.

²⁷ However, Milke Sinuiri's painting shows a highly standardized depiction of patterns, taken from the school of Pablo Amaringo; cf. the paintings of Pablo Amaringo, commented by the painter himself in Eduardo et al. (1999).

²⁸ For further information on healing rites in the Peruvian rainforest see Brabec de Mori (2008) Cipoletti (1986) and Viveiros de Castro (1997); for information concerning healing rites in the Congo see Kremser (1977).



Fig. 13: Painting by Moke, DR Congo



Fig. 14: Painting by Sinuiri, Peru

from the right. It is painted in red-on-black and is covered with irregular patterns, which are culturally considered negative (Brabec de Mori 2008).

Because of their extraordinary abilities traditional healers are quite in the same position as leopards and jaguars: they are admired and feared. Admired, because they are able to change one's faith by curing him; feared because the power to cure at the same time includes the potential for magical damage. Sinuiri in his painting points to this ambiguity (Fig. 14) through snakes (*yobé*), which emerge from the healer's torso at the lower right corner: they allegorise the healer's sorcery weapons. In contrast, the left side of the painting shows a pink river dolphin, regarded a gentle seducer of women and a companion of sirens, which is up to shapeshift into a pair of human feet.²⁹ Altogether the left side of the painting (the "human" and "*ayahuasca*" side) reflects the seductive, human, and watery aspects of the healer's work, whereas the right side (the "jaguar" and "tobacco" side) reflects its dangerous, combat-oriented, and fiery aspects.³⁰ As Kutalek and Prinz state: "Healing and witching don't exclude each other. To be able to effectively cure somebody it is necessary to possess the same powers as the evildoer" (2007c: 57).

²⁹ The human feet as well as the dolphin's body emerge between the leaves of the ayahuasca liana.

³⁰ The analysis of Mile Sinuiri's painting (Fig. 14) was done with the help of Bernd Brabec de Mori who personally knows the artist.

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