

Women of the Water: Analysis of the Ceramic Figurines from the Stilt Villages in Eastern Amazon, Brazil



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Abstract

Prehistoric figurines are generally ceramic and stone artifacts made for various functions, from toys to ceremonial purposes. The figurines can depict humans, animals and super natural beings. A set of 74 ceramic figurines of the stilt villages in eastern Amazonia (Maranhão) are analyzed in this article through a techno-typological analysis and description of the iconographic features. It is suggested that this set of artifacts concerns different ways of manufacturing the body, including physical characteristics of individual beings to shamanic practices evidenced by the bodily transformations of beings with human and animal traits.

Keywords: Figurines; Stilt Villages; Shamanism; Amazonia; Maranhão

Introduction

Figurines are small-sized sculptures made of ceramics, bone, ivory or stone, which are movable artifacts that can be transported [1]. Figurines can be either female or male and therefore have been attributed a wide range of semantic meanings ranging from the most conservative theoretical ones, such as an association with eroticism or fertility, to feminist positions that place them as figurations of community leaders [2-6]. Thus, the study of the figurine is a current agenda, above all because of the political content it carries with it, highlighting the role of gender in contemporary world sociopolitical formation. These artifacts still provoke heated discussions and offer evidence of how the uses of the past have changed over time.

This article was born out of a reflection after six field works in the Brazil's Eastern Amazon stilt villages where 74 specimens of whole and fragmented statuettes were collected. The stilt villages are archaeological sites erected on stilts erected inside rivers and lakes and that served as support for indigenous villages, a peculiar type of pre-colonial occupation in the region known as Baixada Maranhense, approximately 200 km from capital of the state, São Luís, in northeast Brazil [7-11] (Figures 1 & 2). The archaeological sites where the figurines were found were built from the beginning of the Christian era until the 12th century. They have gained attention in Brazilian archeology because of the good preservation of the perishable material found in the middle of the aquatic bed peat where they were discarded [10].

Archaeological studies carried out by Navarro since 2014 show that these settlements are not simple camps, as previously thought [9,10]. There are numerous remains of stilt domestic structures at such sites with identical radiocarbon dates. The large number of artifacts with soot and cooking marks show a stable and considerable occupation [9]. The existence of green stone pendants (muiraquitãs) in these sites, such as the specimen collected by Navarro [7] at the Boca do Rio site in 2014 and those collected by Raimundo Lopes [12] and studied by Navarro, Prous [11] at the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro before the fire that consumed indicate continuing long-distance trade between travelers from the Lower Amazon and even possibly from the Antilles and the Caribbean [13].

Material and Methods

In Brazilian Amazon, curiously, all studies on ceramic figurines were analysed by women: Helen C. Palmatary [14,15] Conceição G. Correia [16], Anna C. Roosevelt [2,17], Denise Schaan [18-20], Denise Gomes [21,22] and Cristiana Barreto [23,24]. The studies focus on the two most prominent pre-colonial societies: Santarem (AD 1200-1500) and Marajoara (AD 400-1300), of the Incised Punctate and Polychrome horizons respectively (Figures 3 & 4). Both cultures are located at the mouth of the Amazon River. While the Marajoara society developed on the island of Marajo on the Atlantic Ocean, the Santarem society occupied long dense settlements along the Tapajos River and Amazon River,

whose waters flow into the same ocean. These figurines were mostly obtained from collections made by residents of the region,

private collectors or from the few archaeological excavations carried out (Meggers and Evans 1957) [17].



Figure 1: Map of the stilt villages region and details of the stilts. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).



Figure 2: Example of stilts in the lakes of Baixada Maranhense. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

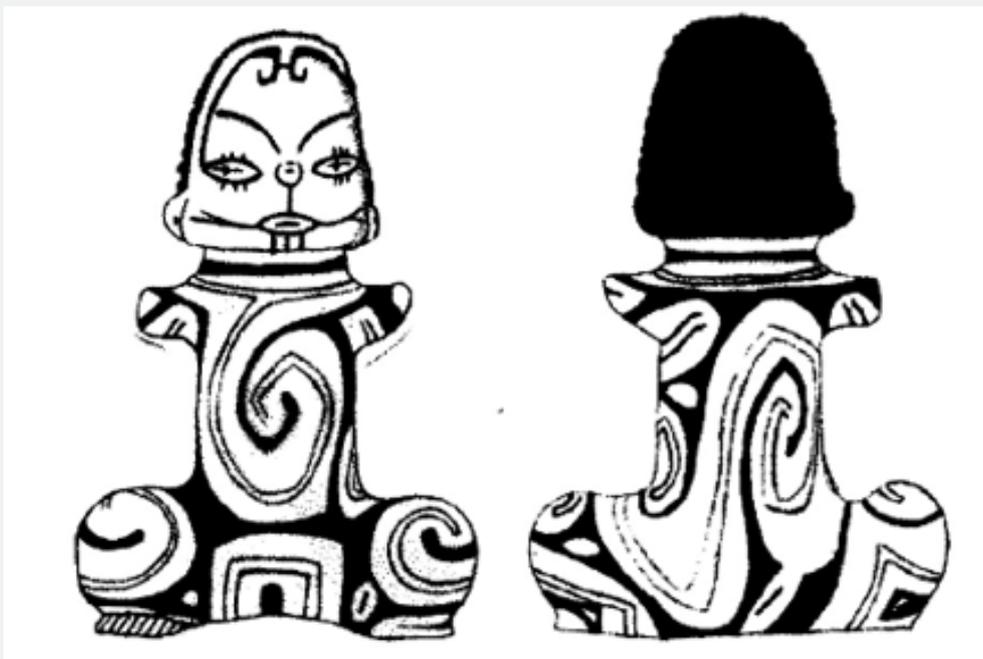


Figure 3: Marajoara figurine. In Schaan 2001b, p. 43.



Figure 4: Santarem female figurine. In Palmatary, 1960, p. 180.

According to Palmatary [14,15], the Santarem ceramic figurines are different from the Marajo in being more varied representing both males and females. The Santarem female figurines, however, are much more common than males and have open legs that form a crescent half-moon shaped base with pointed feet [16]. In Marajoara's the female figurines tend to be kneeling and the knees are prominent. In addition, although the bases like Santarem figurines form a half-moon when placed upside down, unlike the Santarem ones, Marajoara bases are more rounded. Palmatary draws attention to the tanga that some Santarem specimens have, the eyes formed by coffee-beans or by an incision, arms flexed on the abdomen, forming a gap with the trunk, and the fingers and toes and hands formed by incision, in addition to be painted red and black over white slip.

Roosevelt's [2,17] studies introduced the concept of indigenous social complexity to Amazonian societies, since that complexity was until then attributed to a brief, late prehistoric Andean intrusion into the region (Meggers and Evans 1957). For this author, the Marajoara and Santarem figurines can reveal important aspects of social organization and the ideology of past societies. She points out that the majority have ornaments and/or elaborated hairstyles, some are pregnant, many have their genitals and breasts on display, and some are "erotic" in that they have phallic body form. Most come from a burial context. According to the author, the iconographic aspects exalt the qualities of sexuality and fertility in societies of the cacique type or incipient states. Roosevelt [2] points out that the artists often elaborated the ceramic figurines by carefully depicting the anatomy of the genitalia representing the vulva and sometimes the clitoris; the emphasis on the latter could indicate some type of female ritual initiation. The author also brings innovation from ethnographic comparison, stating that artifacts similar to the typical Marajoara tangas were used by Shipibo-Conibo priestesses as public covers after carrying out clitoridectomy on elite girls in puberty initiation rituals [25]. Still using the ethnographic analogy, Roosevelt [2] discusses the use of figurines also as rattles in a shamanic context. The author shows that with the Marajoara female figurine rattles shaped like a phallus shaking them would mimic masturbation. She also points out iconographic evidence for a shamanic character of the Marajoara figurines: that they are sometimes show blowing or whistling, as shaman do when calling spirits.

For Schaan [18], studies on Amazonian ceramic figurines follow the worldwide discussion about their resignification. In other words, these artifacts would not only be examples of fertility and matriarchy, but would provide an agency for representing individuals within a context of social inequality. Thus, this author proposes that the Marajoara figurines "should be understood as symbolic objects related to contextual discourses on social identity and gender" (2001a: 3) linked to funerary rituals. In her 2001a work, Schaan studied 48 ceramic figurines belonging to the same collection of the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi and other catalogs and various publications. Of these, 39.58% are

exclusively female and 15 specimens (31.25%) had a broken head indicating termination rituals. Generally, these figurines have a half-moon base; many are painted with polychromy, and have exposed female genitalia. Some have punctuated breasts and navel and, as in the Arauquinoid specimens discussed earlier, have their arms flexed in the abdomen region forming an arch with a gap between the arm and body. Some are solid but others are hollow and have pebbles inside, so they are rattles.

In another study, Schaan [20] focuses on the adornments of Marajoara figurines, among them we can mention the facial modeling painting uniting the nose and the eyebrow in a T or Y-shaped protuberance and the hair arrangements that, usually combed back, show an elongated forehead. Some also wear the famous Marajoara tangas [19]. According to Schaan [18], the Marajoara figurines would be objects of power of negotiation of identity between the different groups, thus indicating that in Marajo there was a conflicting social inequality that influenced an ontology of the genre. Body painting would not be traits of fertility or matriarchy, but rather marks of individualities that indicated their social position and revealed their political position as a discourse within the status rivalries of the society.

The prominent social position for women hypothesized by Roosevelt and Schaan was also postulated by Gomes [21] in her analysis of Santarem figurines. Based on ethno-historical records, as in Betendorff's work, this author highlights the prominent female role in Tapajo society, which could have had a matrilineal organization. The author discusses the ornaments of these mostly female figurines, acknowledging the existence of male figurines as did Palmatary ones as well. Like Schaan [18], Gomes thinks that these artifacts represent individuals whose social position is indicated by the type of ornaments they use, just as the Bororo use of headdresses as a distinction of social status.

In a recent work, Barreto [23] analyzed 86 Marajo and Santarem ceramic figurines from various collections including those from Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, defining the corporeality represented in the artifacts as the main attribute. She finds that figurines are mostly female, are painted, have breasts and genitals indicated, and arms flexed over the abdomen forming an arch. She notes that most have been found at burials. Barreto [23] noticed that the head of some of these figurines are shown to be the part of the body with the greatest variability, often being painted and with representation of fronto-occipital cranial deformation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the ethnographic production of figurines in the lowlands of South America and, above all, with regard to the Karaja of Bananal Island in the Araguaia River. Karaja dolls were used for the perpetuation of the memory of the female artisan's activities and not only toys [26,27]. At the turn of the century, furthermore, Karaja people reported to ethnographer von Koenigswald that the figurines represented spirits of the dead [28]. Although not actually a tributary of the Amazon because it sheds into the Tocantins that comes out at

Marajo Island, the Araguaia river is no less a part of the Greater Amazon than Marajo Island is. Thus, like the cultures of Santarem and Marajoara, the Karajá people are also located in the lowlands of eastern South America.

The stilt villages (estearias in Portuguese) occur in Maranhão state in northwest Brazil (the Baixada Maranhense). It is a microregion west and southeast of the coastal island of Maranhão, an area of approximately 20,000 km² inside of Legal Amazon, with more than 600 thousand inhabitants. The pile dwellings are located throughout regions characterized by a water system of rivers, flooding fields and lakes in a seasonal tropical climate. The stilt villages figurines comprise a collection of 74 specimens from six archaeological sites (Armíndio, Cabeludo, Boca do Rio, Caboclo, Lago do Souza and Formoso) and those located in the ancient National Museum at Rio de Janeiro destroyed by fire in 2018. This collection was formed by several archaeological campaigns to map the sites that took place between the years 2014 and 2019 in the Turiaçu and Pindaré-Mearim basins.

The methodology employed to map these sites was the systematic collection of the artifacts accumulated around each stilt using georeferencing by GPS. As each stilt was mapped, the artifacts were then collected. With this method, a wide sampling of the archaeological material was obtained, which in addition to figurines is composed of 70 types of ceramic vessel shapes. In addition to the figurines, the vessels to serve, cook food, store liquids, show that these sites were permanent homes and not camps as pointed out by Simões & Araújo Costa [29].

Although these artifacts were not obtained from stratigraphic excavations, wood posts where the artifacts were collected at the sites in questions have closely clustered radiocarbon dates that indicate integral occupations of only two hundred years. There is control of the origin and the exact location on the site plan registration, which can allow for comparative analysis between archaeological sites, in terms of the differences and similarities of the variability of types of artifact. The provenience of artifacts in the stilt villages, in any case, is much more precise than of the majority collections of figurines studied by the various researchers presented in this article, which has not precluded analysis.

It should also be noted that this is the first time that the hitherto-unknown Maranhão figurines have been systematically studied, making it possible to use them to contribute to new information for understanding of indigenous Amazonian culture in an area that is still little explored archaeologically. As a study methodology, the focus is on the ethnological concept of the lowlands of South America focused on the manufacture of bodies [30] and the “social skin” defined by Turner [31]. The visual arts, in this sense, are a way of ordering ritual practices. Seeger et al. [30] consider corporality a symbolic language in which “the notion of person and a consideration of the place of the human body in the view that indigenous societies make of themselves are basic paths for an adequate understanding of the social

organization and cosmologies of these societies”. In this sense, social identities, as well as the diverse cultural manifestations of indigenous societies, such as myths, ceremonies, ancestry, are built on their bodies.

The bodies are unstable, transformational, assembled, and are manufactured. The body in this context is constituted as a tangible diversity of material and immaterial life in which the physical body “is not the totality of the body; nor the body, the totality of the person” [30]. The body is, therefore, the place of social experience. The body acquires several semantic meanings characterized by an ontology called multinaturalism or perspectivism by Viveiros de Castro [32] in which “the world is inhabited by different kinds of subjects or people, human and non-human, who apprehend it according to points different points of view”. Thus, corporality implies the cosmological fluidity of beings depending on the agency to which they are submitted, whether they are people, animals, supernatural beings or things. Regarding the application of ethnological theories to archeology, archaeological materials, such as vessels and ceramic figurines themselves, can be interpreted as human or animal bodies, since many of them have clear features of the physical corporeality of these beings and some are even endowed with soul and conscience and can be managed as people [33]. In this interpretation, the body is the place of lived experience, which is shared by the group, generating social identities, because “today, the body as a site of lived experience, a social body, and site of embodied agency, is replacing prior static conceptions of an archeology of the body as a public, legible surface” [5].

As the most current focus on figurines is ontologies of the body, a formal analysis that invests in its structure seems to be the most appropriate. As for as the formal analysis, it is emphasized that the figurines that offer sufficient attributes for the study of the artefactual variability will be described. Only those diagnostic elements of greater prominence will be highlighted in this work. Based on the discussion on the archeology of the body, the description will include

- i. The techno-stylistic variability of each set identifiable by the researcher, defined as anthropomorphics, anthropozoomorphics and zoomorphics;
- ii. The type of manufacture, alluding to the type of firing, if coiled, smoothed or modelled, whether hollow or compact;
- iii. Techno-typological characteristics such as the types of tempers, if there is an incision and excision or painting;
- iv. Photographs of the front and when possible (because of the integrity of the pieces) of the back and profile will be presented in the case of more representative copies.

Regarding sex, the features of the constitution of biological sexual organs were observed in a binary way, that is, male and female genitalia, i.e., penis and vulva. With regard to discussions on gender, understood as a historical-social construction, we

use the concept defined by Butto Fiore [34] in which “physical characteristics include and exceed sex and adding elements such as physical appearance, posture, gestures, dress modes and ornamentation, generating an individual social role but emergent from interaction with other individuals.

The last phase of the methodology was the interpretation of the data in the sense of seeking a cultural sense within the framework of a specific culture, in this case, that of the people of the stilt villages. Finally, the result will be a narrative text that will help to understand the cosmological context of the function and social use of these artifacts.

Results

The surveyed sites that underwent intervention from surface collection were Armíndio (ARM), Boca do Rio (BR), Cabeludo (CBL) and Caboclo (CAB) in the watershed of the Turiçu River, radiocarbon-dated between 800 and 1000 AD, totaling 74 figurines. In order to understand the artifactual attributes, the basic typological classification of the set corresponds to a division into three categories, namely: anthropomorphic (62), anthropozoomorphic (4) and zoomorphic figurines (8) (Figures 5-8) (Tables 1 & 2).



Figure 5: Stilt villages' anthropomorphic figurines. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).



Figure 6: Stilt villages' anthropozoomorphic figurines. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).



Figure 7: Stilt villages' zoomorphic figurines. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

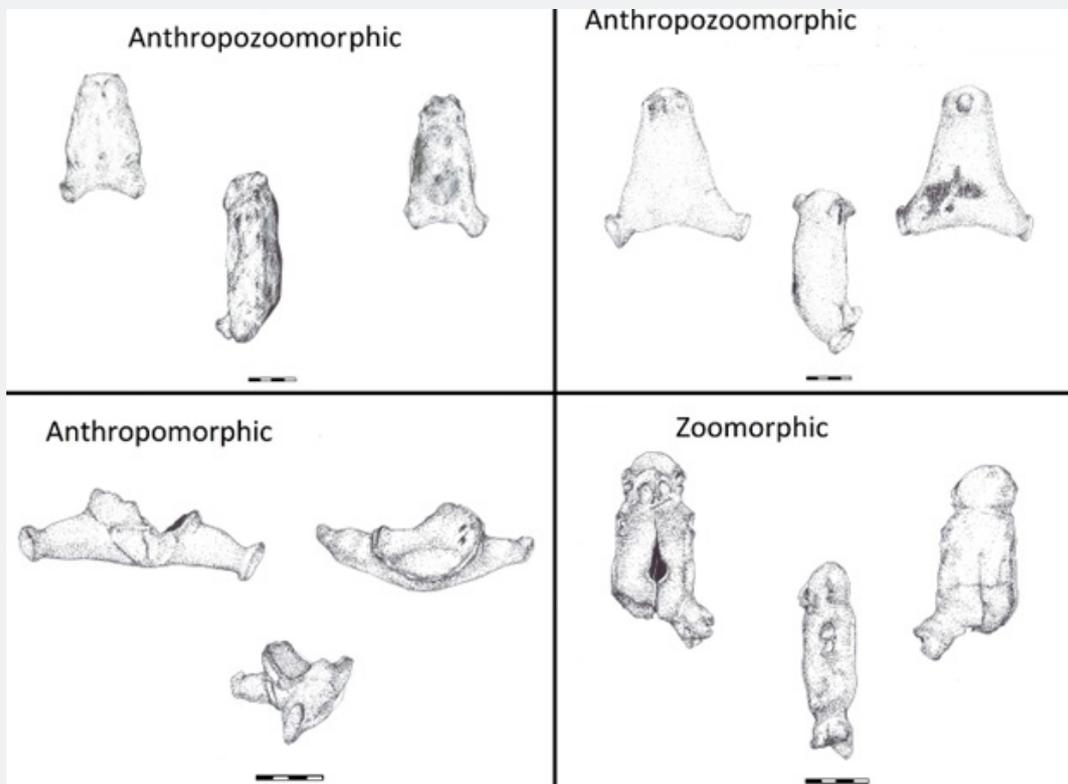


Figure 8: Stilt villages draws specimens. Draws by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

Table 1: Figurine formal analysis of principal specimens by groups.

Typological classification	Site acronyms and registration number
Anthropomorphic figurines	ARM 62, ARM 63, ARM 64, ARM 142, ARM 192, ARM 199, ARM 273, ARM 274, ARM 199, ARM 551, ARM 552, ARM 546, ARM 547, ARM 548, ARM 549, ARM 551, ARM 552, ARM 692, ARM 790, ARM 821, ARM 1.098, ARM 1.368, ARM1 131, ARM 1.370, ARM 1. 371, ARM 1.372, ARM1 373, ARM 1. 374, ARM 1.375, ARM 1.376, ARM 1. 377, ARM 1.378, ARM 1.382, ARM 1. 383, ARM 1.384, ARM 1.408, ARM 1. 454, ARM 1.455, ARM 1.546, ARM 1. 458, ARM 1.459, BR 37, BR 57, BR 58, BR 59, BR1 93, BR1 096, BR 1.097, BR 1.098, BR1.101, CBL 104, CBL 147, CBL 791, CAB 01, CAB 02, CAB 03, SOU 010, MN 02, MN 03, MN 04, MN 05, FOR 601
Anthropomorphic figurines	ARM 60, ARM 64, ARM 1.407, MN 01
Zoomorphic figurines	ARM 61, ARM 271, ARM 1.099, ARM 1. 454, BR 055, BR 056, CBL 15, MN 06

Table 2: Anthropomorphic figurines, Anthropozoomorphic figurines, Zoomorphic figurines.

Anthropomorphic figurines
ARM 62. Fragmented female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed and reduction firing. She has a large vulva figured by a slit and both legs spread with the figuration of the feet without the toes.
ARM 376. Fragmented female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing and without the presence of the head. The trunk is bulky with the presence of the navel shaped in depression and the incised vagina. The base is half-moon in which the legs are open, but there is only the left, whose foot is delimited with the presence of the incised toes.
ARM 546. Female tabular figurine whole coiled and modelled, hollow, smoothed, with grog temper, with zigzag incisions depicting the body that may represent scarifications or tattoos. On each side of the head there is a hollow hole, but there is no representation of the eyes, nose and mouth. The genitalia is represented by a slit-shaped incision. The left leg, short, is represented, but without the foot.
ARM 821. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, with the presence of only the head, which is rounded, with modelled incised eyes in the shape of coffee beans, incised mouth and with the eyebrows that come together and join the nose to form a T.
ARM 1.372. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, reducing firing, formed only by the head, which is rounded, the eyes are incised and the nose has two stipples, the eyebrows join forming an arc across the face, but do not attach to the nose, the modelled right ear is present.
ARM 1.375. Fragmented female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, without the head. The trunk is bulky with the figuration of the navel modelled in depression and it seems to indicate pregnancy, the vagina is represented by a slit-shaped incision with a large vulva, the anus is also represented. The arms are flexed in the belly not forming a gap between the trunk, the fingers of the hand are represented in the form of an incision. The specimen is sitting in the shape of a half moon, the legs and feet are present, but the fingers are not.
ARM 1.377. Fragmented female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, without the presence of the head. The trunk is phallic and with the presence of the navel modelled in depression without the genitalia. The arms are flexed in the belly, not forming a gap with the trunk. The base is semi-lunar in which the legs are open, the feet are delimited, but there is no presence of the toes.
ARM 1.459. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, formed only by the head, which is rounded, has modelled and incised eyes, modelled nose without the presence of punctates due to a break and modelled and incised mouth. There is a carinated body on the outside indicating the posterior junction of the head to the body showing that they were made separately.
ARM 692. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled male, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, with the figuration only of the head, which is flattened and formed by incised eyes and mouth and the eyebrows that come together with the nose to form a T. From the inside, the shape of the model that joins the head to the body indicate that the head was made separately and then added to the body. The presence of a labret on the chin indicates the male gender.
ARM 57. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction burning, with the presence of only the head, which is flattened, has modelled eyebrows, modelled and punctate eyes, nostrils with two punctates, modelled and incised mouth. The junction of the eyebrow with the nose forms a T.
ARM 58. Fragmented figurine coiled and modelled, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, with the presence of only the head, which is flattened, has modelled eyebrows, modelled and punctated eyes, and nostrils with two punctates, modelled and incised mouth. The junction of the eyebrow with the nose forms a T.
CBL 104. Fragmented female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, with clay ball inside it, it has only the head, which is rounded, whose eyes are applied and modeled, the nose is modelled without the presence from the nostrils, the mouth is incised and shaped and holes in the ears indicating that the earrings could be put on. It has a neck and behind the head a protruding pattern that could represent a bun or an adornment arrangement.
CBL 147. Female figurine whole, coiled and modelled, hollow, with grog temper, smoothed, with flattened head, depressed eye cavity in this case indicating detachment of the model from the eyes of the piece, nose formed by two dots, small incised mouth; it seemed to have an adornment on its head, perhaps a tiara. The trunk is bulky and the specimen has breasts, navel and incised vagina. The arms are flexed over the abdomen, not forming a gap with the trunk, the hands stand out, but the fingers were not represented; his posture is seated with legs spread, but does not form a semilunar base, and his feet were not represented. There are clay balls inside it, indicating it is a rattle.

Anthropozoomorphic figurines
ARM 60. Whole figurine coiled and modelled, hollow and with clay balls inside it as a rattle, with grog temper, smoothed, rounded head representing an owl with depressed eye cavity, modelled nose and ears and two lateral holes in the neck region, which indicates that could be suspended. In the trunk, the presence of a navel modelled in depression stands out. The arms are flexed over the belly and there is no gap between the trunk and the upper limbs, the fingers are represented by incisions. The base of the piece is shaped like a half moon and the legs are open with the figuration of the feet, but without the toes.
ARM 64. Whole female figurine coiled and modelled grog temper and smoothed. It represents an owl whose head has modelled eyes applied, the eyebrows come together and join the modelled nose to form a T. Behind the head there is a modelled protruding hollow hole that indicates that the artifact could be used suspended. It has a phallic shape and inside it there are small clay stones characterizing it as a rattle. The legs are spread out forming a half moon position with short legs and human feet without the figuration of the toes.
ARM 1.299. Fragmented figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, rounded head with eyebrows that come together the nose to form a T. There are two orifices above the head indicating its suspension use.
ARM1 454. Fragmented figurine, coiled and modelled, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, rounded head with eyebrows that come together the nose to form a T. There are balls inside it being a rattle.
ARM 1.407. Whole female figurine, coiled and modelled, hollow with clay balls inside it figuring a rattle, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, rounded head in the shape of an owl, has modeled eyes applied, ears with holes where they could be hanging the earrings, eyebrows come together the nose to form a T. Behind the head there is a protruding pattern that could represent a bun or an adornment arrangement. There is a thick U-shaped line painted red. There is a hole in each side of the neck. The arms are semi-curved positioned next to the S-shaped trunk. The trunk is phallic and stands out for the presence of the navel and the incised genitalia figuring the vulva. The base is semi-lunar, the legs are open, the feet are delimited, but there are no toes.
CBL 15. Fragmented, coiled and modelled figurine, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, with rounded head, ears modelled, modeled nose applied and without orifices and incised mouth. She seems to be wearing a tiara. The face looks like that of a monkey. There is a hole in the neck on each side. It has only the left arm that is attached to the body and then reaches the abdomen, also showing a curved monkey tail. The trunk is bulky and stands out due to the presence of the prominent and incised navel, sex was not represented.
Zoomorphic figurines
ARM 61. Fragmented, coiled and modelled figurine, hollow, smoothed, grog temper, reduction firing, figuring a monkey whose head is rounded, has a depressed eye cavity, the nose is formed by two punctates and the ears are represented. The trunk is characterized by a hole in the navel region. The arms were modelled and detached from the piece indicating that they were placed on the body after making the trunk. There is only the leg and the left foot of the specimen, the foot has three patterned toes.
ARM 1.271. Fragmented coiled and modelled, figurine, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, only with the figuration of the modelled base that is sitting and is semi-lunar, there is the presence of the feet and three modelled fingers that resemble those of an amphibian, especially those of the frog.
ARM 1.454. . Fragmented coiled and modelled, figurine, grog temper, smoothed, reduction firing, figuring a owl rounded head with eyebrows that come together the nose to form a T.

Discussion

The literature review about the Amazonian figurines and the techno-typological and techno-stylistic analysis of these artifacts presented in this article indicate a uniform and standardized production of figurines in which the body does appear to have been the place of individual social experimentation. The collection of these artifacts seems to reveal a new culture in the lowlands of South America, of which the main artefactual characteristics are related to both the Marajoara culture of the Polychrome Tradition of the Amazon and the Incised-Punctate Horizon. The set of iconographic expressions of the first tradition, among them:

- i. The iconographic indication that they are phallic and hollow and filled with pellets or stones fits a function as rattles;
- ii. They are uniform and standardized and less gestural and realistic than the Santarem examples (Gomes, 2010);
- iii. Absence of large figurines, especially male ones;
- iv. The bases are more rounded than pointed, as suggested by Palmatary [15];
- v. The arms are flexed over the abdomen and do not have

the typical gap between them and the trunk, as often occur in the Santarem figurines;

- vi. Indication of pregnancy;
- vii. The T-shape that joins the eyebrows and the nose, common among Marajoara figurines but absent in the Santarem specimens (Schaan, 2007);
- viii. The age of Maranhão figurines, which is the same as the middle-to-late dates of Marajoara and two hundred years or earlier than the Santarem culture.

This result associating the stilt villages with a variation of the Polychrome Tradition of the Amazon was already noted by Navarro [9,10] when he indicated the oblong shapes of stilt villages reminiscent of those of Marajo [17]. Besides, Navarro [9] pointed out that the tricolor designs have the meandering character and the combination of narrow and wide lines, both typical of Marajoara, and the decorated places are very similar.

However, the stilt village figurines have peculiar characteristics in terms of techno-typological aspects, such as the eyes applied in the form of a button, the recurrence of the zoomorphic owl face and the calves deformed by the use of

body adornments. Attention is drawn to the variability of these different modes of body fabrication, which can be deformed, metamorphosed, scarified or even painted. Therefore, these characteristics make these figurines an unprecedented way of representing the body in the eastern portion of the Amazon. The elements of body figuration that resemble the peoples of the Marajoara phase seem to belong to a set of shared sociability practices.

As highlighted by Barreto [23], stylistic flows are the result of these networks of spheres of social interaction. Probably, both the peoples of the Marajoara phase and those of the stilt villages were inserted in common sociability networks, since they also shared objects made of green stones, such as the *muraquitãs*. An example of this stylistic flow could be the modeled in the form of a T, which appears in the region of the eyebrow and nose of

human figures, recurrent in the Marajoara funerary urns and in some examples of the stilt village. According to Mikkola (2020), the T would be the facial disc of the *Pulsatrix perspicillata* specie, or *murucututu*, one of the largest birds of prey in the Amazon. Its main body characteristic compared to other species of owls is the absence of large ears (Figures 9a, b, c). It is a large owl, predator of nocturnal habits, according to this researcher. It is observed that, in this type of figurine, the figuration of the ears is also absent [11]. Thus, this similarity between the material culture of both regions refers to the existing social interactions between these two Amerindian peoples. In addition, some specimens, such as those shown in the CBL 104 and ARM 1.407 figurines, have a bun on the back of the head that is similar to that worn by individuals depicted in Maracá funerary urns (Meggers & Evans, 1957) (Figure 9d).

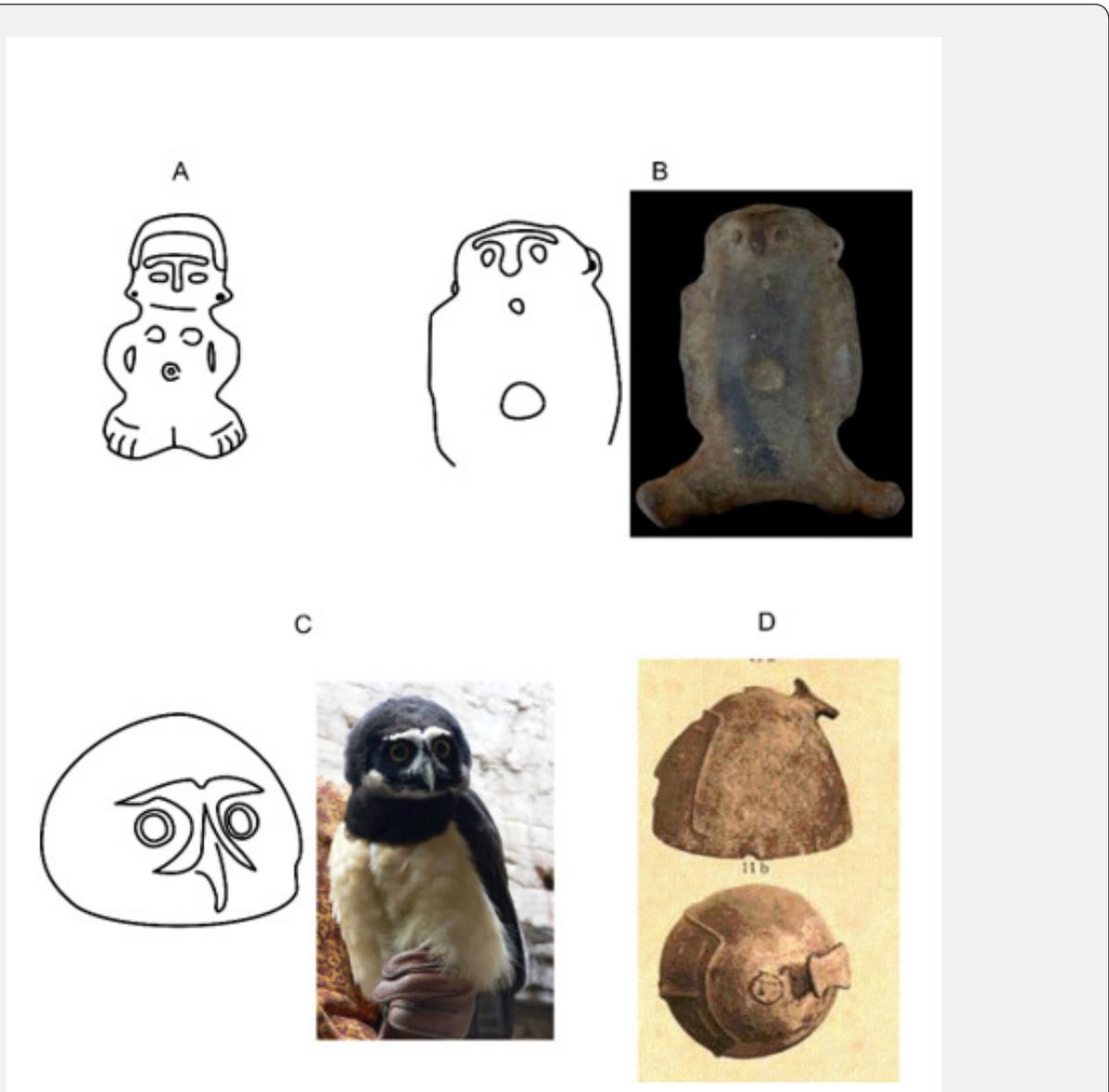


Figure 9: Figurines with the facial T disc and bun in the back. Draws and photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

Although later, the figuration of the Maracá urns may indicate that the stilt village peoples participated in broader stylistic flows in the lower Amazon. On the other hand, the specimen CBL

147 appears to have a body deformation between the nose and the lip, indicating a possible cleft lip type (Figure 10).

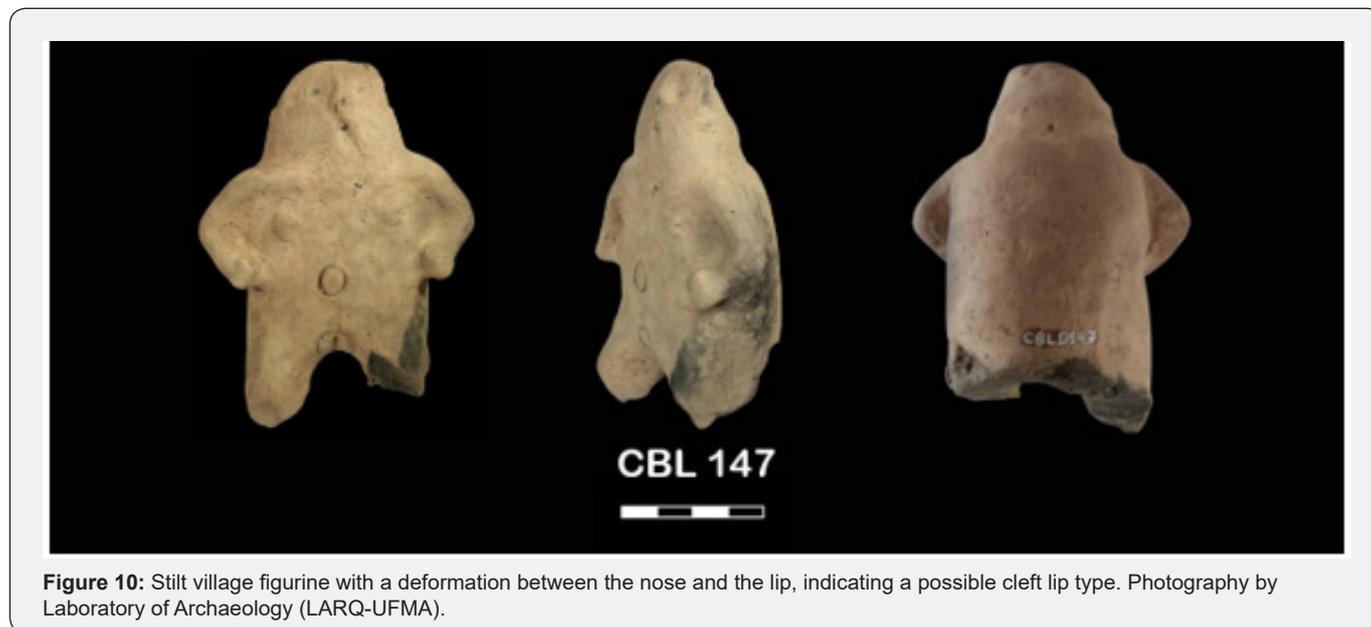


Figure 10: Stilt village figurine with a deformation between the nose and the lip, indicating a possible cleft lip type. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

In Table 3, it can be noted that most of the figurines analyzed in this article are anthropomorphic, followed by anthropozoomorph and zoomorphic types. The formal analysis made it possible to make the following comparisons: the anthropomorphic figurines represent 83.7% of the collection, generally featuring women with the figuration of sex, some of

which are rattles. The anthropozoomorphic figurines correspond to 5.4% of the specimens and generally show the human being with the head of an owl; and they are rattles and do not always bring the representation of sex. The zoomorphic specimens correspond to 10.8% of the collection and stand out for their figures of owl and monkey (see Figure 9).

Table 3: it can be noted that most of the figurines analyzed in this article are anthropomorphic, followed by anthropozoomorph and zoomorphic types.

Archaeological Site	Amount in number and %			Total per site in number	Total in %
	Anthropomorphic figurines in number and %	Anthropozoomorphic figurines in number and %	Zoomorphic figurines in number and %		
Armíndio	41	3	4	48	64,86%
Boca do Rio	9	-	2	11	14,86%
Cabeludo	3	-	1	4	5,4%
Caboclo	3	-	-	3	4,05%
Lago do Souza	1	-	-	1	1,35%
National Museum	4	1	1	6	8,1%
Formoso	1	-	-	1	1,35%
	62 - 83,7%	4 - 5,4%	8 - 10,8%	74	100%

This analysis provided a glimpse of four types of body fabrication: 1) individualized human figuration; 2) human figuration with body painting, scarifications or tattoos and body deformations on the legs due to the use of garter-type adornments; 3) transmutational figuration of the body, evidenced by the bodily hybridity between human beings and animals, and the agentive capacity of the rattle figurines; and 4) zoomorphic figurations.

Regarding the first type, the figurines with human figuration

that do not refer to metamorphic and agentive characteristics seem to represent individualized beings in the stilt villages society, as also noted by Barreto [23] and Schaan [18], based on the Marajoara figurines. On the other hand, the copy FOR (601) presents abstract body painting in black, which can refer to social status, such as belonging to certain clans, types of rituals or even belonging to social groups. [18] (Müller, 2000) (Figure 11). This way of representing the body also refers to a visual communication system that evidences its socialization in cultural

practices of a certain collectivity (Vidal, 2000b). In relation to the second group, attention is drawn to some specimens with an intentional deformation of the legs, possibly due to the use of garters (Figure 12). From the ethnographic comparison, during menarche rituals among the Kalapalo, a Karib group, the girls have their tendons tied below the knee, causing the increase in

leg volume. Bulbs are then formed on their calves during puberty, provoking a pleasant aesthetic for this indigenous group [35]. Thus, the calves are showier, exactly as can be seen in some examples of figurines studied in this article, namely ARM 1.377, ARM 552, ARM 1.455, ARM 1.098 and CAB 02.

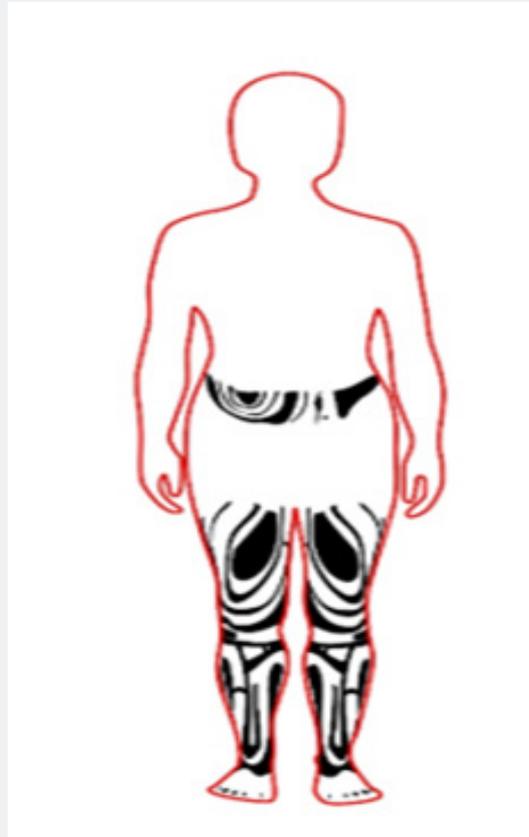


Figure 11: Stilt village figurine with abstract body painting in black. Draw by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

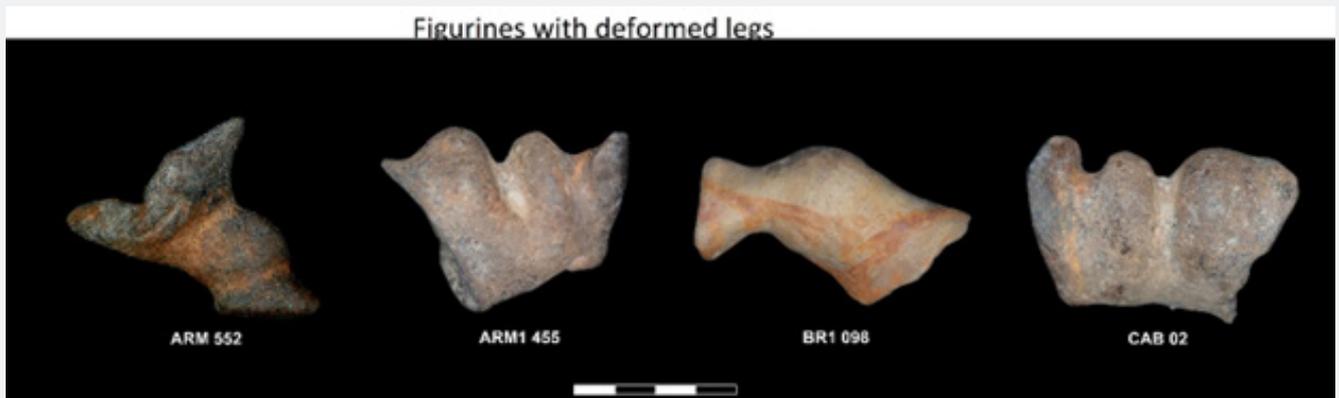


Figure 12: Deformation in the leg of some stilt villages figurines. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA)..

However, in the studied collection, the anthropomorphic figurines that present a transmutational perspective of the body stand out. These are the rattle figurines, such as the BR 58, CBL 104, CBL 147 and ARM 546 ones, and those in which there is a clear association in the manufacture of hybrid bodies of human beings and animals, such as the ARM 60, ARM 64, ARM 1.407 and CAB 151. This way of figuring the body in societies Amazonian communities is constructivist, as Santos Granero [33] pointed out. In this sense, possibly, the meaning of the set of these figurines is the shamanic, as pointed out by Roosevelt [2], Gomes [21], Schaan [18,19] and Barreto [23,24] for the Amazonian statuettes in general. Therefore, shamanism is a "... coherent system of religious beliefs and practices, which tries to organize and explain the interrelationships between the cosmos, the naturalization and the human being" (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1988, p. 23).

The shaman, in this context, is the one who has a sensitive knowledge of human actions on nature, such as healers and rezadeiras who, based on mythological traditions, act on the cosmos through dances, songs and collective meetings, moments in which this narrative consecrated and perpetuated in the social memory of the group. Shamanistic practices with figurines were recorded by Basso (1973), among the Karib and Arawak groups; for the same groups, Carneiro (1982) and Gregor (1977) ethnographic the use of figurines for the restoration of the patient's health. Stahl [36] attributes the hybridity of humans and animals in the shamanic figurines to the rituals with the use

of hallucinogenic substances that he witnessed in South America, since "... the figurines may have served as mundane abodes for summoned spirits within the context of an analogous prehistoric religion" [36].

Zerries [37] points out that the rattle has always been the most important shamanic instrument in the cultures of the low lands of non-Andean South America, since "the noise of little rocks or seeds inside is interpreted as the voice of the spirits and the little rocks and itself as its manifestation". Ethnographically, the rattles made from a gourd and is associated with a musical instrument in which, in the case of the Xikrin, it reveals the social cohesion of the indigenous group, one that is "round like the universe, like circular villages, like the circle of men sitting on the council at night, in the middle of the courtyard, pointing in its verticality towards the sky, home of the ancients in primordial times and home of birds, created and envied by terrestrial humanity (Vidal 2000: 130). Figurines have the elongated shape of a gourd and may well be an allusion to these artifacts.

The rattle as an agency can, therefore, affect social reproduction, which, in turn, is manufactured in the body of a pregnant woman through its round shape, that is, the gourd. Thus, the rattle clay balls inside it can represent the women fecundation [2]. The ARM 1.376 figurine appears to be pregnant, with its hands on its belly. It is worth noting here the fluid energy of pregnancy [38] since the anus portrayed in this specimen, as well as the mouth, would be an orifice or body tube through which substances can enter and leave, a channel of synesthetic energy as postulated by Hugh Jones [39].

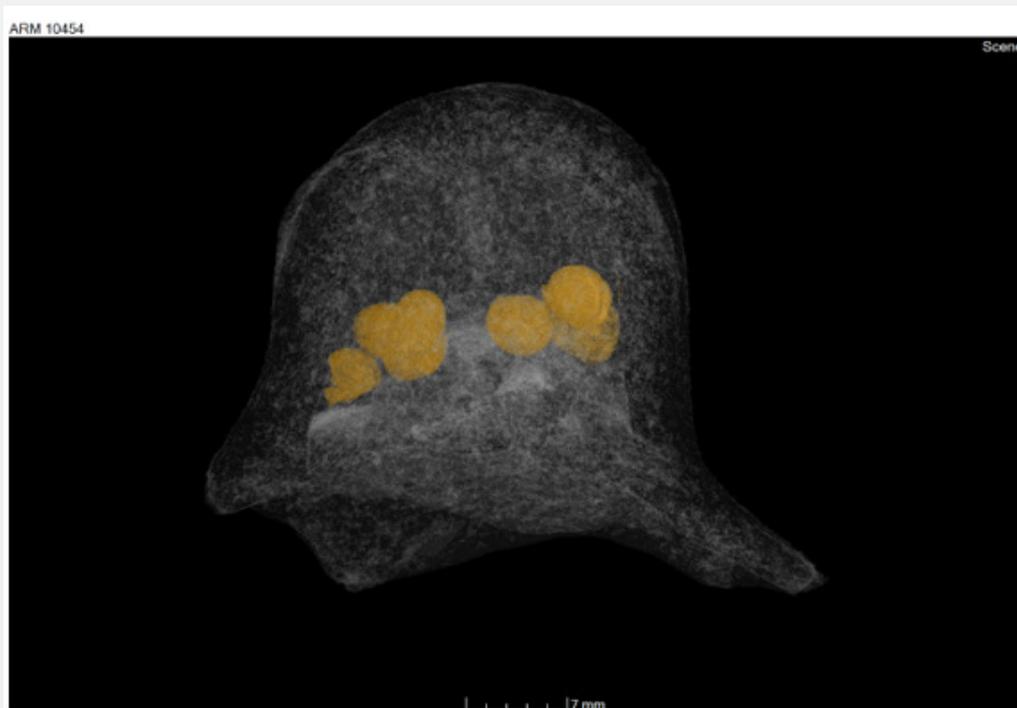


Figure 13: RAMAN image from the head of a zoomorphic figurine. Photography by Laboratory of Archaeology (LARQ-UFMA).

In an analysis of the RAMAN scanning microscope, it was possible to notice that inside the owl figurine of the ARM1 454 specimen; seven small clay lumps were placed inside its head (Figure 13). It is very interesting was the way the artifact was made. According to the technology used, it would be evident that the placement of the lumps on the head of the specimen would have been carried out through the base of the head, which would later be sealed with the modelled clay. However, RAMAN showed that the lumps were introduced through the mouth, after the base of the head was closed by clay. Why the mouth? It is understood that this process did not obey the expected technological process, but the cognitive one whose mouth is the maximum expression of shamanic power, because the healing power is given by speech. About the shamans in Maranhão, D'Évreux [40] reported, "His instrument is only the voice, so strange to those who are not used to it". The rattle, therefore, is part of the shamanic paraphernalia because it is capable of emitting sound, a form of communication between the different worlds in which the shaman operates. These sound instruments are present in much of the ethno-historical records of the colonial period in the Maranhão region, as in the works of Daniel [41], D'Abbeville [42] and D'Évreux [40] and were also studied by anthropologists the beginning of the 20th century [43].

As for the zoomorphic aspect of the figurines, the owl is an auxiliary animal to shamans, as it allows them to perform what Reichel-Dolmatoff (1988) calls "shamanic flight". The owl, in this context, would be the animal that helps shamans in their flight by helping with the disconnection of the spirit from the human body. For the Warao, for example, who still live on stilts in the Orinoco delta in Venezuela, the rattles have spiritual forces and their human forms resemble the ancestral shaman who visited the sky in the form of bird and the Great Anaconda Spirit of these water peoples was endowed with this instrument (Wilbert 1963).

In addition, the nocturnal aspect of this bird stands out. According to Schaan [20], owls with feminine features are represented in funerary urns, associating these birds, therefore, with the world of the dead. For Roosevelt [17], the birds of prey represented in secondary burials would be associated with the skeletal process of decay, since these animals do so in nature in relation to their prey, a necessary action for the dead soul to rest. Finally, the owls act as a messenger animal, since it stands out for its great ability to see, typical shamanic characteristics. The ARM 064 figurine draws attention due to the owl's large round applied eyes, as if it were lurking.

With regard to gender discussions, the people of the stilt villages seem to have differentiated it by binary sex markers in identifying figurines as the biological female sex. Such cultural markers are those present in the body itself [44]. However, there are also some specimens without the figuration of the genitalia, which indicates that in the case of these figurines the construction of the genre did not always occur through biological sex. Because they are fragmented, it becomes difficult to infer their meaning,

since gender could be shaped in other body features than genitals.

Curiously, the Armíndio set of figurines, which make up almost 65% of the studied collection, is the collection that most resembles the artifacts of the Polychrome Tradition of the Amazon. Since the systematic collection at all sites followed the same methodology and which resulted in an approximate number of pieces, we suggest that either this village was a center for producing and distributing of figurines or in this village there was a greater amount of rituals with the use of these artifacts.

The formal analysis made it possible to make the following generalizations: the anthropomorphic figurines represent 83.7% of the collection and generally represent women with a clear figuration of the genitalia and some of which look pregnant. The anthropozoomorphic figurines correspond to 5.4% of the specimens and show, in general, the human being with an owl head, and are rattles. Among the few cases of zoomorphic specimens, which correspond to 10.8% of the collection, there is again a specimen with an owl head and a monkey figurine with a hole in the navel region, which, according to Navarro et al. [45] could be a night monkey (*Aotus infulatus*).

The figurines of the stilt villages seem to be associated with two specific patterns: 1. The pattern of the gestures of the anthropomorphic figurines does not seem to evoke personified individuals, but rites of passage associated with the transformation of the woman's body such as menstruation and childbirth. The recurrence of figuration of the vulva and protruding bellies indicating pregnancy corroborates this interpretation. If individuals were intended, there would be a much more diverse group of representations. In addition, the predominance of females may indicate a society that is more female than male oriented. 2. The anthropozoomorphic and zoomorphic figurines possibly allude to the physical transformation of the body related to shamanistic activities in which the human being needs to change the shape of the body to access worlds inhabited by other types of non-human beings. The fact that some are also rattles fits with patterns of shamanism in the ethnographic societies since sound is an element of communication for beings that inhabit different worlds.

Roosevelt [2] pointed out that the vulvas emphasized in the female figurines could have been elements in use in rituals of female puberty. Female initiation rites are especially prominent among the Shipibo ethnographic culture [46]. The ethnographic observations among the Shipibo-Conibo show that there are women shaman [47], and an account by a Shipibo woman states that those rites, which included clitoridectomy, were conducted by women shaman [25]. As far as the relation to the female bodily transformations that could compose this puberty ritual, some specimens with a deformation in the leg that seems intentional draw attention (Figure 6). During the menarche rituals among the Kalapalo, a Karib group, the girls in the tied tendons below the knee causing their increase in volume causing a pleasant

aesthetic for these indigenous people [35]. Thus, the legs become showier, exactly as can be seen in several specimens of figurines studied in this article. All the figurines, with the exception of one, are feminine, which may indicate that their symbolism belongs to the universe of the woman, in this case of those participating in first-menstruation rituals, being the women themselves who went through this process.

In both contexts the presence of female shamans seems to be determinant as pointed out by Palmatary [15], Correa [16], Roosevelt [2], Gomes [21] and Schaan [18] for Amazonian figurines in general. Regarding the monkey figurine, for example, among the Karijona, a Karib group from Colombia, revenge rituals were carried out which consisted of filling the bodies of monkeys already dead with tobacco that was later smoked by the navel [48]. In addition, the night monkey has conspicuous eyes, that is, they see very well in the darkness. Also, in Amazonian cosmology, females and their spirits are often associated with the night, while males are more commonly associated with the sun and daytime [49,50].

Shamanism is a “coherent system of religious practices and practices, which tries to organize and explain the interrelationships between the cosmos, naturalization and humans (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1988: 23). The shaman, in this context, is the one who has a sensitive knowledge of human actions on nature, like the healers and prayers who, based on mythological traditions, act on the cosmos through dances, songs and collective meetings in which this narrative is enshrined and is perpetuated in the social memory of the group [51-57].

Conclusion

This article analyzed, for the first time in the archaeological literature of the lowlands of South America, an unprecedented analysis of the figurines of the Eastern Amazon stilt villages. The techno-typological analysis and the ways of making the bodies of the figurines of the people of the Amazonian stilt villages revealed a long history, which begins at the beginning of the Christian era and extends to the year 1000. From a perspective regional archaeological site, despite the similarity with the way of figuring figurines with the peoples of the Marajoara phase, those of the stilts seem to constitute a more local and proper style. In this sense, some shared traits, such as the T-shaped pattern on the forehead of some examples, reveal movements of stylistic flows that were operating between these groups. Such traits were possibly not restricted to the island of Marajó and seem to be also present in a sphere of social interaction between several indigenous peoples who occupied the lower Amazon. The stilt villages sites seem to comprise a homogeneous society from a cultural point of view and with a well-defined identity. The techno-typological and stylistic elements presented, such as the presence of ground shard anti-plastic in all the specimens studied, ratify this cultural unity, as Navarro has been saying [9,10].

Thus, the way of manufacturing the body among the peoples of the stilt village is in line with the Amazonian cosmological ontology, which falls on Amerindian perspectivism and animism. Bodies can be painted, intentionally deformed or even metamorphosed. In this sense, they are manufactured according to the agency of the plurality of beings that act in the cosmos, being them human, non-human, hybrids and, apparently, also supernatural, revealing the importance of shamanism.

The most figurines collection of LARQ-UFMA is anthropomorphic. These specimens are individualized beings, like the women who possibly used garter-type adornments to deform their calves. As described by the ethnographic comparison, Karib women practiced this bodily deformation in puberty rituals. The anthropozoomorphic figurines seem to show processes of body metamorphosis. The rattle figurines may have been used in shamanic healing rituals, as well as the ethnographic analogy. Sound seems to have had an important agentive power.

The hybrid figurines, with human and non-human traits, they can also evidence the transmutational ways of figuring the body of different beings that populated different worlds, which can allude to the shaman's own bodily transformation to reach these spheres through the use of hallucinogens. Finally, zoomorphic figurines can also belong to shamanic ritual paraphernalia, since animals are the shamans' helpers in their different tangible worlds. The preference for the figuration of owls, a nocturnal animal with great vision capacity, is an allusion to this bodily metaphor that the human being acquires during shamanism rituals.

Finally, the artefactual variability composed by the statuettes of the people of the stilt villages seems to represent the identity traces that were manufactured in the body, the place of social experience. In this sense, the statuettes legitimize the history of collective memories of a social group through the body socially manufactured.

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Conflict of Interest

Permits were not required for this work. No financial conflicts of interest exist. Data Availability Statement. This is the first time that the data are published.

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