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Sensitive Places

Akaa kii Kizai

Wapichannao Cultural Heritage Project

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Instead, it is hoped that this present document forms the foundation and beginning of a continued and much extended documentation of *Akaa kii Kizai* in the *Wapichan wiizi*.

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The *Akaa kii Kizai* (sensitive sites) dotted throughout the *Wapichan Wiizi* (territory) form an interconnected and interdependent matrix that acts as the very fabric that *Wapichan* culture and society is built upon. These sites and their connections to each other act as threads binding people and places to each other in a way that demands responsibilities and care flowing between culture, landscape and ancestors into the present.

“Mountains are homes to our spiritual families, relatives and where we go to learn, hear the advice of our ancestors, to meditate and speak with our spiritual leaders. I have spoken with the one who knows who related to me that mountains are places where I will meet you, teach you my ways, and will hear and learn my sacred words...The lands and people together are a family, they provide for each other.”

Hilary Saba

January 2020

“All mountains are the homes to spirit keepers that dwell in it, the interconnection of these mountains help balance spirit beings and resources within the land. These mountains were once humans. But because of enviousness for power with the gods (*Dowidi* and *Tominkaru*), to show who has more power transforming any living being into different things, (for example, into mountains, stones, hills, trees, animals and birds) those beings who were once humans transformed (and) became the spirits and keepers of that mountain or hill. Our culture and way of life depends on these spirit beings for our generation’s survival and our traditional practices will maintain our relationship with them.”

George Simon

June 2020

Like any relative or relationship, these spirit beings and sensitive sites they inhabit need to be cared for and nurtured in order for them to continue. And this is how the spirit mountains and sensitive places of the *Wapichannao* act as a territorial management plan, with accompanying roles, responsibilities and *Wakaduzu kakiniorea* (customary rules) that are maintained by the living *Wapichan* to ensure that the things the ancestors left behind for the *Wapichannao* are protected for future generations.

Many *Wapichannao* today worry that their relationships of mutual care for the land are being forgotten and the bonds between these sensitive sites, the deep pools and mountains, and the spirits they are home to, are coming undone.

“They provide us with different winds and fresh air, clean water, all forest resources and beautifying the land. But we abuse all what is on earth, that should not happen, and today we face different natural disasters and illnesses. I encourage all *Wapichannao* to continue the *Wakaduzu kakiniorea* (customary rules) and keep our land a safe place to live. As a *marunao* I have done all I could to bring harmony with them and the people. Other group of people don’t live as how we live, and they are the ones destroying our lands all because of money and rich living. We will be left behind to face the consequences.”

George Simon

16th – 20th June 2020

And so, with this in mind the *Wapichannao* through our representative organisation, the South Rupununi District Council (SRDC), have supported our communities to document our sensitive sites in an attempt to protect them and our *Wakaduzu* and share this knowledge with our communities, our partners and our neighbours.

The following report is an ethnographic record of the creation and significance of some of the sensitive sites in the *Wapichan Wiizi* as told by the elders and *marunao* (shamans) we interviewed. It is important to note that while there are benefits to documenting our cultural heritage and history, our traditions are oral and this report does not replace the importance of our elders handing down their knowledge to our children in stories and song, in their homes and in person. This current report does however try to shine a light on our *Wapichan wiizi* and convey its importance but should not be read alone and is part of an ongoing wider project being undertaken by the *Wapichannao*. Other key documents include our territorial management plan, our *marunao* study, and our village and district cultural heritage policies.

South Rupununi District Council

September 2024

Tominkaru's Journey

Tominkaru the creator, and his mischievous son Dowidi, shaped the Wapichan Wiizi landscape as we find it today. There are special places that were important to Tominkaru when he lived on earth, like the mountains where his son Tominkaru Dani was born and buried, where he kept his pets and musical instruments, and where he ascended to Aokazi. These places are sensitive and have special significance to marunao nao and all Wapichannao. The following stories recounted by our elders describe the events that created these sensitive sites.

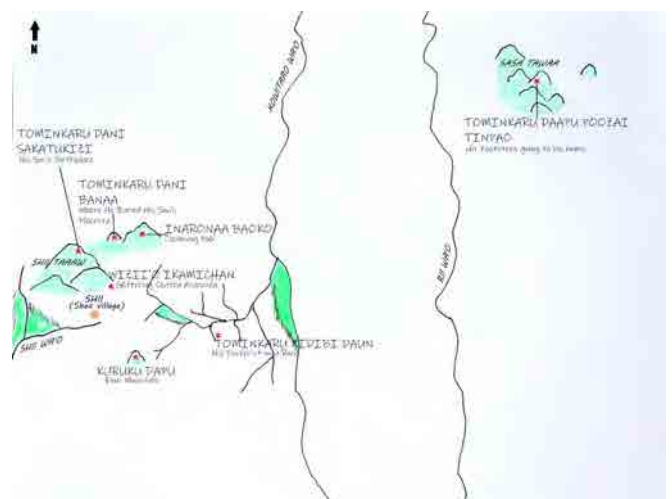
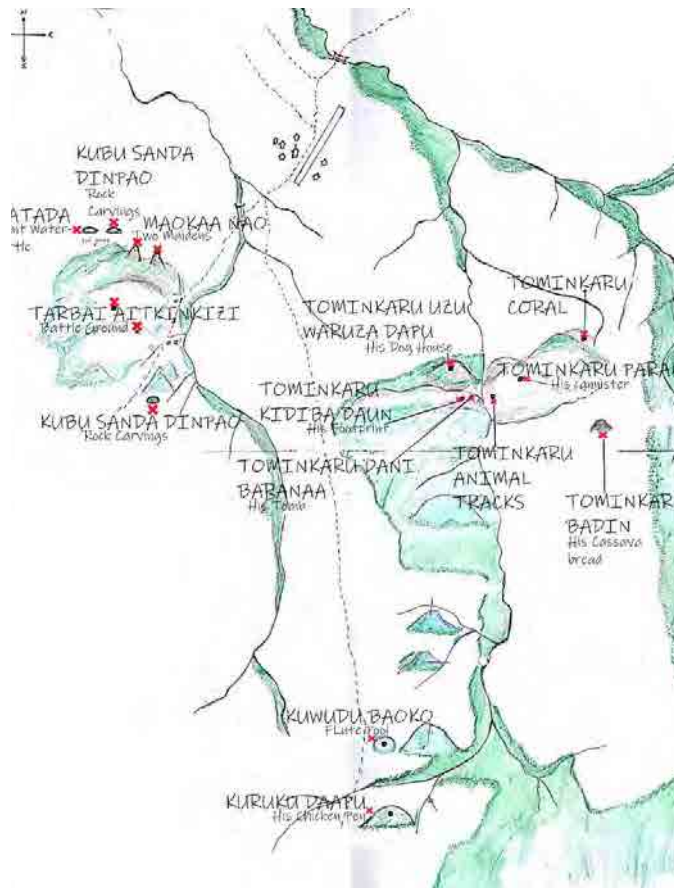
Tominkaru's Journey

Bernard Ritchie, 7th October 2021

Long ago, Tominkaru travelled the entire Wapichan Wiizi coming from the west and going to the east. He has left his belongings across the Wapichan Wiizi wherever he walked, for example, Shizizi Paawa, Wiiwii Taawa, Widuko Toon, and Saasa Taawa.

During those days, it is believed that Aokazi was closely in touch with the earth and everything around was able to closely communicate with each other. As part of Tominkaru's preparation before he was lifted up with Aokazi, he decided to walk and journey the place. Tominkaru's first place (settlement) was at Shizizi Paawa, he built a home for his pets, the chicken and foxes, and also built himself one but this was not an ideal place to bring forth his son. Tominkaru Dapu is on the east of Shizizi Mountain and on the west is Waruzo Dapu. He also planted his farm with various types of bananas (Tominkaru Suuzunu Baawa) at Shizizi Paawazi.

Tominkaru moved further east of Shizizi Paawa and built his new home at Wiiwii Taawa. On this mountain there is a huge opening which is called the gate or entrance to Tominkaru Dapu and also his pakaran (canister) where he packed and placed all his



belongings like his instruments. One day *Marunaowaba* decided to visit the cave (*Tominkaru Dapu*) and found a lot of things that he had left there (for example, stone axes, stone spade, etc.). He planted his farm with various types of bananas and dasheen. *Tominkaru* built his home and on the eastern side is *Waruzo Dapu* and south of his home is *Kuruku Dapu*.

Tominkaru moved further east of *Shizizi Paawa* and built his new home at *Wiiwii Taawa*. On this mountain there is a huge opening which is called the gate or entrance to *Tominkaru Dapu* and also his *pakaran* (canister) where he packed and placed all his belongings like his instruments. One day *Marunaowaba* decided to visit the cave (*Tominkaru Dapu*) and found a lot of things that he had left there (for example, stone axes, stone spade, etc.). He planted his farm with various types of bananas and dasheen. *Tominkaru* built his home and on the eastern side is *Waruzo Dapu* and south of his home is *Kuruku Dapu*.

As the journey continued, *Tominkaru* travelled into the forest and along the forest edges. On his way he met three farmers, who didn't know that he was *Tominkaru*. The first farmer was ploughing his farm, and the second farmer was cleaning up, but they didn't welcome *Tominkaru*, whereas the third farmer who was planting his farm welcomed *Tominkaru*. So as *Tominkaru* continued his journey, he said these words, "Let the labor of the first farmer turn into hills, the second farmer's labor turn into mountains and the other be satisfied." The farmers returned to their farm the next day and were amazed to see things had changed and until this day the farmer remains the keeper of the area. *Inii* is the keeper of the mountains, *Kanokoshi* (*Roomi Dokoze*) the keeper of the huge trees and forest, and *Tokodoro* the keeper of hills.

Unfortunately, as he travelled further his son eventually died along the way, at a place in Aishalton. During those days all the birds and animals were able to talk and communicate with each other as humans still do. Upon hearing the news of the death of *Tominkaru's* son all the animals and birds started to cry. After two days, the birds and animals stopped

crying as he tried to resurrect him from the dead, but toucan didn't listen, so he continued crying. Seeing that toucan made no attempt to stop crying and give support that he will resurrect, *Tominkaru* gave up and his son remained buried. In the forest, *Tominkaru* also planted his farm with papaya at *Koroosa Taawa* (Cross Mountain). Therefore, nature farms, *Kuruku Dapu* and *Waruzo Dapu* are found across *Wapichan Wiizi* because wherever *Tominkaru* settled, he planted his farm and kept his pet.

In the forest on *Boono Wa'o* there are huge waterfalls called *Tiiwada Tozoowan*. To the south of *Boono Wa'o*, *Tominkaru* left his footprint on a rock and nearby in the west direction is the footprint of the jaguar. This footprint was left when *Tominkaru* mashed on the rock when the rock was soft.

Dowidinao barowan roriam | The tree of life

Juliet George, 19th–20th October 2020

In the middle of the earth, *Tominkaru* planted a huge tree that produced different varieties of fruits, beans, and other species of crops eaten by humans and animals.

People and animals came from near and from over mountains and seas, to eat and take away seeds, tubers and fruits from the tree. It was the only source of food on earth. The tree was laden with food every season.

The tree was so tall and big that it reached the sky and heavens. Its branches spread over the earth like a huge hat covering the earth from heat. Life was normal and everything connected to each other. The tree provided water and food for humans and animals.

Until one day the *Dowidinao* found the tree. They were astonished and surprisingly saw animals and humans under the tree, collecting food while humans were leaving with loads and others coming with empty *dopawai* (*warashi*). Others were meeting families and friends, and young men and women were marrying under the tree before their parents.

Others followed their husbands and wives to their respective territories.

At this happy connection of people, the *Dowidinao* became angry. Having slept with that in mind, *Dowidi* the next day explained his plan to his brothers. “Let us cut down the tree, so that we can have the fruits all at once and not wait for the fruit to fall one by one. We will scatter the people too.”

As the people and animals pleaded to the *Dowidinao* not to cut the tree, they only laughed and went on cutting for days.

At last, the tree fell with a rumbling sound that shocked the earth. It took with it the sun, moon and the stars. Its branches fell to distant lands and into the sea. The entire earth was covered in darkness, heavy rains and striking thunder and lightning across the dark sky.

Everyone was in darkness; the *Dowidinao* went their way, also feeling sad at what they did, but convinced that they were proud of themselves for cutting the tree of life.

The humans and animals knew that the sun and the moons fell into the sea, and they gathered all the animals that lived in the water. They discussed who would dive down into the sea to search for the sun and moon.

Many volunteered, but none of them went to the bottom of the sea.

Listening very attentively and thinking to himself at the far end, was the *Wu’uwuzu* who came forward and volunteered to go down and get the sun out from the seas. “I will dive down and find the sun, and I will need your help. I will bring back light to the earth and we will see each other again,” he said thoughtfully.

All looked surprised and laughed at his size and mocked him. But he paid no attention and prepared for his mission. He went to the shore and looked for a high edge to jump from. The others followed at a distance, and some were afraid that he would never come back, while others encouraged him. He leaped

into the sky and down to the bottom of the sea. He went down until he saw a small light at the bottom of the sea. But he came back to the others to tell them to prepare to go down with him.

After taking a rest and taking a deep breath, again he went down. This time he went to the light and saw that the sun was still shining and held out his hands and held the sun by its long hairs. Swimming back up he met the others, who saw the *Wu’uwuzu* coming out with something shining. All jumped into the water and helped him with the sun. The sun was alive, and all were happy.

After some time, the sun woke and saw people around him, dancing and chanting an unusual tune to wake him up. Regaining his strength the sun ascended into the heavens and proudly shone for all on earth.

The tree of life had fallen with its branches and fruits scattered all over the lands. Fruit trees and crops grew wherever it fell, and humans and animals had enough to eat and survive. That is what is planted and eaten today by humans.

Today we can see the tree trunk with its flat table-like top — the Roraima mountain — and the branches spread as mountain ranges — Pakaraimas, Kanokos, Serra da Lua, etc.

Maoka Taawa | Virgin Mountain

Dennis Paul, 19th August 2021

Maoka Taawa has a story of twin sisters who their mothers sent to go cut firewood. But instead, they climbed up the mountain and sat there looking for each other’s lice. Their mother was waiting for them, but they delayed returning. So, the mother talked to *Tominkaru* about her children not returning home. *Tominkaru* then said the two can remain at the mountain forever because they didn’t return as their mother requested and were turned into rocks.

There is a creek which flows directly from *Maoka Taawa* called *Maoka Wa’o* (Virgin Creek). On the other

side there is a rock shaped as a boat and a rock shaped like a shark which cut the boat in half.

Amy Paul, 19th August 2021

Maoka Taawa (Virgin Mountain) is where two young ladies were turned into rocks. They were advised by their parents to look for lice on each other. The parents left them on the mountain to do this and advised them not to look into the direction of the lake where *Tominkaru*'s instruments were being played. They were turned into rocks by *Dowidi*.

Phillip Brown, 7th September 2020

There are the remains of a boat which is found at *Maoka Taawa*. Long ago there was a flood which made the people make boats in order to survive the flood. There came *Dowidi*, the mischievous son of *Tominkaru*; he saw how the people were happy and decided to punish them because he was jealous. He sent his saw to cut the people's boat and cut it in half.

Komiinoroonaa Baoko | Anaconda Pool

Dennis Paul, 19th August 2021

There is a pool called *Komiinoroonaa Baoko* which keeps things. This pool is like a house and nearby it has a rock believed to be the mouth or entry to the pool. *Tominkaru* appeared and played his instruments at this pool. He also hid his instruments there. The mandolin and guitar are two of the instruments.

Ian Paul, 19th August 2021

Tominkaru had his instrument at a lake called *Komiinoroonaa baoko*. A huge anaconda was seen at the pool where *Tominkaru* hid his instruments (including the flute) and is believed to be the keeper of the pool. Because his son *Dowidi* was mischievous, *Tominkaru* hid his flutes and instruments so *Dowidi* couldn't spoil them.

Photo: *Maoka Taawa*



Kuwudu Baoko | Lake of the flute

Phillip Browne, 9th November 2020

There is a lake located between *Komiiroroona* and *Kiizida Taawa* called *Kuwudu Baoko* (Lake of the Flute). At this lake *Dowidi* and *Kuwai* would play different musical instruments and when they finished, they climbed up *Kiizida Taawa* and buried the musical instruments nearby a rock. Until today those instruments remain buried there.

Marudu Dukuo | Mildew Mountain

Willie Browne, 30th September – 4th October 2020

This mountain is named after cassava bread (*Badin* or *Karara'i*). During the days when the gods lived on earth, the bread (*badin*) was put in the open air to dry, but instead was left there to mildew. That is why the mountain is called *Marudu Dukuo* – mildew mountain.

Marudu Dukuo was the dwelling place of the good god (*Tominkaru*) and the place where he lived with his animals, the sheep and donkeys.

On the western side of the same mountain, there is a sheet of rock sloping down to a creek called *Bakopara Wa'o*.

Today you can see grooves of tracks marked on the rock, where *Tominkaru* carried down his animals to graze and drink water at the same creek – *Bakopara Wa'o*.

Where the mountain rises from the ground, *Tominkaru*, when he ascended into the heavens, left his chest on a flat rock, for people to see that he lived in this part of the earth. In this chest he locked and kept his precious treasures.

After *Tominkaru* went back to heaven and left his people and animals, a group of people remained living on the *Marudu Dukuo* called the *Dawuzainao* (tall people). They lived there mainly to hide from their enemies, as there was fighting among groups of people who wanted to steal their neighbours' women, the abundance of game and to conquer their lands. To this day the mountain is also called *Diziinapa Kizai* and *Piichiri Dapu*. *Tominkaru* in his good mind left *Piichiri* (human spirit beings) to look after his animals, birds, fishes, and deep pools both in the forest and in the savannahs.

The main staples of these people were the *ite* fruits, and to this day you can see *ite* trees growing on top of this mountain, where these people once lived.



Photo: *Dowidi Sasan* (the saw the *Dowidi* used to saw a boat in half)



Photo: *Tominkaru badin* (Tominkaru's casava bread)



Photo: flat rock on which there are tracks of animals.

Chaakasha Dapu | Donkey Home

Willie Browne, 30th September – 4th October 2020

To the southeast of *Marudu Dukuo* is located a small mountain known to the locals as *Chaakasha Dapu* (the Donkey Home). This is where *Tominkaru* kept his donkeys.

Waruzo Dapu | Fox Home

Phillip Browne, 7th September 2020

A mountain which is to the left side of *Marudu Dukuo* is another home of *Tominkaru* and his pets, the foxes. After a while he released the foxes into the wild. He shaped the *Mabaiba* (honey wax) into the form of dogs, then breathed life into them and kept them as pets.

Tominkaru Pakaran | Tominkaru Chest

Willie Browne, 7th August 2020

Tominkaru Pakaran is a mountain where he buried his musical instruments before he died.

Sheep, horses and donkeys would ascend the mountain to eat and would usually come when they were hungry. Until today the tracks can be seen clearly on the rocks. It is believed that as Good Friday approaches the animals would be more likely to be heard and seen. Their usual time of appearing and coming out would be at night.

Aro Dapu (Deer Home) is a mountain similar to the *Tominkaru pakaran*. These areas are common hunting grounds for deer. People would hunt along the area in search of the deer and other game animals.

Masokonnao Taawa | Old Lady Mountain

Dennis Paul, 19th August 2021

To the east of *Tominkaru Badin* in a straight line is a rock called *Masokonnao Taawa* that is shaped like an old lady and is a sacred site. *Masokonnao Taawa* was very sensitive; people who disturbed the keeper were likely to get sick. It was getting bushy and overgrown, so *Marunao Paul* decided to talk to her and clean around her. The spirit keeper of the site has calmed down now.

Ian Paul, 19th August 2021

The old lady was on her way to visit her relative in the west when *Tominkaru* took away her life and she became a rock. She was carrying some gold or something valuable that she had stolen from another area, *Koitaro Wa'o*, to take to the people who lived in the west. He turned her into stone because he didn't want her to take the valuable item to the other side in the west. That is the reason why there is gold in and around *Masokonnao Taawa*.

Marudu Wa'o Taawa |

Mildew Creek Mountain

Willie Browne, 30th September – 4th October 2020

To the west of *Marudu Dukuo*, a mountain called *Marudu Wa'o Taawa* is a burial ground where *Tominkaru* buried his only son, who was killed by the hunter *Ba'okoz*. The tomb is located on the east end of the mountain, where *Tominkaru* laid his son. In the future, *Tominkaru* will remove his child from here and take him to another place he has prepared at *Roomi Toon*.

After the death of *Tominkaru Dani* (*Tominkaru's* child), all the animals mourned and cried out after him. The toucan and green parrots cried out loudly and continued for days; *Tominkaru Dani* heard them crying, opened his eyes and made a few steps out of the tomb and was lifted up to the sky.

Today you can see the footprints on the rock, coming out of the tomb.



Photo: *Tominkaru Pakaran* (*Tominkaru's* chest)

Dennis Paul, 19th August 2021

Tominkaru Dani Baaranaa (Tominkaru's son's grave) is at *Marudu Wa'o Taawa* (Mildew Creek Mountain). He waited for his son to come out from the grave, but he never did, therefore *Tominkaru* stamped on the grave to leave a mark for future generations to remember that his son was buried there. To the southeast of *Tominkaru Dani baaranaa*, a small footprint remains there, and it is believed to be the print of *Tominkaru's* son.

Phillip Browne, 7th September 2020

It was at *Chaakoi Taawa* (*Itokidian pau dani* — where *Tominkaru* took down his child to rest) that *Tominkaru* took down his son to make him rest. He also left his footprints there when he walked on the ground as he walked up the mountain. After a while *Tominkaru* decided to bury his child under the rock, by making it fold, and he locked his son under. That is where he buried his son, until now his son hasn't come out as yet but will come out soon when the weather has worn the rock away.

Amy Deburitto, 19th August 2021

To the west of *Marudu Dukuo* are *Tominkaru's* footsteps at *Marudu Wa'o Taawa* (Mildew Creek Mountain). At *Marudu Wa'o Taawa*, *Tominkaru Dani Baaranaa* (Tominkaru's son's grave) burst open, and his son tried to come out of his grave. *Tominkaru* didn't want his son to resurrect and take the human form; therefore, *Tominkaru* mashed him back to earth. That is why the footprint is left.

To the east of the burial ground is another rock called *Iwii Paawaz* (vagina rock).

Katam Baara | Sour Rock Slab

Willie Browne, 30th September – 4th October 2020

Katam Baara was a mountain with green trees and bountiful vegetation. Today it is divided into two separate bush islands. A clean strip of savannah divides the mountain in half.

Long ago a huge *Orapiroo* (serpent) moved in search of a better place to live. It came from the deep waters of the *Chiipo Wa'o* and passed on top of the mountain. The serpent was so huge that it removed all the trees while moving with all its strength and force. Through the path it moved no trees can grow again because of the poison that it released from its body. Today the path has become a savannah dividing the mountain into two bush islands.

The *marunao* knew the destruction the serpent would do to the people nearby and decided to move it further into big, forested lands and deep waters. This is further into the *Idaruo Kanoko* (Amazon Forest).

Between *Katam Baara* mountain and *Marudu Wa'o Taawa*, there is a wide stretch of savannah, where *Tominkaru* would graze his sheep and other animals.

Tominkaru Dani Shakatakizi | Birthplace of Tominkaru's Child

Oswald William, Lucita Wilson, Justin Peters,
20th–22nd October 2020

Shizizi was the first place and mountain where *Tominkaru* built his kingdom and dwelling area. During that time there also lived a cunning fox (*Waruzo*) who built his home to the east of the godly dwelling. After some time *Tominkaru* decided to move in search of another place; the fox also went after him, until *Tominkaru* settled at *Wiiwii Taawa* (mountain southeast of *Rupunao Village*). The fox also settled there and built a home of a cave.

Presently there is a tunnel leading from the fox's cave to the mountain nearby. At the end of the tunnel, it is believed that there is a storeroom filled with different plants, seeds, food, poisons, charms and other necessary utensils, weapons and a master keeper.

Tominkaru then decided to leave for another place northeast of *Wiiwii Taawa*, to a mountain now called *Shii Taawa* (*Shii Mountain*). This important mountain is the birthplace of his child and remains up to today.

Kitanauzon Taawa | Spotted Mountain

Willie Browne, 30th September – 4th October 2020

Kitanauzon Taawa is named because of the designs and carvings done on a flat rock, which is situated approximately four hundred metres southwest from the mountain. This mountain is also known to be the store of *Tominkaru*, where he kept his belongings and gathered food for his people and animals.

Once there was a boy who grew to manhood and became a great *marunao* in the area when there were no churches and missionaries. It was a time when the *marunao* did the right rituals and ceremonies and smoked the tobacco.



Photo: *Marudu Wa'o Taawa* (burial ground of *Tominkaru Dani* (son))



Photo: *Masokonnao Taawa* (Old Lady Mountain)



Photo: *Tominkaru dan barana* (The burial grounds of *Tominkaru's* son)



Photo: *Iwii Paawaz* (Vagina Rock)

He owned and usually played and entertained his neighbours with the flute, which was the only musical instrument in those days. One day it was broken and there was no way to repair it. So, it remained at home and was never touched again. But the neighbours insisted that it was repaired so that it become functional again. One early morning the *marunao* (named Peter Toshin) thought that he should repair the instrument. He opened the box and took out the instrument and dusted it and thought the next day was the right time to go. He went up the *Kitanauzon Taawa* the next day, took with him his musical instrument, which was not functional any longer, a pouch of plant roots, barks and leaves and his tobacco. At the foot of the mountain, he wrapped his tobacco and took out his sacred plants and puffed his tobacco towards the mountain from the northern side. He recited the sacred prayers and called to the owner and keeper of the mountain, and, to his astonishment and surprise, a huge gate to a huge house opened in front of him. At the gate stood a man whose height was higher than any man, and dark in complexion and dressed in jewels and coloured clothing.

As the *marunao* could not look into his face, he went down to his knees because of the brilliant light that shone from his eyes and face. The huge creature called to him, "Get up, I'm the owner and won't harm you but help you with what you want, you can ask freely." The *marunao* stood up and spoke to him, "I want this musical instrument to be fixed, or can you give a new one."

The man took the instrument from the *marunao*. They spent a long time talking to each other and the *marunao* got acquainted with him after some time. After a long conversation the man gave the *marunao* his instrument and saw that it was shining and glittering as it looked new again. He said, "Go home now as your request is granted and the instrument repaired again, go and make the people happy again."

At that moment the *marunao* found himself at the foot of the mountain, and it was late in the afternoon. He knew it was like a dream. He thought that he slept, but it was real, and the instrument was there nearby and sparkling. He got up and picked up the instrument and went home. He thought, "From now on that man will be my godfather to help and strengthen me during my work with the people."

The *marunao* was approached by neighbours and people who did not know where he went, even his family. They offered him *parakari* and other drinks to welcome him again, and the fixed flute once again played for the people.

He related the story to only persons who he thought would keep the story a secret, but the story went on from family to family, settlement to settlement and wider.

The spirit keeper at *Kitanauzon Taawa* is a music master, and anyone wanting to learn to play any musical instrument can ask the spirit keeper through the right process.

Saasa Taawa | Saw Mountain

Bernard Ritchie, 6th April 2018

Other important mountains include *Saasa Taawa* and *Koroosa Taawa*. Our *marunao* can fly to those places and consult with the spirits of ancient *marunao*. We *Wapichan* do not walk about much close to those places as there are many *inii* (forest giants).

Elaine Antone, 8th October 2021

One of *Tominkaru*'s settlements was at *Saasa Taawa*, a mountain which is shaped like steps or a saw blade. He settled here after he moved from *Shii Taawa*. *Tominkaru* used these steps to climb to the top of the mountain, where his throne is found. He planted his farm and also kept his pets there, the chicken and foxes. This was *Tominkaru*'s favourite throne.

Savannah Mountains

The mountains in *Wapichan Wiizi* all have their own stories about how they came into being. These stories recount the presence of ancestors who walked the earth and who, through their actions and relationships, became transformed into the mountains we know today. Often at the hands of *Dowidi*, *Tominkaru*'s often envious and jealous son, who turned them into mountains. The tables that accompany each group of sacred mountains list the names of the mountains and the relationships they have to the other members of their family, as they were when they walked the earth.



Photo: *Katam Baara* Mountain

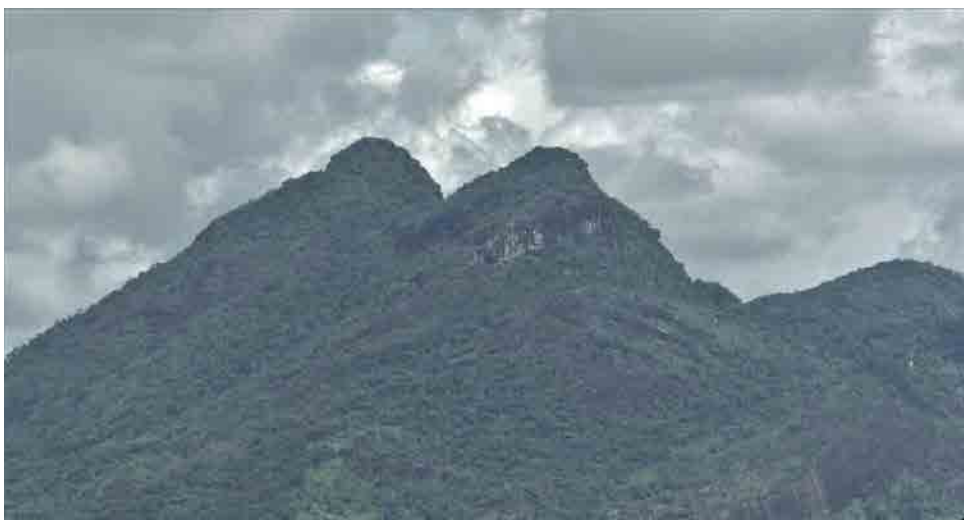


Photo: *Shizizi Taawa* (*Shizizi* Mountain)

Shizizi and related families

I'm advising, maybe in the future our grandchildren would like to train as a *marunao*, [Shizizi] is the place to go, so as to continue what was left for us by our great grandparents.

So, I'm sending this message to those that are not yet born, to us now, that our ancestors have taken care of this beautiful land, and we too must take care of it now.

Hilary Saba

Mountain	Relationship
Kawazonnar	Husband of <i>Kataanuiba</i>
Kataanuiba	Wife of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Duoaba	Sister of <i>Kataanuiba</i> , wife of <i>Konowaro</i>
Konowaro	Husband of <i>Duoaba</i>
Tozao	Son of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Waiozo	Son of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Mabaiba	Daughter of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Saporodai	Son of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Tartarain	Daughter of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Chiziziara	Son of <i>Kawazonnar</i>
Inii	Brother of <i>Kawazonnar</i> , Husband of <i>Kuruk'u aba</i>
Karuk'uaba	Wife of <i>Inii</i>
Kashao	Son of <i>Inii</i>
Washanao	Son of <i>Inii</i>
Orapiroo	Son of <i>Inii</i> , Husband of <i>Taaraba</i>
Taaraba	Wife of <i>Orapiroo</i>
Bakaparaba	Sister of <i>Taaraba</i>
Wiiazu	Son of <i>Orapiroo</i>
Tarubai	Son of <i>Orapiroo</i>

Hilary Saba, 10th –13th January 2020

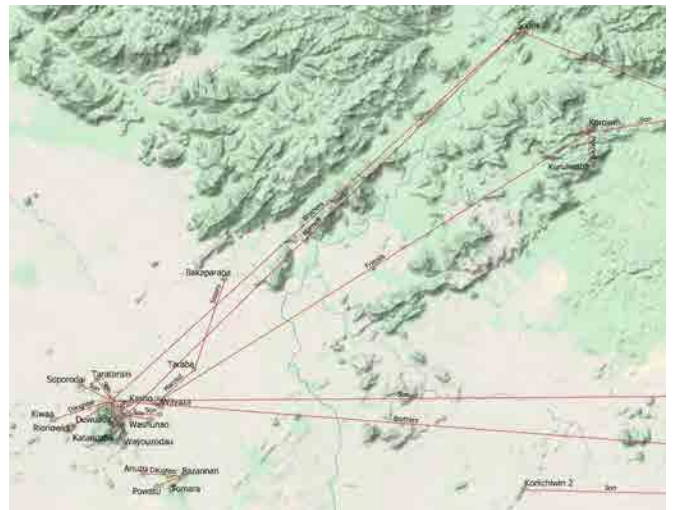
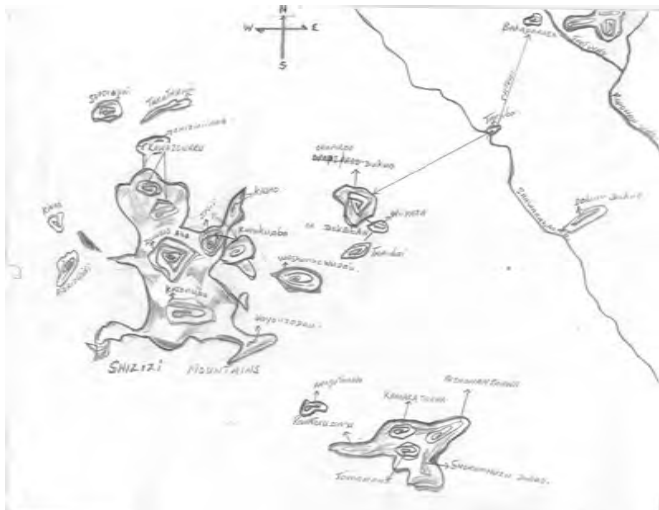
Shizizi mountain is important to us, because our ancestors and grandfathers (or people before us) left a lot of things (tools, carvings, clay pots, drawings, plants, etc.) behind, and now they live in spirit in this mountain. *Shizizi* has three main peaks known as *Kawazonnaru* (northern peak), *Duoaba* (middle peak), and *Kataanuiba* (southern peak). *Duoaba* and *Kataanuiba* are two sisters. *Kawazonnaru* being the husband of *Kataanuiba*, a great wise man, had the power to organize and overlook his people within his territory. *Duoaba* had accompanied her sister and her sister's husband, who was returning from visiting relatives in the east (*Kanokoan* – known as *Kanuku* Mountains) to their home in the west (*Idaru'o Kanoko*). Her husband (*Konowaro*, now *Soomo dukuo*) had remained in the middle of the forest to oversee their homes, territory and belongings until his wife returned from her journey. While bidding his wife *Duoaba* goodbye, strict order was given to them by *Konowaro* not to look back while travelling. But unfortunately, while on their way they disobeyed and

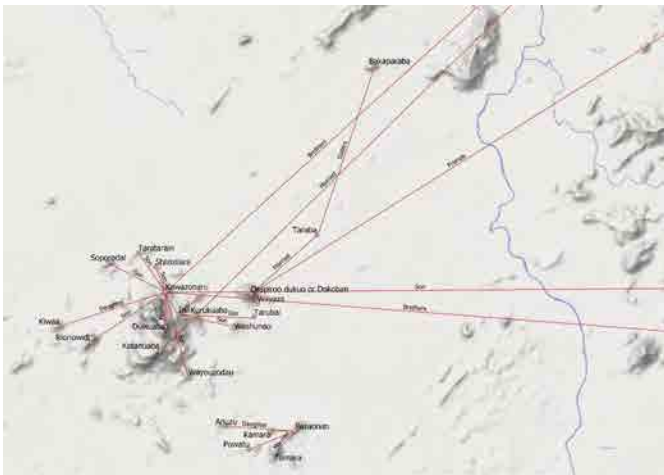
looked back from where they came from. The three persons were transformed into mountains or “big houses.” Now today the saying goes “never turn back; if you’re going, don’t turn back or something will happen to you,” and that is what happened to the travellers.

Her husband remained awaiting her return, but to his dismay she never returned, and he transformed into a mountain (*Soomo dukuo*).

A group of three main peaks make up *Shizizi* Mountain – *Kawazonnaru* (husband), *Kataanuiba* (wife), *Duoaba* (sister-in-law of *Kawazonnaru*). The *Shizizi* Mountain is the dwelling place of our well-known *marunao nao* (shamans) today.

Shizizi Mountain is connected to Soomo dukuo (left bank Soomo Wa'o) through the legend of Duoaba being the husband of Konowaro (Soomo dukuo). Her husband remained in the deep forest as a mountain. It is rich with various resources and sensitive to human presence. The spiritual keeper is alive and controls all that's within the territory. The *marunao*





Saporodai, *Taratarain*, *Chiziziara*. They were also children of *Kawazonnaru* and *Kataanuiba*. They went together with their parents and were running and having fun and playing in front of their parents, as they were swift runners. *Dowidi* was moving in all the lands and met them before their parents. (*Dowidi* was the son of *Tominkaru*, the creator, and because he rebelled against his father, he was removed from the heavens above to the earth below. He had the powers of the gods.) He was watching them play and said, "I will transform these children into mountains, so the earth will know that I am god." That was what he did.

When their parents turned around to look where their children were, they themselves turned into mountains, as they disobeyed the order of *Konowaro*.

These families of *Orapiroo* (wife – *Taaraba*, children – *Wiiazu*, *Tarubai* and aunt – *Bakaparaba*) were travelling from the west (*Idaru'o kanoko*) to the east (*Kanokoan*) to visit relatives. They went in search of planting materials and other new species of seedlings to plant in their territory to the west. They carried these along with wild met in their baskets.

But they were met by the mischief god (*Dowidi*) on their way. He seems to envy their great working relationship with each other, their ability to grow different food crops and their freedom of movement within different territories.

While travelling their *warishis* were loaded with different varieties of seedlings, animals, plants and trees.

Because of the togetherness of this family and their working relationship (*Dowidi* has no relationship with no one), *Dowidi* transformed them into mountains, to make his name known as a god and continue his fame over the lands.

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Hilary Saba, 10th –13th January 2020

One of the peaks on Shizizi is *Kataanuiba* (the southern peak) and simply means “giving” or “sharing”. This peak is rich in game animals (*aro, bakuru, koshara*) and different species of birds (*powish, karapa*).

This peak is also the battleground of the tribes that occupied this part of the land. There are burial grounds, and stones that tell the story of the battles. These stones were laid in lines going up the mountain, to record the warriors who were present. As they went up the mountain, each of the warriors would pick up a stone and lay it in line as they went up the mountain.

The low plains to the east were the battlegrounds.

This peak is important to all of us, it is the giver of life. It provides for the people and holds rich historical significance to the people. Our history lives in the mountains.

Hilary Saba, 10th –13th January 2020

Tozaobaanaa Taichaakizi (great *marunao* Tozao vomiting place). The southern high peak near to *Kataanuiba* where the *marunao* goes to train and do the necessary rituals to complete the period of fasting. He must spend months, all by himself without a proper meal, the only strength being from the tobacco.

On these peak lives the spirit of the great *marunao* named *Tozao* who fasted for days to gain knowledge, wisdom and authority to look over the entire territory. Today, we seek his help in many ways. When the rituals are completed, the knowledge is transferred to the trainee, to reveal and cast out sicknesses, learn new prayers and look after the entire land.

Koshada and related families

Mountain (Range)	Relationship
Koshaka (Koshada)	Husband
Mokoroaba	Wife of Koshaka
Inii	Koshaka's son
Paoshida	Koshaka's son
Koromaba	Inii's wife
Kowaiba	Koshaka's son in law, <i>Wiiazuaba</i> 's husband
Wiiazu aba	Koshaka's daughter, <i>Kowaiba</i> 's wife

Hilary Saba, 10th –13th January 2020

Koshaka (Koshada) and his family were going to meet *Kawazonnaru* and family, to assist them with their load, and exchange plant seedlings to carry back. But again, *Dowidi* saw them from his hiding place, and thought them to be a productive group of people. “I will destroy them, and never again will they be happy” he said. He looked up to the sky and repeated the magical words, “*Saaa... Mariina’a kizi’inaa pa’i itominan midukuo nii o kuba ni’i naa, napain bao’oran kaduzu kida pana’okazi kida.*” (Go... let all of you be transformed to be mountains, rocks and different kinds of creatures.)

Torudukuo and related families

Mountain (Range)	Relationship
Torudukuo (Matoro tuu)	<i>Azakawara aba’s</i> husband, <i>Koshaka’s</i> brother-in-law
Azakawara aba	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> wife, <i>Koshaka’s</i> sister
Madaru	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Waronam	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Kobawara	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Aro shamoron	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Paran Taawa	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Biziai	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Kadibarodo	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Kadibarodo min taawa	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> daughter
Shikodo aba	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> daughter
Kaziman	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Tararam Dukuo	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son
Maruu	<i>Torudukuo’s</i> son

Godfrey Pauline, 13th October 2018

Karawaiman Taawa (Blue Mountain) and the areas that have *Kiitana'o* “colourful” or “colourful patterns”) or the *kiitan kido'o amazada* (“patterned colourful place”). Besides the mountains, there are also rocks that have *kiitan*. *Karawai* means colourful, with many different colours. *Karawaiman* means really colourful, more colourful than *karawai*. So *Karawaiman Taawa* is a place we go to collect colourful clays. There is a creek called *Kamata Wa'o* flowing from the mountain – that is where the clay gets its colours. *Kamata* is a creature just like the worm. The worm spits out deposits on the surface of the earth which is colourful. This is why we call the mountain *kiitan kida'o*, because it is a colourful, patterned mountain. There are grey, purple, blue, red, yellow, white, and other colours of clay, all sorts of colours. You could choose colours when you collect clay.

Besides the clay, *Karawaiman Taawa* is a hunting area. This is also a farming area. They had old farms by the side, close to the mountain. *Kiitana'o atamun paiz* (spotted leopard wood) can be found there. There was a lot of richness in that place. You don't have to look for nothing. That place is a fertile place, and the soil is very rich. They enjoyed that area because there were lots of fishes, turtles, wild pigs, monkeys, baboons, and fruits. These people did not have to think about what they should buy or what they should eat; there was plenty. People still live there and have their camps along the creeks that flow from the mountain.

Those are sacred areas. When people went in that area, they had to follow the customs and have to have respect for the area. They have to use a lot of herbs and incense to protect themselves from spiritual beings that would harm them. If you go there, you have to carry a little piece of cloth or some other offering and offer that to the mountain *dokoza* (owner or grandfather) before you reach there and before you leave. You have to ask the *dokoza* for permission to gather clay, build a farm, or do anything else you want to do in the area. The keepers in the area keep it cold and fertile and you must follow the customs, so you do not disturb them. You cannot play in the area.

If you're a woman and are menstruating, you would have to sling your hammock high from the ground; you have to wear a slipper made from bark so you would not mash the earth, so you do not disturb the earth; and you cannot bathe in the creek.

Every family that is living in the area would gather the same wood sap, and every evening, they would smoke the area, so that if any bad creatures came around, they would smell the scent burning. That is how families would guard themselves. For little children, they would prepare *powizi* (annatto, a red paint from fruit, mixed with the sap of the wood), and every child would be dotted with the *powizi* on their head, chest, and feet. That is how the children could go and not be harmed by anything outside.

Talita James, date unknown

People never lived at *Karawaiman Taawa* or went near there. There is *inii* (a one-eyed giant) at *Karawaiman Taawa*. There is a *namachi din* (a big tiger spirit) which is a *tapik* (keeper), as well. When you walk around there, you hear sounds that the *namachi din* is calling. It calls rains and thunder. There is also the *a'uu* (a strange creature that makes noise). The old people said that when the *a'uu* comes, he would hit the root of the tree and knock it with his knees, and that is why he makes a lot of noise. All of these creatures are *tapik* of the area. There are plenty of different creatures there.

People would go to *Karawaiman Taawa* and would find clay paint of different colours. You can also find plenty of *karawai* trees, which bear yellow fruits with a white, milky inside. When you eat this fruit, it 'pastes' up your mouth. The name of the mountain might also have something to do with this fruit. There is gold at *Karawaiman Taawa*. Even though it was told to the young people, they have never found where the gold is. That's because the people who went before, they had *poori* (prayers) and used that to get the gold and other things from the mountain. The young people do not follow those ways anymore. They sometimes carry rum, and they throw it there. They do not use the *poori* so that is why they cannot find the gold there.

All of our mountains are sacred grounds. That is what we have been told by the old people. There are customs we have to follow. Sometimes when you are on your period, you cannot go. You cannot cook peppery things around there, because that might provoke the different creatures living there. The peppery smell in the atmosphere can awaken them and they might send thunder and lightning. Some people had the gift and knew their own *poori* that could protect them and help calm the spirit creatures if they were provoked. If you did not have the gift and did not know any *poorii*, you would have to go with people who did know.

Michael Francis, date unknown

I know about *Karawaiman Taawa* and *Marudi* mountains. They are both mountain ranges and are close to each other. People would go to *Karawaiman Taawa* to extract chalk from the mountain for the *parichara* dance. For the dance, the ladies would have to dress up in their 'aprons' and everybody would have to wear paint in different ways depending on their age and if they are married. The paint would come from the colourful chalk on the mountain, the *karawai* – that is how the mountain got its name. You could only find the chalk along a ravine along one side of the mountain. The *komata wa'o* (a short palm tree) would be a marker that would tell people where to find the chalk. People would throw in beads to pay for the chalk. You will find plenty of beads there.

You cannot play about this place, and you cannot spend time overnight there. There was one big mango tree near the mountain where people used to camp when they went. They said when you collect the chalk, a monster, dragon-like, would come attack you. They had to call *poori* (prayers) to collect the chalk. Before going, they had to tell the *marunao* in charge of the place before they went so, he would know who exactly is going. He would also give them advice. When they left from the house, he would smoke incense behind them so he could ensure they are protected. That is how they would go for the chalk. When they came back, the *marunao* would check them to see if they are safe to come home.

Simon Marcello, date unknown

Karawai means clay or mud. It is used for persons when they want to dance. When you use it properly, the *tapik* keeper of the mountain does not get vexed or annoyed. But if you go for it just like that, the keeper will be *kimudukao* (troubled) and there will be thunder and heavy rain will fall. The thunder and rain are a message being sent to you. The people used it; they paint their skin with it. The drawings you do on your skin with the clay must be in weaving patterns. For example, there is one that is of the *kankoorun* (scorpion). The *tapik* feels good when people use the clay the right way. But it is dangerous sometimes, when the rain and thunder come.

Evelyn Lee Andrews, date unknown

Marutu Taawa (the dark mountain, or Marudi Mountain) is at the end of the Blue Mountains range. That whole area is special for the *Wapichannao*. The forest and those blue mountains there are *konaunama'o* (beautiful) to us. Our foreparents cared for and respected that area. We *Wapichan* believe the whole area is *akaa ki kiizai* (a sensitive place). This is what my daddy told me, and his daddy told him the same thing. You cannot just trouble that place and extract things as you may get sick or suffer misfortune. The spirits there will 'shoot' you. It has happened to people. The owner of that place is a large *dawawa'i* (serpent spirit). It can appear in different forms if it is troubled. It can appear like a person in your dreams and then the person can get thin, thin, thin and die. That spirit will take revenge and catch the spirit of a person and make them sick. That happened to a white man who went Marudi to mine long ago.

The place is abundant in useful trees and fruits, and it is good for hunting and fishing. There is a special clay in the mountains. Our ancestors cared for the place and showed respect to the spirit keepers there. Because our foreparents cared for the place, they benefit from meat, fish, and fruit. It was good hunting and fishing with plenty *bichi* (hogs) and deer. They had enough food. The people used to share the meat. We did not really take out a lot of gold before in those

days. We extracted useful bush materials and medicines. We used to harvest the *komaro* seed from the forest around *Marutu Taawa* and trade the seed with Melville at *Wiichabai* to get trade goods. That seed has a scented oil that can be used to make soap.

So, our *kotu'ainao* (old time people) used to care for the land and follow our beliefs. They did not harm the spirit keepers and so that is how they got their food. They did not buy meat with money. They also respected the Blue Mountain clay and only those with special knowledge and *poori* (invocations) would extract that clay for special purposes. Ordinary people cannot touch it. It is hard and is located in lumps like chalk. If you trouble the clay sites, then wind and storms will come, so you can only go there with *aichapainao* (people who know how to ask the keepers of the clay using *poori*). So, for we *Wapichannao* the Blue Mountains are *kadora'o* (untouchable).

Luisa Laita, 12th June 2018

There are still many powerful bush spirits that occupy those mountains and bush. We say the place is *kachaniti kia'o* (frightening). There is the *inii* (forest giant) and there is also the *tokodoro* (giant forest being). They are the *tapiknao* (keepers) of those mountains and forest. If you hunt there and scare a game animal into the mountains, you must let it go and not follow it. They say the keepers are calling their game back. It is like that there until today. If you go, there you can sometimes hear the keeper's shout. They call the winds shouting "*awaru, awaru, awaru!*" The *tokodoro* is a giant tall as the trees. He makes a noise banging his knees together and it sounds like someone hitting a tree's large buttress root. Another spirit being there like a person is called *a'uu*.

The Blue Mountains have special forest with useful trees and plants that we have used traditionally. There are large stands of *l'o bao* (bamboo) and also *paizu* (letter wood/bow wood). All those trees also have their spirit keepers and so following our custom we use *poori* to extract lumber and materials. It is necessary to obtain what you need following the

rules and then get out of the place. One must not linger there. There are still plenty of game in the area, and it supports special wildlife like the *idaru'o kokoi* (harpy eagle). The whole mountain range is also important for creek heads and fish spawning grounds. The creeks flowing down from there include the *Tooto Wa'o*, *Ikizapu Wa'o* and *Kopau Wa'o* and the same *Koitaro* head. The fisheries are rich there. You can see many *achimara* (haimara fish), and also *kapoto* (scaled fish) which is *kaduunu'o* (tasty). Those creeks are connected and some flow also from Marudi area: *Panchi* flows into *Tooto Wa'o* that flows into the *Koitaro*.

Victoria Thomas, 12th June 2018

The *Karawaiman Taawa* (Blue Painted Mountains) are a special place. There are rocks up there and if you scratch them, they show lovely blue colours. We say it is *konaunama'o* (beautiful) to see it. These rocks are on the mountain foot above the banks of the *Koitaro* River. There is a *Kodoi din* (tapir tiger spirit) that watches over the place on the mountain tops. This is why it is dangerous to go there. He sees all and he smells people when they approach. But in the past our forefathers could go there with special *poori* (prayers) to protect themselves. You could sometimes hear the *Kodoi din*, and it sounded like a *kuwuda* (flute). The tiger spirit sounds the flute when he detects people. In the past, our forefathers were strong and very fast runners. They would use their *poori* to extract materials and then run fast out of there. Sometimes the wind would come strong and chase behind them. It was so strong that the large trees would be coming crashing down after them as if they had been chopped clean through. Before the *Wapichan* would work on their balata lines underneath the mountain but they did not work up in the mountain forests as they feared the *Kodoi din*. If you go up there this tiger spirit comes immediately. It remains a sensitive place up until today.

George Simon, 12th-20th June 2018

Karawaiman Taawa (paint, white, or blue mountain range) stands as one of the pillars that supports the earth and the heavens, and a source of rich colourful (blue, white, yellow) clay that comes out of the mountain through springs which are fed by tunnels underneath the mountain. A legend says it's the resting place of the rainbow (*Koyarara*). It is the home to different spirit beings which include *Inii*, *Orapiroo*, *Bichi Dukozu*. There are several *Orapiroo* (serpents) that own the mountain, and the great *Marunao* tied them with strong iron chains and the head pointing up to the sky. They take in or swallow earth from the top of the mountain. The earth is filtered and ground inside the serpent and passes through the anus to the outside of the body, making or changing the earth to different colours. The *Marunao* relates that this is a slow process which humans don't realize. That is why this mountain lies flat as a snake in the forest. The *Marutu dukuo* is one of the exit mountains and it is believed that the filtered substance comes out as gold, dye and other minerals. *Karawaiman Taawa* is also connected with other mountains in the Brazilian area (*Kauzubu*, Serra Da Lua - where the moon rests).

This is also the home to the *Atorada*, *Daozai*, and the *Pawishiannao* who lived alongside the mountain and lived a life of bartering, hunting, fighting tribal wars and most importantly, extracting the dye, gold and other precious minerals. They exchanged these for the annatto (*powizi*) with the *Tarumanao*. The annatto is used to paint themselves as a ritual, before they extract the dye, and to paint their boats and weapons.

The *Atorada* and *Pawishiannao* followed a customary norm of how the extraction should happen. They extracted when it was dark nights. The extraction of the dye is a process of rituals only the *Marunao* can perform. It takes a period to communicate with the spirits and the *Marunao* go through a fasting period, to convince the dye master to peacefully extract the substance. Only adult men can do the extraction with the *Marunao*, and the women would make the potteries and other eating utensils. They would also keep the dye as an offering and gift to other tribes.

If there is any trip to this mountain, the custom should be to ask a *Marunao* to accompany, and a proper offering should be maintained all the time. Often at times hunters experience heavy rainfall and heavy breeze if they are near the mountain; that is because the spirits could feel human presence nearby. An offering of tobacco should be left to them.

Marutu Taawa | Marudi Mountain | Dark Mountain

Before, there were no excavators but now a lot of damage is being done. The water is brown and dirty, and the fishes are dying. I am very sad. I don't know how to explain how I feel. I don't know why people go to Marudi. They don't really need the things there; they just want to live there and gain things for themselves. They are not in need of it. And they are just destroying it. When we *Wapichan* use the mountains, we use it just a little bit and then we come back. We have worked long, using our natural way of getting what we needed – not plenty, just what we needed.

Talita James

Godfrey Pauline, 13th October 2018

Marutu Taawa (“dark mountain”; Marudi Mountain) is close to *Karawaiman Taawa*. It is a dark mountain. The people who first settled in the area, they said the place was dark. You could not go around the area before because it was so dark, so they called it *Marutu Taawa*. But right now, they have mixed up the name and they call it *Maratu Taawa* (“marudi bird mountain”; Marudi Mountain). The old people said that if you go to an area which is a new area to you and you don’t know about that place, anything you did would cause some wind to blow or some rain to fall or something else to happen. That is why the place got so dark. So, when people moved around, the place would suddenly get dark, like there was rain coming, and it would thunder. Over time, the elders who got to know the place would use *poori* (prayers) to talk to the *dokozu* of the mountain and they would blow on a whistle made of bow wood after reciting the *poori*. After they blow the place, they used the same whistle to tame the owner of the place.

Simon Marcello, date unknown

Marudi is a mountain. That is the place being destroyed at this moment. *Marutu wa’o Taawa*. It’s not the bird *marata*; it is the darkness mountain. When people used to climb the mountain, you have to do it very early in the morning. And you’d never be there up to midday, because the place gets dark, and you don’t see anything. The people who bled balata would go home. Not even the sun shines. People used to go there to work and return home before midday. A cloud forms on top of the mountain, a very dark cloud.

Nicholas Myers Ernest, date unknown

All those mountains and forest down towards *Marutu Taawa* (Darkness Mountain) are important to us *Wapichannao*, and our foreparents cared for the area. The names of all the mountains and creeks have meaning to us. The name *Marutu Taawa* come from our ancestors who walked in that place. There was a group of our people who traversed the area crossing the mountain and they saw that suddenly the sky became dark, dark, dark. They also noted that when they moved away at the end of the mountain the sky got brighter again. That is why they learned not to climb the mountain and to go around it. This is where the *Maruta’o tuunizu* (the grandfather spirit of darkness) lives. Long ago this spirit keeper would kill humans that troubled his area. Before I was born, they say that a *marunao* went to the area and close it down so people could work there.

