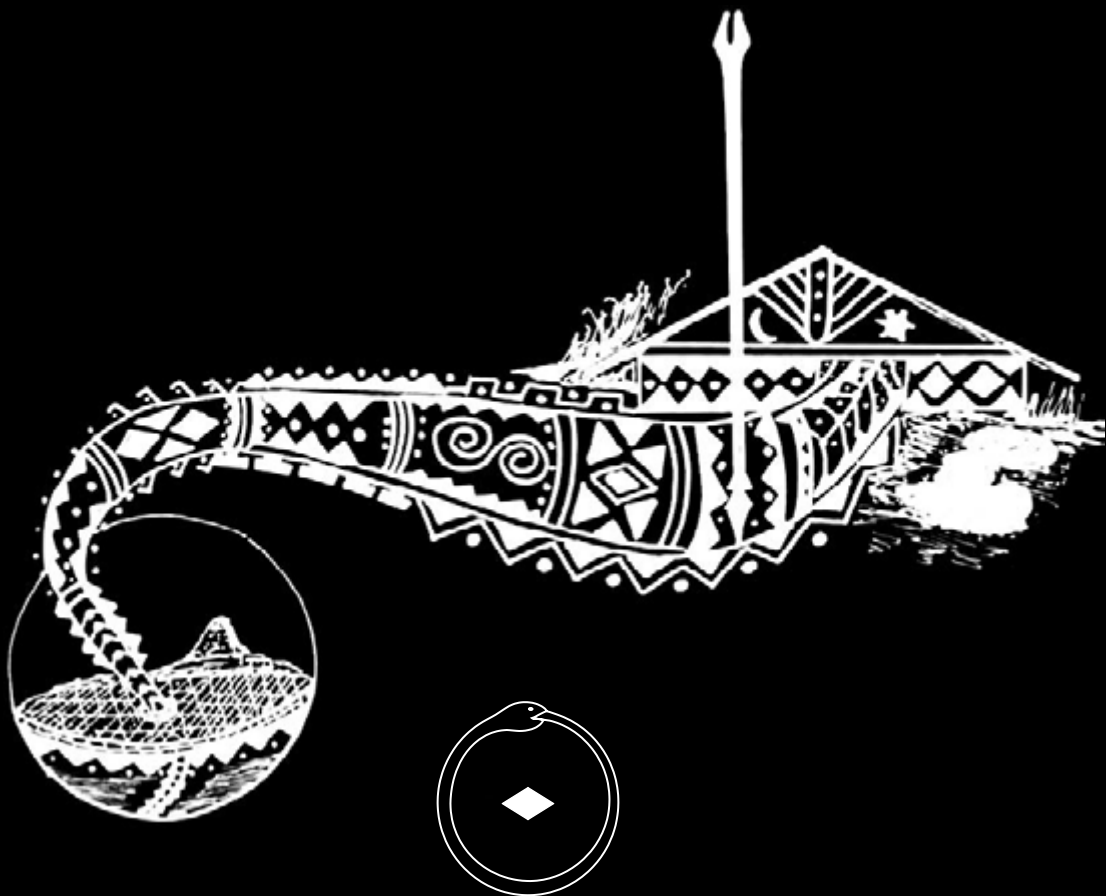
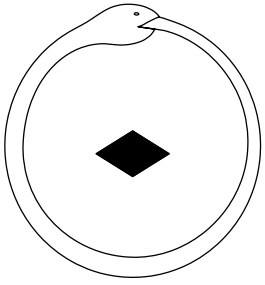


PAMŪRÍ YUKŪSIRU  
THE JOURNEY OF LIFE  
IN THE TRANSFORMATION CANOE  
Jaime Diakara



notebooks  
SELVAGEM



PAMŪRÍ YUKŪSIRU

## THE JOURNEY OF LIFE IN THE TRANSFORMATION CANOE

Jaime Diakara

Transcription of Jaime's speech  
at the [Wild talk](#) of January 20th 2021.

I don't know if white people will understand or even be interested in what we want to say to non-indigenous society in this Wild Talk. I always say that I am not a scientific expert, but an expert in traditional indigenous knowledge. I graduated from Desana<sup>1</sup> school in indigenous knowledge, and I have an Anthropology degree in indigenous perspectivism. It is very important to put forward these earth stories through Geomythology. How is the Earth? How is the world we live in? We need to draw here some important features of Geomythology for indigenous society, which is called "popular cosmologies" in Western philosophy conditions. In our Anthropology work at the Center for Indigenous American Studies of the Federal University of Amazonas (NEAI/UFAM), we have a traditional advisor and a non-indigenous advisor. It's the tripod of knowledge. For example, my traditional advisor was my father, who passed on to me all the information. And I'm a memory card, who passed on to my non-indigenous advisor's computer, for us to discuss.

With this, we work in Physical Geomythology to discuss and create theories: Tukano theory is like this, Desana theory is this, Tuyuka theory is this, Baniwa theory is that. Each people has their own ways of acting, promoting and respecting nature during the ritualistic parties. The Tuyuka do not have the same festivities as the Desana, and the Tukano do not celebrate the same constellations. That's why we, indigenous anthropologists, began to think of a different way of showing how the different indigenous peoples think of today's world. We work on a new

ILUSTRAÇÃO DA CAPA E DA  
PÁGINA 7: Jaime Diakara  
LEGENDA: *Antes não existia  
cores e sim um mundo de  
escuridão e de transformação  
de vidas de todos os seres.*

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1. Indigenous people from the Amazon, living in Brazilian and Colombian territories. The author of this text, Jaime Diakara, is Desana (T.N.).

Anthropology, in which we incorporate the indigenous way of thinking. What was myth in the past will now be called *kihti*, “blessing” will be worked as *bahsese*<sup>2</sup>, what was called ritual now is *bahsamoĩ*<sup>3</sup>. These three concepts are based on the constellations. Each *kihti* is linked to the movement of the stars, and the *Transformation Canoe* [Canoa da Transformação] left Copacabana beach towards the Rio Negro following the movement of the stars. And that’s why when we discuss and talk about the mythology of humankind’s transformation we always pay attention to the movement of the stars. Physical Geomythology is very important because the indigenous people look at the stars not as stars, they perceive them as reflection as mediators, time guides. And we’re taking this new dialogue from the indigenous way of thinking into university.

We have three great sages who animate the *maloca*: *γai*, *kumu* and *baya*. When we talk about *γai*, considered as a jaguar, it represents an expert, a great connoisseur within the *maloca*. It is the one who dominates, guides its brothers, takes care of the *maloca* and makes the agencies when someone is sick. But the *kumu* is a blessing expert, known as *pajé* or shaman, connoisseur of all medicinal plants and blessings, he knows the invisible beings or non-human beings that may attack humankind. It is the one that does the protection and smoking of the house, considered the great nurse of the family. There is also *Bayá*, the great chanter and musician, that cheers the *maloca* during the ritualistic party.

For us, indigenous people, the river is not just a river, a stone is not just a stone, a lake is not just a lake, a mountain is not just a mountain, there is another “human” that takes part in the concert of sociological cosmologies<sup>4</sup>, there are other beings. And that’s why the Milk Lake<sup>5</sup> has a very important meaning for indigenous peoples.

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2. A *kihti* is not completely a *bahsese*. The application formula of *kihti* is *bahsese*, a shamanic ritual.

3. *Bahsamoĩ* are dance rituals.

4. When I say ‘the sociological cosmologies’ I wish to bring this thinking that the indigenous *Desana* has in its everyday socialization with beings that inhabit these places, that are the *waimahsã*, “non-human beings, invisible beings”. In specific rituals, specific connections are open with each *waimahsã*.

5. For the *Desana* and *Tukano*, life begins in Rio de Janeiro, called Milk Lake by them. It is in this place that emerges the *Transformation Canoe* [Canoa da Transformação], and where the first *malocas* arise. Check the notebook [Rio de Janeiro, the Milk Lake](#) [Rio de Janeiro, o Lago de Leite].

On San Sebastian's day they pay tributes to the first contact between the Portuguese and indigenous peoples, which took place at the Guanabara Bay, in the Milk Lake. The nature in Rio de Janeiro is very important in indigenous thinking, because it is a matter of ethnic territoriality concerning the origin of life and the origin of the human, that is, the transformation of humankind. Descending from the universe, it was there, in Rio de Janeiro, that the first contact with life was made. The Portuguese came from the other side and made this contact in the same place. In the Desana indigenous cosmology we celebrate the anniversary of the site of Guanabara Bay, the Milk Lake in the Constellation of Armadillo. In this constellation we identify, by the movement of the stars, the concentration of several fish, and therefore the importance of doing two tributes on the day of San Sebastian: the first contact between indigenous and non-indigenous and, also, cosmologically speaking, the time of the Armadillo season.

The Constellation of Armadillo, which can be seen in the Milky Way, is not right in the middle of it, it is right on the side, it is the fourth constellation. The calendar is in the universe and every movement of the stars will tell the time of the year. For example: for the Desana, the first day of the year starts in August, with the Constellation of Heron, which was the time of year when the Transformation Canoe arrived in

DESENHO DA CONSTELAÇÃO DO TATU: **Tōrāmũ Kēhíri** (Luiz Lana). Integra uma série de desenhos para o artigo CHUVAS E CONSTELAÇÕES DESANA que **Tōrāmũ Kēhíri** e Berta Ribeiro escreveram juntos. Os originais estão na Fundação Darcy Ribeiro.



Ipanoré Falls, according to the Desana narratives. The Constellation of Armadillo is very important for indigenous peoples, because it is floods season, when there is the *piracema*<sup>6</sup> of several kinds of fish. And that's why I mentioned the lake at the basin of Guanabara, because it is in the Armadillo season that one can get there to celebrate, to drink life milk and make their ritual, that we call *piracema* in Portuguese.

It is a party and a tribute to strengthen life and blood. The vein of the human being is connected to the Universe's gourd, which in its turn is connected to the Guanabara Bay and that's why I call it a basin, in other words, a gourd. The symbology of the Armadillo is there, in Guanabara Bay<sup>7</sup>.

When a **kumu** says that there is a symbology of life in the Guanabara Bay, where there is the connection of the human with the universe and of the universe with the human, it is not a touristic, an economic symbology. We, the **Desana**, speak in two temporalities: telling the story of the place is one thing, telling the story of time is another. When the **kumu** brings both things together, then it becomes the blessing, which we call **bahsese**. My father, grandfather and uncle always used to say that the Milk Lake is a concentration lake. For the **Desana** that would be a gourd. Translating to the Portuguese language, it would be a basin of gemstones, of gold. That lake is not just a lake, it would be the body of a person's life, where the contact with the first connection to the milk gourd happens. I am not speaking of whole milk, or milk powder, but the milk that is in the kumu's memory, philosophy, Geomythology, Geocosmopolitics. Don't go thinking that there is actual milk there, that you are supposed to go there to drink milk. I am speaking in the matter of spirituality, of animist theory.

In the memory of great indigenous thinkers, all of that water in the Guanabara Bay is not just water, the *Sugarloaf Mountain* [Pão de Açúcar] would be the breast of a woman, because it seems that there is

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6. Migratory movement of fish in their period of reproduction, towards the sources of the river, or the shallow parts of it.

7. It is in the season of the Constellation of Armadillo, of the *piracema*, that the Transformation Canoe with the *waimahsã* people leaves the Milk Lake and goes off on its journey towards Ipanoré, a waterfall in Rio Negro.

the presence of a woman's part there, and the kumu uses this milk that comes linked with the woman's breast. These philosophies are in his memory, and for the *Desana*, *Tukano* and *Tuyuka*, they are sacred things. Each one has its own understanding on how to interpret the places, how to imagine the culture in connection to nature.

It is also very important to outline how the indigenous make this Geomythological reading. How was the structure made? Who is the creator? Who devised it? What was this Lake for? What is the Sugar Loaf for? And what is around it? And the beaches? Does it have meaning? For the *kumuã*, everything that exists on Earth has its meaning and its life. The indigenous idea is not the same as the white thought, so it is very important to translate something that sometimes great thinkers weren't able to properly translate from indigenous thoughts.

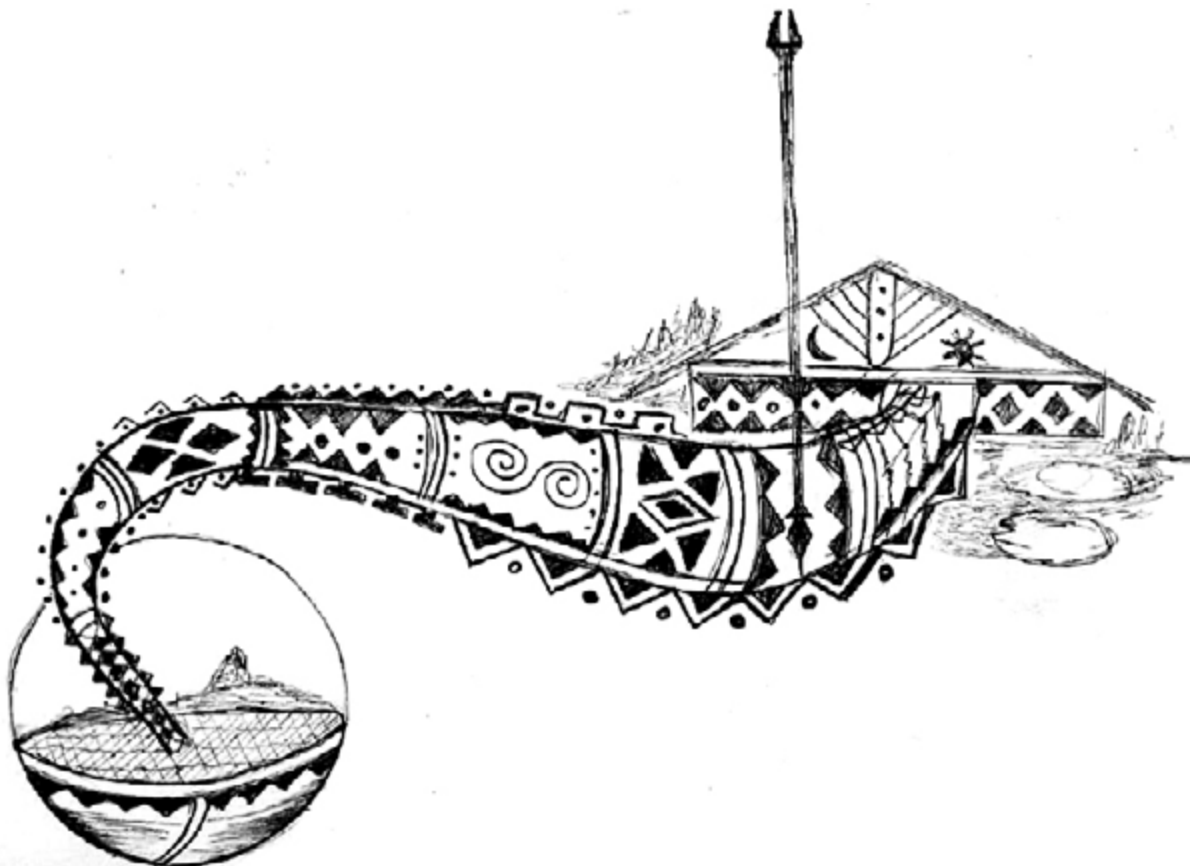
When the old men talked about *yai*, *kumu* and *baya*, it has been translated that *yai* would be a jaguar. Today, many draw the jaguar as indigenous symbolism, but in fact they were not talking about the jaguar itself. The jaguar is a species. They were talking about jaguar concerning the title of wisdom and knowledge, the domain of indigenous knowledge concerning the platforms of the universe, the terrestrial and the river. From the connection with these animals, how to adapt to them, how to see the world through this connection and suffer negative or positive consequences, depending on what one chooses: to provoke or respect other beings. When human beings do not respect other beings, they cause diseases, evils and then fail to solve it. The human being creates the pandemic and then cannot solve the problem. The world is suffering at the moment. Covid-19 pandemic is taking away many thinkers and ancestral sages. In my people, *Desana*, we lost Feliciano Lana, a great writer and illustrator who used to tell his story through drawings.

The non-indigenous think that indigenous people are inventing myths. The human being is very suspicious. Those who live with this concept of perspectivism believe that that place is, for us, a sacred place. You can't bathe in that place because something happened, and you might suffer the consequences. Every locality where the Transformation Canoe has been has its own symbology, for example, the Copacabana Beach is not just any beach, sometimes someone goes bathing there and might disappear. In Belém do Pará, Manaus, until we get to Ipanoré, the *Pamũrĩ*

poá falls, from where human beings have emerged. Each place on Earth where the Canoe has been has its sense and meaning. That's why stories have their own significance: they can do good or do harm. When the connoisseur knows this, he can turn this Geomythological wisdom into Geomedicines.

The Guanabara Bay is the milk gourd. When a blesser, a **kumu**, is going to bless the woman's first pregnancy, she will tell the father: I think I want to get pregnant. What will the **kumu** do, then? He will start to bless materially and spiritually, making contact with the Milk Lake, making connection to the universe through the blood vine, so that the baby can take shape and prepare to come to this world. This is what we call indigenous Geomedicine. Every place has its own kind of blessing. Every location where the Transformation Canoe has passed through will keep on following the woman's pregnancy until it gets to Ipanoré Falls. This pregnancy follow-up is called Geomedicine, because it is ushering a life into this world. The indigenous woman is followed-up by Geomithology and Geomedicine, which is the myth becoming blessing, and places becoming landmarks to take care of humankind's health.

The Transformation Canoe leaving the beach of Copacabana, for the **Desana**, is not just a Canoe in Geomedicine. The **kumu** will embody a woman's body. I am referring to how the **Desana** connoisseurs use this narrative of the canoe, **Pamũrí yukũsiru**, to bring a life into the world.



**JAIME DIAKARA**

Pedagogue, master in Social Anthropology, Desana people writer of children's literature and lecturer on Desana cosmopolitics. Born on the banks of Tiquié river, son of a Desana father and a Tukano mother. Related to Luiz and Firmiano Lana, authors of the book *Before the world did not exist* [Antes o mundo não existia].

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**TRANSLATION**

**CAMILLA CARVALHEIRO DIAS**

Camilla is a yoga teacher and an explorer of body power through dance and dramaturgy. She was born and raised in São Paulo. In 2017 she left the capital to learn about other cultures and research individual knowledge processes. Camilla returned to São Paulo in 2020 where she chose to live until the present moment.



## **MARINA MATHEUS**

Marina is a dance maker. Researches and practices conversation between dance, literature, anthropology, philosophy and yoga. Born in Petropolis, raised in Santos, has lived in São Paulo since 2013. In addition to conceiving authorial works, Marina creates as a collaborator with Carolina Bianchi Y Cara de Cavalo. Alongside Joana Ferraz, the artist articulates the dance creation platform and publishing house Acampamento.

## **REVISION**

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