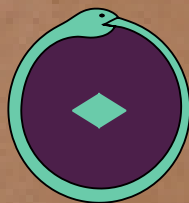
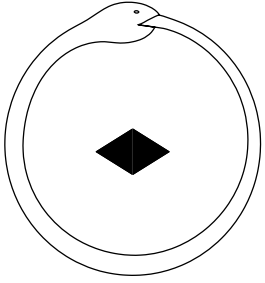


IN MY DREAM,
I AM WHOEVER I WANT TO BE
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In my dream, I am whoever I want to be.

The dream told below is part of the set of dreams I obtained in my initiation with the *Muká*¹, during three months of isolation in the Gregório River forest in 2010. In the course of this period I was with the *Yawanawá* shaman Vicente Yawarani, who died in 2018, and his son Thawahu, who was also an initiate in the *Muká*, a sacred root of the *Yawanawá* people used to obtain, mainly through dreams, the spiritual instructions from their ancestors².

1. This dream is part of the book *Muká, o olhar além* [Muká, the gaze beyond], still unpublished.

2. The details about the *Yawanawá* initiation process would be too extensive to explain in this text. Basically, the *Muká* root is chewed, its juice is ingested, and from that, the postulant goes on a strict diet which includes food abstentions and social isolation. Dreams are one of the means by which the initiate obtains shamanic knowledge and powers. More details can be found in the book *Muká, a raiz dos sonhos* [Muká, the root of dreams].

Suddenly, I saw myself somewhere else. I was in a kind of warehouse by another river's bank, which I identified as the Jaquerana³ River. The warehouse was a mixture of a bar, canteen, pension and trading place. There were canoes berthed, tied with ropes in the stilt houses on which the establishment was based. New canoes arrived, bringing people from the surroundings.

I remember being seated in a spot, in the shadows of the establishment, as if I wanted to escape from the stares and the attention of those who walked by.

A hat projected an even darker shadow over my face, that I obviously could not see, but felt it to be blackened by the jenipapo. Most people purposely turned their gazes away from me, as if avoiding to stare at me.

It was when a canoe berthed, bringing with it a large group of indigenous people that I identified as being Marubo⁴. They entered the warehouse and looked at me from a distance. However, they didn't seem to have that fear in their eyes, as did the others.

From the group, three indigenous men stood out, all carrying their spears. One at the front and two by both sides, like security guards.

The one in the front, which seemed to be the boss, asked me:

– Are you indigenous, white or black?

– This is my dream and I am whoever I want to be – I replied, not in Portuguese but in his own language.

He was relatively surprised, but not much. He smiled and greeted me, pointing to a place nearby, a creek to which I, for some reason, should go.

I walked out of the bar and took my own canoe towards the designated place. I climbed the hill and walked a few minutes through a trail in a field. The trail took me to a yard where there was a simple hut, covered in straw. Outside the house there was a young woman.

The young woman was about twenty years old, light brown hair, almost blond, with white skin, but quite tanned. Her shapely body was adorned with indigenous adornments. Bead necklaces, bracelets, anklets and a woven straw skirt. Her face, like her body, was covered by the most diverse kenes, painted in urucum, and in her hair there were two hair clips in the shape of long macaws: one red and the other blue.

3. Jaquerana River. Tributary of the Javari River whose source is in the Serra do Divisor, Acre.

4. Marubo. Pano language family speaking people, resident in the Indigenous Land of Vale do Javari, Amazonas.

After all, she was very pretty, but she looked much more like a beach girl from Rio de Janeiro than an indigenous woman from the Amazonas.

She appeared to be drying leaves in a basin, as if she was preparing some kind of medicine. She noticed me approaching, but she didn't get scared and continued with her task. As I approached, I noticed that her gestures didn't match her appearance. It was someone remarkably experienced who handled those leaves. So, in a flash, I knew that that woman was actually very, very old.

When I got quite close, she finally stopped and came within my reach. We greeted each other.

– Are you indigenous or white? Young or old? – I asked.

*– This is my dream, and here I am whoever I want to be – she replied, also in an indigenous language, in words almost identical to those I had just said to the **Marubo** leader.*

Then, she removed the two macaw shaped clips from her hair and gave them to me to hold. As I held the clips, they actually turned into two macaws, one blue and the other red, and they walked over my arms. At the same time, both birds gave me a nip with their beaks. I woke up still feeling the pecks on my arms.

This dream seemed to me to indicate the possibility that I had indeed crossed the line that separates my own dreams, and entered someone else's. By visiting her in her own domains, I got confirmation once again that in a certain level of dreams we can be something beyond what we are in our waking life, and that from there we can bring new knowledge and powers to this side.

LEANDRO ALTHEMAN

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