

“YÂDÉ KIIRÎBAWA YEPÉ WASÚ!” REFLECTION ON THE TUPINAMBÁ BATTLE FOR THE PROTECTION YOUR TERRITORY*

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ABSTRACT

This is an important reflection on how Tupinambá people in the Tapajós river region have been practicing environmental and territorial protection politics. Here I discuss how we are still denied by society, but that, in fact, we are a first part of the history of Brazil. I present as an example the "II Tupinambá Ancestral Meeting" which deliberated for the manifesto in defense of life and love for the sacred Tapajós river, together with the Arapiun, Borari, Kumaruara and Tapuia ethnic groups. Finally, I reason that we will continue to resist the politics of the Brazilian government that they seek to infringe our territory and on the conceptual struggle we wage for our ethnic affirmation and resistance.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogical archaeology; Decolonization; Autonomy; Cosmoperception.

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*“Yâdé Kiirîbawa Yepé Wasú” in the *Tupinambá* language translation means “Our unity is our Power”



RESUMO

Esta é uma reflexão importante sobre como nós, o povo Tupinambá da região do rio Tapajós, estamos praticando políticas de proteção ambiental e territorial. Aqui discuto como ainda somos negados pela sociedade, mas que, na verdade, somos uma primeira parte da história do Brasil. Apresento como exemplo o "II Encontro Ancestral Tupinambá" que deliberou pelo manifesto em defesa da vida e do amor ao sagrado rio Tapajós, junto às etnias Arapiun, Borari, Kumaruara e Tapuia. Por fim, discuto que continuaremos resistindo às políticas do Estado que buscam infringir nosso território e também à luta conceitual que travamos por nossa afirmação e resitência étnica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Povo Tupinambá. II Encontro Ancestral Tupinambá. Resistência étnica. Rio Tapajós.

RESUMEN

Es una importante reflexión sobre cómo nos los Tupinambá de la región del río Tapajós estamos practicando políticas de protección ambiental y territorial. Aquí hablo de cómo la sociedad todavía nos sigue negando, pero que, de hecho, somos una primera parte de la historia de Brasil. Les presento como ejemplo el "II Encuentro Ancestral Tupinambá" que deliberó por el manifiesto en defensa de la vida y el amor por el sagrado río Tapajós, junto a las etnias Arapiun, Borari, Kumaruara y Tapuia. Por fin, sostengo que seguiremos resistiendo las políticas del Estado brasileño que buscan infringir nuestro territorio y también la lucha conceptual que libramos por nuestra afirmación étnica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Nación Tupinambá; II Reunión Ancestral Tupinambá; Resistencia étnico; Río Tapajós.



INTRODUCTION

More than 521 years our Tupinambá people have lived in the region known today as the lower valley from the Tapajós river. We live in our T. I. Tupinambá (Terra Indígena Tupinambá)¹ with our villages located in the south-eastern section of an environmental conservation unit known as RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns (Reserva Extrativista Tapajós-Arapiuns)² in the left bank of the lower course of the Tapajós river, southern area of the county of Santarém territorial border with the city of Aveiro, Pará state (VAZ, 2010; JESUS, 2022).

The named conservation unit was created in 1998, after many debates about the importance of environmental preservation in the area. In the area of land regularization, conflicts over land in this region were articulated at the same time the record of the former's federal subdivisions in FLONA Tapajós (Floresta Nacional do Tapajós)³. This ecological reserve is located on the direct margin of the lower course of the Tapajós river, positioned exactly in front of the RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns (IBAMA, 2004, p. 35-37).

According to federal report (ICMBIO, 2008) the large trajectory of conflicts was politically intensified in the 1980s when different community groups from the left bank of the Tapajós river took steps to prevent the progress of several illegal logging projects.

In 1981, behind documents, meetings, convocations and public hearings with Brazilian government agency INCRA (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária)⁴ the first regularization of terrain linked to traditional peoples took place a land range in the zone located on the banks from Tapajós river, approximately 64 x 13 km (kilometers) (GDA, 1999 apud ICMBIO, 2008, p. 7).

Since then, there have been different battles marked the history of mobilizations by traditional peoples during the 1980s and 1990s. Most notably, against the entry a wide logging companies and their actions to illegally felled forest (ICMBIO, 2008, p. 7-8).

After pressure and political campaign from indigenous and community movements for the conquest of the traditional land rights, the acting president of the republic signed commitment letter to the creation of the reserve on September 21th 1998 and in November 6th 1998 signed ordinance that created RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns. Area was delimited approximately 6,476 km² (square kilometers) (647,611.64 acreages) and most of its land belongs the Brazilian government domain (BRASIL, 1998; ICMBIO, 2008, p. 9; ISA, 2021).

This battle for the repossession of the land had a hard revival in the native notion of indigenous culture. According our oral history, we resist and follow the ways of our ancestors. As at Ponta do

¹ *Tupinambá's* indigenous land.

² RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns (Extractive Reservation Tapajós-Arapiuns).

³ FLONA Tapajós (National Forest of Tapajós).

⁴ INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform).



Pau da Letra beach, a place of memory of conflicts with European travellers' groups, that since the 16th century have invaded lands originally belonged to indigenous populations of region. In 2019, Ponta do Pau da Letra beach received the "Il Tupinambá Ancestral Meeting: Act in defence of our territory, river and forest". The indigenous rite took place between October 18th and 20th at the banks and inside Tapajós river and was the stage for spiritual ceremonies and resistance songs.

One of the main decisions taken by the warriors, young people and shamans, sapient women's and cacikados of the Tupinambá in union, was to launch itself in the waters of the Tapajós river to "[...] intercept about eight ferries and barges of the continuum convoy of looting and destruction of our natural resources." (POVO TUPINAMBÁ, 2019a, translated by author, p. 1)⁵. This was determined as a mode of protecting our original domains. As we stated in the Tupinambá manifesto we intercepted (POVO TUPINAMBÁ, 2019b):

[...] barcaças graneleiras do agronegócio, mineradoras e pecuária que passam na frente de nossas aldeias. Essas barcaças representam o modelo de desenvolvimento predatório e genocida que usa inescrupulosamente o rio Tapajós como rua para escoar os comoditiles, estes mesmos que estão sendo lavados com o sangue dos povos indígenas da Amazônia⁶.

In this direction, our territorial protection practices revolve around the control, regularization, and detailed study of our ancestral indigenous land. Experience that goes through a strong rhythm of intense ethnic, cultural, and political articulation.

CHARACTERIZATION OF PONTA DO PAU DA LETRA BEACH, PLACE OF INDIGENOUS RITUAL

On this section, I'll demonstrate technical information about the climate, geology, geomorphology, vegetation, fauna and other characteristics of the area. The place where the Ponta do Pau da Letra beach is located belongs to the Tupinambá of Jaca village and is downstream from Ponta do Enajatuba⁷. The extreme territorial limits of the Jaca village are constituted by the Paranapixuna and Jacaré villages and by the traditional communities of Surucuá, São Tomé and Boim both localities located on the left bank of the lower course of the Tapajós river. The river is a

⁵ Original text: "[...] *interceptar cerca de oito balsas e barcaças do contínuo comboio de saque e destruição de nossas riquezas naturais.*"

⁶ "[...] *agribusiness, mining and cattle barges that pass in front of our villages. These barges represent the model of predatory and genocidal development that unscrupulously uses the Tapajós River as a street to transport the comoditiles, the same ones that are being washed with the blood of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.*"

⁷ Ponta do Enajatuba is one of the most important territorial landmarks of T.I. Tupinambá. It is an extensive beach area that is home to enchanted peoples. Some of them protectors of the territory, being linked to the origin of the Tupinambá culture.



great importance to the Tupinambá people, not only for its high navigability and richness in the variety and quantity of fish, but also for sheltering the cosmological beings who ordered the Tupinambá world; the “Encantados do Tapajós”.

Our territory is made up of different villages, distributed in various locations on the left bank of the lower Tapajós river and the Terra Firme area of RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns. Our villages are: Paranapixuna, Jacaré, Limãotuba, Brinco da Moça, Pajurá, São Francisco, Castanhal, Boa Sorte, São Caetano, Enseada do Amorim, São Pedro, Surucuá, Paricatuba, Muratuba (Mura), Vista Alegre, Jaca, Jauarituba, Santo Amaro and Mirixituba (Figure 1).

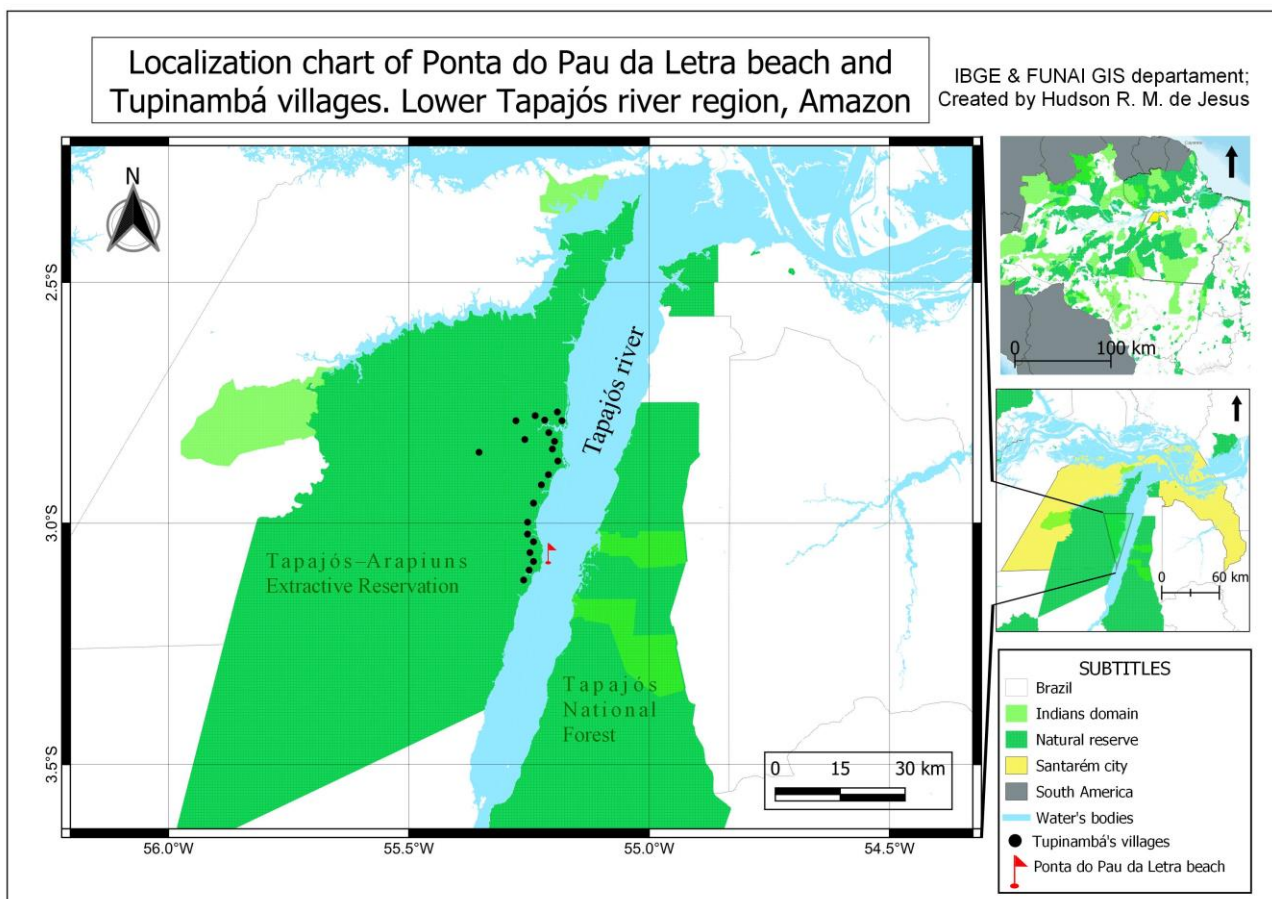


Figure 1: Researched area. Source of cartographic grids field data, IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) & FUNAI (National Indian Foundation).

Tupinambá people locate the history of their ancestors along this Tapajós river, where different ethnic groups also live, such as: Arapyun, Tapajó, Kumaruara, Munduruku, Munduruku Cara-Preta, Tapuia, Tupinambá, Apiaká, Arara Vermelha, Tupayu, Jaraki, Borari, Maytapu, Yawaretê (ARANTES, 2020; ARNAUD, 2015 ; ARRUTI; VIEIRA; SILVA, 2019; BELTRÃO, 2013; CARDOSO,



2019; COLARES, 2013; COSTA & VAZ, 2019; COSTA LIMA, 2018; FIGUEIRA & SANTOS, 2020; GARCIA, L.F., 2020; IORES, 2009, 2011; JESUS, 2018, 2020, 2021; LIMA, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019; MARQUES, 2019; MEDAETS, 2018; PEIXOTO, 2017; PEIXOTO & PEIXOTO, 2012, 2019; PEIXOTO; ARENZ; FIGUEIREDO, 2013; RODRIGUES, G., 2018; SILVA, A., 2018; SILVA, S., 2013; SILVA & RODRIGUES, 2019; SILVA; DINIZ; ALENCAR, 2021; PEREIRA & BRASILEIRO, 2020; TAPAJÓS, 2019; TAPAJÓS & SILVA NETO, 2019; TEIXEIRA; HERRERA; TERRA, 2018; VAZ, 2010, 2013).

According to information from Cacique Braz Tupinambá⁸, the last stage of the self-demarcation of the extension of Tupinambá territory delimited an area of approximately 200,000 acreages. Traditionally, the Tupinambá ancestry marks the indigenous occupation in the region, a history that resides in the complexity of the relationships we have with the place where we live.

Para nós a T.I. Tupinambá deve ser um lugar harmonioso para se viver, com nossas belezas naturais, praias de areia branca, água doce e cristalina, fauna e florestas encantadoras, lagos, igapós, e, principalmente, igarapés e caminhos indígenas (POVO TUPINAMBÁ, 2018, p.12).⁹

The space where the ritual act place is characterized by being a geographical zone with an extensive beach area, with sandy deposits of extended morphology¹⁰, that form beautiful landscapes of white sand that are parallel on the coast bank of the Tapajós river.

In a millenary process of geological sedimentation, the Ponta do Pau da Letra beach is nearby to deep river channels, whose attributes are stones areas that emerge with the drought of the hydrographic basins. Idiosyncratic seasonality of the ebb tide period of the hydrographic system (BRANCHES FARIAS & SOUZA CARNEIRO, 2012; DANTAS et al., 2017; MENDES et al., 2020; OLIVEIRA et al., 2000).

There is a forest in the place called Restinga that borders the area of forest known as Tropical Forest (Ombrophilous Rainforest) (CONAMA, 1996; TNC, 2019, p. 7): Restinga vegetation of the Tapajós river is known for being a sandy coastal forest that consists of having its land very close to bodies of water, with vegetation with types: open herbaceous and/or closed beach, closed

⁸ This information was passed to me on December 10th, 2019, in the São Francisco village.

⁹ "For us, T.I. Tupinambá should be a harmonious place to live, with our natural beauties, white sand beaches, fresh and crystalline water, enchanting fauna and forests, lakes, igapós, igarapés and indigenous paths."

¹⁰ These deposits are also known as sandy ridges, being responsible for the formation of dune areas and depressions of different types, in addition to serving in several successive stages of soil sedimentation in floristic areas (reader COSTA et al., 1996; MENDES, 2012; SCOLES, 2016).



herbaceous cordon sandy; open and/or closed floodable shrubs and arboreal. And it can also be divided into different ecological communities of plants such as halophiles, reptant psammophiles, herbaceous swamps, the graminoidal beach and the genus palmae (Arecaceae) (AMARAL et al., 2016; ZACARDI et al., 2017, 2018).

This complex mosaic of vegetation cover is strongly influenced by fluvial and eolic action, mechanical and chemical processes responsible for the deposition of the sediments that form the Restinga zones. Due to its important environmental and ecological function of fixing and stabilizing soils and vegetation; Restinga has received special attention for its legal protection in accordance with the Brazilian Forest Code, which has classified these spaces as a Permanent Preservation Area (APP), which cannot be occupied and/or devastated (BRASIL, 2012).

The air temperature and climate at Ponta do Pau da Letra beach is temperate, with humidity and heat, divided between a season with a large amount of rain in the first half of each year and another season with a sunny characteristic, with few rainfalls at the second half of the year (BENTES, et. al., 2018; MANDU; GOMES; COUTINHO, 2020; SOUZA et al., 2018).

In addition to the Restinga vegetation, which has its expansion limit determined by the pre-market line zone¹¹, there are other types of plant ecosystems in the immediate at the Terra Firme¹² areas, depending on the types of soil and water drainage. These being: the Ombrophilous Rainforest (Tropical Forest) and Igapó Forests.

The Ombrophilous Rainforest occupies the largest portion of the element considered to be native vegetation and comprises three subgroups of forest cover. The Sub-Montana Dense Ombrophilous Rainforest Emerging Canopy (Dense Forest of Terra Firme) characterized by large trees, measuring between 25 to 35 meters in height, with a predominance of exuberant vegetation, usually with one or two species that stand out in the stratum uniform arboreal. The Dense Ombrophilous Rainforest Lowlands Emerging Canopy (Open Forest with Cipoal) that presents trees with an average height of around 20 meters, surrounded by various vines. Within this type of forest there are usually denser patches of vegetation, like the type of cover mentioned above. And the Ombrophilous Dense Alluvial

¹¹ In the study area in question, this is a geographical area that delimits the space of constitution of the Restinga forest and borders other types of vegetation groups, which have an aspect of dense forest in terms of the number of trees, a known physiognomic characteristic of the Amazon Forest.

¹² Terra Firme forest is an ecosystem presents great richness, complexity in the composition, distribution and density of species and requires a "habitat" fundamentally determined by climatic and edaphic conditions (see ARAUJO; JORDY FILHO; FONSECA, 1986, p. 138 and GAMA et al, 2005, p. 613).



Forest Uniform Canopy (Open Forest with Palm Trees) which is a mixed formation of palm trees and well-spaced trees, of very irregular height, between 10 and 25 meters high (ICMBIO, 2014, p. 31-32).

Regarding the surrounding Igapó Forests, we can define them as environments with marshy terrain, periodically flooded and covered by vegetation composed of large, exposed roots. There is a correlation between the Open Forest with Cipoal and the Igapó Forests, which converge during the flood period, represent areas temporarily subject to flooding from the Tapajós river and its tributaries, together with existing lakes there (ICMBIO, 2014, p. 31-32).

NEWLY DISCOVERED HISTORY OF THE TUPINAMBÁ PEOPLE AT THE TAPAJÓS RIVER

With the territorial invasion of the last centuries on the lower Tapajós river, carried out by several *Karíwa*¹³ (non-indigenous) groups. Some such as: the Jesuit missions, the indigenous directory in the city of Santarém, the Cabanagem movement, the rubber cycles, the military dictatorship, and capitalist economic liberalism, we fight so that many of our customs and cultural practices are not lost and/or forgotten in the course of time. After more than 500 years of physical, psychological, and epistemological violence, we have resisted the genocide carried out for years by different economic and social politics for the indigenous people of the lower Tapajós river (Figure 2).

¹³*Kariwa* is a word that comes from the Tupinambá indigenous language and means "non-indigenous person invader".



Figure 2: Ceremony of territorial protection at the II Tupinambá Ancestral Meeting on the Tapajós river. Source, Tupinambá people, 2019.

History that we manifest through our way of life and protection of our indigenous territory, which informs a lot about what it means to be of the Tupinambá ethnic group in current times. According to our “*Protocolo de Consulta Prévia Livre e Informada*” (POVO TUPINAMBÁ, 2018, p. 11)¹⁴, done at the seminary on territorial self-demarcation occurred in the São Francisco village:

Somos originários dessa terra, mas naquela época nosso povo tinha medo de ser afirmar devido as ameaças de morte. Após a Constituição de 88, com o apoio do Grupo Consciência Indígena (GCI), perdemos o medo e voltamos a nós auto afirmar enquanto indígenas. Por meio de nossa união, passamos a lutar pelos nossos Direitos. Lembramos que ficamos todo esse tempo adormecidos como estratégia de sobrevivência e com medo da violência que poderíamos sofrer.¹⁵

Currently, the Tupinambá people of the Tapajós river speak the Nheëgatu language¹⁶ as well as the Portuguese. Nheëgatu Tupinambá refers to one of the linguistic dialects used by the Tupinambá

¹⁴ “Free and Informed Prior Consultation Protocol”.

¹⁵ “We are originally from this land, but at that time our people were afraid to assert themselves due to death threats. After the 1988 Constitution, with the support of the Indigenous Consciousness Group (GCI), we lost our fear and returned to asserting ourselves as indigenous people. Through our union, we started to fight for our Rights. We remember that we were asleep all this time as a survival strategy and afraid of the violence we could suffer.”.

¹⁶ An important part of the development of the Nheëgatu Tupinambá language came from the contact between Tupinambá populations and speakers of other Amerindian languages such as Arawakan. It is, therefore, the linguistic continuity of the ancient Tupinambá language, now also spoken outside indigenous villages. A language that has been subject to external



people in the Tapajós river basin, being considered a language of the Amazonian Tupi series. That is why, the revitalization and strengthening of this language, taking into account its ethnic specificities, because “[...] it is a language that lives in our memories, in our stories, songs, places, it is a language that does not lead us to colonization by *Kariwa*, but rather to our ancestors, it is a truly indigenous language [...]” (CRUZ & FERREIRA, 2020, p. 10), it becomes strictly necessary.

In the public context, the São Francisco village was the first on the Tapajós river to reaffirm itself, ethnically, as a Tupinambá people. This was due to the continued transmission of oral histories and memory about ethnic origins, which is also referred to the recent political struggle and revitalization of knowledge and culture. At the present time, the foundation date of the São Francisco village is October 13th, 2013, and this was marked in a convention for reasons of legal protection of the territory and individuals (POVO TUPINAMBÁ, 2013).

As of 2012, our way of life was once again heavily threatened. Faced at possibility of building a railway in our territory, the Tupinambá people had to go through a strong process of reorganization in villages, which led to the formation of institutions that represented their *parentes*¹⁷. The project was being carried out in partnership between the national governments of China and Brazil, in addition to other partners in the private sector. The road would serve for the faster flow of grains and cereals to the São Luís city at the Maranhão state, city that has an important grain port in the northern region and would be responsible for sending soybeans to other countries.

Other's problems would be the daily robbery that foreign mining companies cause in the Tapajós river and mainly the prelude to the construction of five bigger hydroelectric complexes on the Tapajós river and the possibility of building two more (FERREIRA, 2013). In overall, 44 projects for the construction of power hydro stations plants distributed among the Tapajós, Juruena, Teres Pires, Jamaxim rivers and its tributaries, considered the last frontier for the Brazilian government mega-projects in the Amazon (TNC, 2019, p. 10).

The full construction of these hydro stations would change the hydrographic Tapajós river basin affecting an area of 1,979 km² (197,200 acreages), substantial in biodiversity and natural beauties. Land extents, vegetation, rivers and igarapés would be grossly impacted during the construction and operation of the power hydro stations. Forest areas will be flooded, including places with high concentration of dwellings of riverside and indigenous populations (SANTINI, 2012).

The choice of the name of the São Francisco village was a historical and symbolic tribute to the matriarch of the Tupinambá people on the Tapajós river; Acendina Lina de Melo, who had died a

influences over time (see more in CABRAL, 2011; MOORE, 1994; 2014; MOORE & STORTO, 2002; RODRIGUES, A., 1964, 1985; NOBLE, 1965; SILVA MEIRELLES, 2020).

¹⁷ *Parente* is a term used as a symbol of collective brotherhood to refer to indigenous people from different ethnicities.



decade before the village was rebuilt at the age of 106 years. For a long time, São Francisco was considered the patron saint of the community, so much so that, annually, between the months of October and November, the feast of São Francisco is held. This festival is part of the Tupinambá tradition and anachronistically meets the perceptions that the Roman-Portuguese Catholicism would have destroyed the indigenous cultures in their traditions. It is true that this nomination demonstrates the importance of local memory to revive and bring to life the respect for people who have died, but who fought for our culture.

It is known that from the 16th and 17th centuries, the indigenous populations of the Tapajós river underwent population reduction and an attempt to destabilize and disarticulate their ways of life (SYMANSKY & GOMES, 2012). For us from the Tupinambá people it was no different; even so, it was possible to reframe our traditions and immaterial perceptions, a situation that led us to the formation of new forms of indigeneity. About this, Souza and Gois (2017, p. 121) are emphatic in saying that in the lower Tapajós river region:

[...] se encuentra el hogar de varios pueblos indígenas, que habitan a lo largo del río Tapajós y de los afluentes de los ríos maro y Arapiuns. Es importante señalar que los grupos indígenas que habitan en esta zona se ven a sí mismos como herederos de las antiguas naciones Tupinambá, Tapajó, Arapium, Apiaká, que habitaron esta región antes de la llegada de los colonizadores. Cabe señalar que los tupinambá pasaron desapercibidos ante los ojos de los especialistas [...], y durante mucho tiempo fueron considerados como un grupo ribereño que subsistía gracias a la pesca y la agricultura.¹⁸

Thus, for a long time, the Tupinambá people were considered a riverine and caboclo group. In this sense, our history on the Tapajós river was marked by discrimination and put on hold and many of our rights and histories are still denied. In this sense, we are an indigenous people that is going through a process of consolidation, as a re-established collective, but which understands that we are far from the end of this process of recovery.

Tupinambá people and other natives' groups from the Tapajós river reorganized the indigenous movement from the 1990's onwards. The movement's primary objective was the recognition of the differentiated indigenous ethnic condition of these peoples and the beginning of the re-acquisition of their lands. From this, in May 2000 the CITA (Conselho Indígena Tapajós-Arapiuns)¹⁹ was created,

¹⁸ "It is home to several indigenous peoples, who live along the Tapajós River and the tributaries of the Maro and Arapiuns rivers. It is important to note that the indigenous groups that inhabit this area see themselves as heirs of the ancient Tupinambá, Tapajó, Arapium, and Apiaká people, which inhabited this region before the arrival of the colonizers. It should be noted that the Tupinambá went unnoticed in the eyes of specialists [...], and for a long time they were considered as a riverine group that subsisted thanks to fishing and agriculture."

¹⁹ Indigenous Council Tapajós-Arapiuns (CITA).



responsible for bringing together various indigenous peoples of the left bank of the lower course of the Tapajós river.

The recent historical experiences of the 21st century, the geographic proximity and occupation trajectory of the Tupinambá in partnership with the Arapyum people are intrinsically linked with the creation of RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns. Which was officially created by IBAMA (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis)²⁰ in 1998 as a great achievement of the indigenous peoples who live in this environmental conservation unit.

The creation of RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns was the acclaim of advances in indigenous wins. For this, important struggles were fought for its creation at the beginning of the democratic reopening of the Brazilian government between the 1980's and 1990's. About this, Peixoto and Fleuri (2018, p. 537) emphasize that:

A luta pela terra conformou os territórios que hoje são Reserva Extrativista e Terras Indígenas e a necessidade de comprovação de perenidade e vínculo com terra, no final dos anos de 1990, jogou luz na ancestralidade indígena daquela população. Conscientes, eles perceberam que “uma gota” da cultura do branco não extraía deles a indianidade, mas que tinha sido sim uma estratégia eficaz de oprimi-los, inculcando neles a vergonha de sua própria cultura, para tentar arrancar deles o direito primordial à terra que sempre viveram. Revelaram os rituais indígenas que praticavam escondidos. Valorizaram suas comidas e seus modos de fazer. Nunca deixaram de pedir permissão aos seres visíveis e invisíveis que habitam rios e matas, para caçar e pescar. Mantêm uma relação de reciprocidade com a terra. Os indígenas se libertaram e isso é decolonial.²¹

In its genesis, RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns had as main justification the protection of large areas of forest from the expansion of wood companies. At the same time, this context provoked in the main leaders at the time the theme of indigenous history and cultural identity (VAZ, 2011). Thereby, the conception of RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns represents an important landmark in the ethnic mobilizations of the left bank of the lower course of the Tapajós river, the definitive return of the Tupinambá people to the struggle for their original rights.

After 2011, the Tupinambá struggle for the land tenure regularization of their land began to be led by the CITUPI (Conselho Indígena Tupinambá do Baixo Tapajós)²². An entity created to

²⁰ Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA).

²¹ “The struggle for land shaped the territories that are today an Extractive Reservation and Indigenous Lands, and the need for proof of perpetuity and link to land, in the late 1990s, shed light on the indigenous ancestry of that population. Consciously, they realized that “a drop” of white people's culture did not extract indigeness from them, but that it had been an effective strategy to oppress them, inculcating in them the shame of their own culture, to try to wrest their primordial right to land from them who have always lived. They revealed the indigenous rituals they practiced in secret. They valued their foods and their ways of doing things. They never stopped asking permission to the visible and invisible beings that inhabit rivers and forests, to hunt and fish. They maintain a reciprocal relationship with the land. The indigenous people were freed and that's decolonial.”

²²CITUPI (Tupinambá Indigenous Council of Baixo Tapajós).



represent us legally and politically, composed of *Caciques*, *Tuxawas*, *Pajés*²³, *Parteiras* and *Benedeiras*²⁴ from the villages. Leaders chosen in a collective process, whose function is to fight for the guarantee of improvements for all and who must always be communicating to the people about political activities.

The land tenure situation of T.I. Tupinambá and its villages is still the target of many battles in the legal field of indigenous claims. Even today already recognized by the local commission of Brazilian government agency FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio)²⁵ there is still no indication of the date of demarcation. An indigenous right that is guaranteed through the Brazilian constitution (BRASIL, 1988 [2016]) and which is also configured in the “Convention 169” of the ILO (International Labour Organization)²⁶, (OIT, 1989, 2011), which had its text approved by the Brazilian government starting to be validated in the national territory since 2003 (BRASIL, 2002).

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND: TERRITORY, LANDSCAPE, SIGNIFICANT PLACES, AND MEMORY

There are many concepts of territory in archeology. According to Zedeño (1997), the concept of territory in archaeology can be understood as the socio-environmental history of human interaction in the environment in which it lives. But, at the same time, as a display of human territoriality. The territory is in the economic, social, political and ritual sphere and has a strong spatial dimension, which involves people's homes and daily lives. It is important to emphasize that the landscape of Ponta do Pau da Letra village is an indicator that defines part of the environmental territory, but that this should not be observed only in this way, as there are countless ways to observe the territory. Mainly from an identity point of view.

The concept of territory in archeology is seen not only as a space through which cultures and people in the past occupied and dwelling the land. Which is usually interpreted through the spatial

²³ The concept of *Cacique* is related to the kinship, prestige and generosity of the main family of the village. He is responsible for organizing and taking care of issues related to indigenous peoples, such as way of life and rituals. And he must be an excellent articulator of political and cultural issues. *Tuxawa* has attribution to a leadership position within the village, which refers to its tradition as a farmer and political articulator. While the *Pajé* (shaman) is a leader and spiritual intermediary. Indigenous sage about forest spirits and elder spirits, who in his *Pajelança* uses natural medicines of power such as baths produced through plant roots and teas made from herbs and seeds of the forest. In addition to this, he also uses animal substances and minerals to expel evil spirits and cure various physical and/or spiritual ailments. Both denominations have origins in the Tupi-Guarani language.

²⁴ *Parteiras* are responsible for performing home births. A learning acquired since childhood that is based on indigenous experience, knowledge, and practices (SCHWEICKARDT; MÂNICA; SCHWEICKARDT, 2017). The *Benedeiras* are people from the village who carry kindness in their practices. With knowledge about the use of healing plants and specific natural medicines for each problem. The ancient knowledge of these women unites medicinal plants, prayer, and faith (VAZ, 2016).

²⁵ FUNAI (National Foundation of the Indian).

²⁶ In Brazil this organization knows as OIT (Organização Internacional do Trabalho).



and geographic distribution of artifacts. However, the territory, even more so, are places where landscapes exist as records of very old territorialities. We talk here about the concept of territoriality, which is the meaning that traditional populations can attribute to these landscapes, as well as being places of spiritual beings (ZEDEÑO, 2008, p. 211-213). This three-dimensional interaction is built by the combination of human modification in a landscape previously seen with only the environment, but through this way of employing historicity, it leads to the formation of specific territorialities (ZEDEÑO, 2008, p. 212).

In the definition of Garcia (2017) “[...] the landscape is what interweaves the different “meanings” [...] of what “[...] corresponds to the temporality of connected human experience to paths, places, toponyms and topography.” (GARCIA, L.G., 2017, p. 29, translated by author).²⁷ These experiences are narratives, indigenous stories that tell us, listen to, write, sing, and transmit, in the construction of our memory as the Tupinambá people.

Silva (2013), when studying the Assurini people, presented us with the idea that significant places bring with them their ancestral records of visitation and historicity, making these; spaces of archaeological narratives from the point of view of cultural diversity. Significant places are physically and symbolically transformed, they are perceptions of identity and culture that invoke cultural encounters and that make them persistent (ZEDEÑO & BOWSER, 2009) and that are defended by indigenous peoples in different parts of the world.

Jácome (2017, p. 497), in her study about the WaiWai society in the living on the banks of the Trombetas and Nhamundá rivers, demonstrated that the significant places of the Wawai:

[...] ao mesmo tempo são locais de história dos antepassados e de outros seres, que no tempo presente são apresentados como míticos. No entanto, vimos que a potencialidade desses lugares de ativar memórias e afetos (perigos, doenças, infortúnios) é real, ou seja, que aquilo que está no passado mítico, tem potência e agência de agir no presente. Mas ao mesmo tempo, consideramos que os lugares e as cerâmicas também guardam memórias, não no sentido cronológico linear, mas conforme já discutimos, por outros modos.²⁸

From this perspective, she points to:

[...] lugares que não necessariamente são sítios arqueológicos, ou seja, lugares com vestígios materiais que nós reconhecemos como tal. Mas são lugares com

²⁷ Original text: “[...] a paisagem é o que entrelaça os diferentes “significados” [...] daquilo que “[...] corresponde à temporalidade da experiência humana conectadas aos caminhos, lugares, toponímias e topográficas.”.

²⁸ “[...] at the same time, they are places in the history of ancestors and other beings, which in the present time are presented as mythical. However, we saw that the potential of these places to activate memories and affections (dangers, sickness, evils) is real, that is, that what is in the mythical past has the power and agency to act in the present. But at the same time, we consider that places and ceramics also keep memories, not in the linear chronological sense, but as we have already discussed in other ways.”.



histórias e marcas (visíveis ou não) que fazem parte da narrativa histórica de humanos e não humanos (JÁCOME, 2017, p. 197).²⁹

Indigenous memory helps in the interpretation of such social landscapes and cultural parks. Wherefore, it is essential to understand how these places are present in the daily life of indigenous peoples.

There are places of memory, which are linked to the concept of indigenous ancestry of significant places (SILVA, F., 2013). As a result, the identification and/or measurement of the size of archaeological sites is normally based on prior information, credited to local knowledge about the territory. This memory can be related to ethnic identity, which is explicit in the relationship of indigenous people with their territory.

For Machado (2013) the concept of cultural landscape does not only involve materially modified landscapes, but those that are transformed by human perception.

The concept of landscape is essential to understand the meaning of territory, important places and the memory associated with them. There are many understanding of what landscape is, I'll focus in two.

An initial that understands it as synonymous with the environment and that classifies it as responsible for offering different environmental conditions of resources necessary for the survival and subsistence of a human society. That observes the landscape as an environmental space composed of ecological systems, with a structure and life of its own transformation, in which humanity spent the thousands of years of its evolution adapting and domesticate (ARROYO-KALIN; CLEMENT; FRASER, 2008; MACHADO, 2017; MAGALHÃES, 2013; NEVES, 2013; NEVES & HECKENBERGER, 2019; PIPERNO, 2011; SCHEEL-YBERT, 2016; THOMAS & VAN DAMME, 2010; WIERSUM, 1997).

Only more recently can the second view referred to, which deals with the environmental landscape as a place significantly marked by social and cultural experience, be considered (BEDNARIK, 1995; ZEDEÑO & BOWSER, 2009). Hodder (1986) in his historical and interpretive perspective warned of the archaeological record as a non-reductive allegory of biological human adaptation to the environment, but of a social interaction in the environment and with the environment. Which includes not only the use of the environment for survival, but its significance through rituals and symbolic practices (HODDER, 1992).

These places are constituted and loaded with stories triggered by routine activities in the territories. Each of these places that are part of the landscapes have a memory associated with them. With specific and distinct predicates and meanings, with particulars derived from its

²⁹ “[...] places that are not necessarily archaeological sites, that is, places with material remains that we recognize as such. But they are places with histories and marks (visible or not) that are part of the historical narrative of humans and non-humans [...]”.



relationships with people and its interrelationship with other places in the landscape, created by the human performance of use and by the act of telling the local history (DAVID & THOMAS, 2010).

Thinking about the long duration of the Amerindian occupation of T.I. Tupinambá means producing an archaeology of the present in indigenous territory, it can be transversal to an archaeology of the Tupinambá feelings (GARCIA, L.G., 2020) of belonging and, at its core, be based on the relevance that the sources of oral history have. With this, the indigenous tradition, its cosmology, native values and knowledge, particular ways of historicity and meaning of places, become the main actors in archaeological practice. In this regard, Garcia (2017, p. 36-37) points out that the methodology applied to field research in archaeology and to ethnographic writing should emphasize:

[...] dimensão relacional dos lugares, mais precisamente sobre o modo como os lugares tecem paisagens ganham cores, sons, calor, frescor, cheiros, sabor, cansaço, medo, afeto, expectativas, surpresas, estranhamento, saudade.³⁰

The knowledge and scholarship regimes of the Tupinambá people are built, among other ways, by their living relationships in their villages and territory. Indigenous knowledge is not diametrically opposed to the archaeological sciences. However, for a long time our knowledge has been dichotomous in relation to archaeology. My experience as an archaeologist and villager rekindled my scientific expectations as I lived a large part of my life in the village and, therefore, I know, inherently, the landscapes, environmental phenomena, and indigenous paths of the territory.

DISCUSSION: REST HOME IN THE FOREST AND ON THE PONTA DO PAU DA LETRA BEACH TO BUILD A TUPINAMBÁ INDIGENOUS THEORY

Landscapes are territorial and symbolic spaces, sometimes sacred, that emerge from worldviews controlled and contested by social and ontological practice. Their understanding is permeated by living in these landscapes and places in the territory (LUI & MOLINA, 2009).

The significant places in T.I Tupinambá tell us indigenous stories about the creation of life, cosmology and about the importance of mythological beings in the genesis of our culture such as Cobra grande, Onça pintada e Uirapuru³¹.

Life linked with territory, from perspective of social practices and also ethnobotanical knowledge practices are arguments that attest to the meanings for the natives to remain in their lands (BICKER; ELLEN, PARKES, 2005; GOMES, 2021).

³⁰ “[...] *relational dimension of places, more precisely about how places weave landscapes, gain colours, sounds, heat, freshness, smells, taste, tiredness, fear, affection, expectations, surprises, strangeness, missing.*”.

³¹ Giant Snake, Painted Onça and Uirapuru, these indigenous histories are part of the cosmology construction and existence narrative of the Tupinambá people.



Until now, a large part of Amazonian native cultures has been poorly defined and interpreted by the different epistemic currents of scientific practice that deal with human behaviour (ARRUTI, 1997; ALMEIDA, 2004; BENSUSAN, 2004; BOLÃNOS, 2010; COSTA, 2019; IORES, 2018; VADJUNEC; SCHMINK; GREINER, 2011). For example, from the naturalist idea of acculturated Indians that was formulated from the 19th century onwards, passing through the generalization of the name of Amazonian peasantry present in records and sociological studies of the first half of the 20th century, reaching the conceptual formulation of traditional peoples by recent anthropology (CALEGARE, HIGUCGI; BRUNO, 2014; BELOW, 2015; COSTA et al., 2013; DE CASTRO, 2013; EMMI, 2007; HARRIS, 1998; IORES, 2014; KAWA, 2012; LACERDA, 2013; LIMA, 2015; MEDAETS, 2019, 2021; OLIVEIRA, 1988; PACE, 1997, 2006; PEIXOTO; ARENZ; FIGUEIREDO, 2013; PONTUAL, 2015; REIS, 2017; SARQUIS, 2010) (Figure 3).

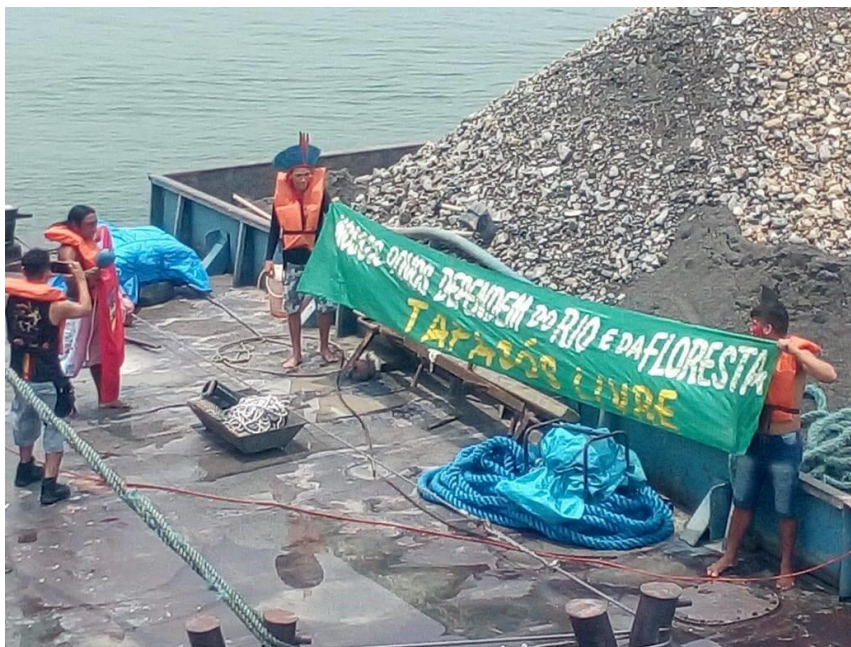


Figure 3: Interception of ore looted from indigenous lands, led by the Tupinambá people, with the participation of the Arapiun, Borari, Kumaruara and Tapuia ethnic groups. Source Tupinambá people, 2019.

In Brazil, now more deeply, we indigenous people who are commonly referred to in research and publications as “study objects”, put on a position of intellectuality to propose a unlike theory from those preceded by the “west” to inform them about the shapes in which we are immersed in contemporary society (AMADO, 2019; ANGELO, 2018; ARANTES, 2019; BANIWA, 2006, 2019a; CORREA, C. 2019; CORREA, E, 2019; FERNANDES, 2017; KAYAPÓ, 2013; PRIPRÁ, 2021; RAMOS, 2016; VAZ, 2019a, 2019b).



We consider Ponta do Pau da Letra beach as a sacred place in our territory because it contemplates our cosmological history. Due to this, the construction of this indigenous theory on the notion of identity and its relationship with territory and the notions of territoriality, through the definition of sacred places, can only be contributed by taking a position in academic environments. A question that we can address because of the intense debate about our Amerindian tradition of living in villages. For our ethnic belonging can no longer be seen as the image that to be an indigenous society we must live “isolated” and that our culture would have been encapsulated in time.

This erroneous view of isolated peoples derives from a mistaken conception of the idea of living in villages (SHELTON et al., 2013). Because the indigenous peoples are practice isolation in the Amazon Forest to seek rest home there, to escape the homogenizing genocide of Brazilian government and yours necro-politics.

This voluntary isolation is due to the forced contacts made in the past and present, which aim only at accessing the natural resources available on indigenous lands. Oppressive historical conditions such as massacres and enslavement are also conditions that cause such a context and that threaten their lives and territories

Taking refuge in the forest is a way to avoid forced contacts that occur through various types of violence, such as deaths, rapes, and epidemics. It is legitimate to think that before the European invasion there was no such concept of isolated peoples or even voluntary isolation. In fact, this romantic and prejudiced view of isolation is wrong because they do; furtive contacts with other neighbouring communities, especially in areas with different ethnicities and traditional peoples (IACHR, 2013; SHELTON et al., 2013).

In the 20th century, voluntary asylum in the forest by indigenous peoples occurred due to the policies of the Brazilian government of a supposed “attraction” and “pacification” undertaken initially by the Brazilian government agency SPI (Serviço de Proteção ao Índio)³² and later by FUNAI. These politics lasted strongly into the late 1980s and into the 21st century they have made a strong comeback during the presidential Brazilian government of Jair Bolsonaro (BANIWA, 2019b; STOLL, 2019; POVO TUPINAMBÀ, 2021; VAZ, 2019c) (Figure 4).

³² SPI (Indigenous Protection Service).



Figure 4: Warriors women's in defence of our environmental heritage on the Tapajós river. Source Tupinamabá people, 2019.

According to FUNAI, there are around 120 indigenous communities in Brazil that have not yet been contacted (FUNAI, 2021, p. 1). Contact forced of any these peoples has an incalculable size, as it confronts the notion of human rights, meaning the continuation of the genocide against the native peoples of Amazon region. In this sense, protection politics for these indigenous peoples that respect their self-determination are necessary (SHELTON et al, 2013).

Any type of forced contact violates the fundamental rights of these peoples who live in rest home in the forest. Considering that they have a constitutional and international right to choose their own way of life, political-social organization, and cultural linguistics. So, it is necessary to make a real reflection on what happened to our Tupinambá people in the Tapajós river region after the beginning of interethnic contact since the 16th century. Particularly, we do not believe that we disappeared in the first two hundred years of ethnic and warlike conflicts with European invaders. Instead, we have continued to resist for the last five centuries.

What makes the diversity of indigenous groups in the region not mentioned in the documents of the "official historiographical narrative" (IORES, 2019; JESUS 2019) since the 17th century was the evolutionist vision that saw in indigenous names a primitiveness. A mistaken conception that determined peoples as savages and in stages of evolution (CURI, 2015; GARCIA, S. 1993; GEERTZ, 2004; LARAIA, 2001; LÉVI-STRAUSS, 1989), WAGNER, 2010).



With this outlook, research and historical documents then began to speak of native populations, coining them with terms such as: caboclos and ribeirinhos (riverside dwellers).

In truth these were called that without having been consulted about how they saw themselves. So, there was not an end to indigenous cultures, but simply an option by the authors to make these people invisible.

In other words, it is not that there are no more references in contemporaneity, but that the original peoples resisted and did not deny their identities. They have always known that they had a strong indigenous ancestry and now more than ever they have exceptional courage to assert their ethnic identity and flee from colonizing and homogenizing cultural categories.

Diversity never ceased to exist, certainly that transcultural changes occurred, but the affirmation of the indigenous identity of the Tupinambá people in the region has always existed. And it has always been part of the socio-political and cultural landscape of the Tapajós river.

This does not mean thinking or attributing a static view to the Tupinambá or simply proposing a model of ruptures and permanency, as this model ends up generating cultural selectivity and only promotes segregations when choosing the cultural equipment that could or could not remain in our society in the present time.

END CONSIDERATIONS.

Our ethnic mobilization process is only going to get stronger and stronger. The long silence about the existence of social differences between the native peoples from the left bank of the lower course of the Tapajós river was a choice of the way science in general caricatured culture. Because of this, it cannot be said that at some point in this history there was an end to the ethnic erasure of the Tupinambá culture. On the contrary, we resist and lived in harmony with our territory.

One of the problems we face in our territory are the public politics that the Brazilian national state has been seeking to implement in the region since the 1950s, which were based on a supposed “population” in the Amazon region, a place was, hypothetically, there would be no human occupation. As a result, many indigenous territories were invaded.

Together, conventional historical literature tried to make us invisible, as well as other people’s such as the Borary, Arapium, Tapajó, Maytapú, Tupayú, Corarienses, Kumaruara, Arara-Red, Munduruku, Comandy, among many others. And because of this we suffer from violence and the denial of our indigenous rights and identity.

In addition to having to protect our environmental heritage, we also must fight against the mistaken idea about indigenous descent, which for us is linked to our ancestry and not to phenotypic



and genetic issues. The example that was presented to protect our territory was the realization of a direct action to defend our natural resources, together with our *parentes*; Arapiun, Borari, Kumaruara and Tapuia, with their maracas, canticles, adornments, bodies painted with genipap and urucum (annatto), bands, arches and arrows.

Our assertion is an ethnic and territorial resistance, in which I believe it is better to write another story that deals with the theme of indigenous existence rather than to rewrite the evolutionary history of the region, showing everyone our true and collective history of our ancestors and of our experiences in everyday practices and forms of political organization. We affirm that there has been a renewal in our indigenous life and that after centuries of sighs of resistance, we now inherit this struggle that for a long time our rights were denied and ignored by the hegemonic society.

Even so, we never believe that we are “extinct”, as society in general proclaims. We make a movement of alterity, which raises a conceptual struggle about who we are, with this we defeat the archaic concepts of the formation of Brazilian society and make a movement to resist the usurpation of *kariwa* in our territory.

The Ancestral Call of the Tupinambá people is the ultimate expression of the struggle for the defence and protection of our Tapajós river and Amazon Forest, which must remain standing. This ritual that takes place annually in our indigenous land comes to bring an alert to the lives of our ancestral peoples who many times have given their lives in exchange for the immoral profit of the society of capitalism.

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