



ANCIENT LANDSCAPES OF THE JURUENA











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.....  
Utiriti Waterfall.  
Antonio Garcia



## ✧ The Juruena is alive ✧

Since 1969, Operation Native Amazon (Operação Amazônia Nativa, OPAN) is dedicated to the indigenous-related work in the Juruena, a region located in the northwest of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, home to the springs of the Tapajós basin, exceptional scenic beauty, biological importance and, extremely high cultural significance for Brazil. Throughout this time, and in challenging social and political contexts, several proposals were created with the help of the indigenous peoples to address the challenges in guaranteeing the right to their ancestral territories, cultural expression, and ways of seeing and being in the world. In short, such proposals focused on the sustainability of their quality and way of life as well as well-being.

At a time when there were no public policies focused on indigenous rights, OPAN sought to prove to the Brazilian government and society that indigenous peoples are the owners of their paths, and that that their past of having their lands usurped, along with their cultural specificities, warrant the participative development of innovative strategies regarding their health and education and that would guarantee their territorial rights. Together with other civil society groups, OPAN saw the better part of these advances codified into law with the advent of Brazil's 1988 federal constitution.

However, the immense pressure that indigenous peoples and their territories have undergone in recent decades, due to the advance of the agricultural frontier, contamination of water by agrochemicals, and

multifaceted infrastructure projects, poses real threats to the cultural and environmental heritage of the Juruena region. Unaware of the importance of cultural places and landscapes, Brazilian society loses, every day, the chance to know a piece of the history of its original peoples.

We have been monitoring this issue and it worries us that the achievements of indigenous peoples enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution have been rapidly torn apart by the lack of implementation of inclusive public policies and the dismantling of state structures that were given inadequate budgets, threatening the institutional mission of guaranteeing protection of the environment and the rights of indigenous peoples. Added to this is the approval of measures that make environmental legislation more flexible, thereby raising the risk of the occurrence of social and environmental disasters resulting from licensing processes that are unable to truly attest to the viability of development projects.

Furthermore, social movements are being criminalized, impunity is being stimulated, and a whole history of struggles for the recognition of these rights by the three branches of power and three levels of government is being distorted. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of foresight, which sustains incentives for old-fashioned economic development that is based on models that are predatory, pollutant, unfair, and disconnected from the reality of climate change in all of its aspects.

Territorial Management of Indigenous Lands (Política Nacional de Gestão These setbacks require

even greater efforts toward social mobilization and the qualified education of civil society in service of the quest for conditions worthy of participation in the development of policies that affect the well-being and future of coming generations. In recent years, OPAN has been committed to the importance of the National Policy of Environmental and Territorial Management of Indigenous Lands (Política Nacional de Gestão Ambiental e Territorial de Terras Indígenas, PNGATI) to achieve positive results.

On the Juruena, where OPAN has had a historical role since long before Decree 7747/2012 went into effect, contributions to PNGATI are materialized by means of the support for territorial monitoring, strengthening of indigenous organizations, diverse thematic training—notably in the area of indigenous rights and policy, use of methodological tools such as diagnostics, ethnic mapping, and zoning of indigenous territories, support for indigenous initiatives for sustainable management and income generation, negotiation with public agents and strategic social actors, publishing of indigenous territorial and environmental management plans, support for meetings, assemblies, and rituals, and promotion of initiatives that value and record the culture, memory, and history of indigenous peoples.

It is precisely in this scenario that the work that culminated with the publication of *Ancient Landscapes of the Juruena* emerges. With an extensive technical, bibliographic, and logistical effort, we present this invaluable contribution to national and international knowledge about the narratives of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena. Even if the book represents a limited approach, considering a much broader universe of mythical histories and landscapes, it bridges a relevant gap in bringing together references from historiography,

anthropology, and archaeology to tell, through the contemporary and lively account of indigenous peoples, the story of their immanent connection with the land and waters of the Juruena.

Dedicated to a deeper dive into the sacred stories and ancestral landscapes related to the Ponte de Pedra (Stone Bridge), Salto Utariti, Salto das Mulheres, Salto Ytu'ú, and Salto Augusto waterfalls, the book presents to readers a cultural and social complexity utterly ignored when assessments and research are approved for the implementation of infrastructure projects. More often than not, these projects are based merely on shallow analyzes of environmental impacts.

As you read this book, more than a hundred hydroelectric projects, including those that directly threaten these five exceptional places, are being pushed forward by public agencies. This is not to mention the projects for new transmission lines, roads, railways, waterways, as well as agricultural enterprises and water use for irrigation, all of which put several of the indigenous territories of the Juruena on the list of the most under pressure from infrastructure projects in the Legal Amazon. We hope you will get to know and love the vast heritage that the Juruena region represents and come to realize that it belongs to you as well.

Enjoy your reading!

**Andreia Fanzeres**  
*Coordinator of the Indigenous Rights Program,  
Indigenous Policy, and Information to Society*

**Artema Lima**  
*Coordinator of the Mato Grosso Program*







.....  
August Waterfall.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





.....  
Rocky outcrops of one  
of the Ytu'u falls.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN

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## Invitation to set sail

*When the day comes that there is no place for indigenous peoples  
in the world, there will be no place for anyone else*  
(AILTON KRENAK)

**T**he sub-basin of the Juruena River is formed by rivers of clear and swift waters. Rivers that flow into the Cerrado<sup>1</sup>, the cradle of the waters, and run north through rocks and lowlands that lead them to the mouth of the Juruena, in the middle of the Amazon forest. The small tributaries, little by little, join the main course of the Juruena River. The savannahs and *veredas*<sup>2</sup> are left behind, making room for the tall chestnut and giant kapok trees of the dense forest. At its end, its lush waters join the Teles Pires River, delimiting the border between the states of Mato Grosso, Amazonas, and Pará, giving life to the famous Tapajós River.

The Juruena River is both an abode to many and an archive of history. Its 190,931 km<sup>2</sup> are the home to more than a dozen different indigenous ethnic groups who speak their own languages—Apiaká, Bakairi, Enawene-Nawe (Salumã), Haliti (Paresi), Kawaiwete (Kayabi), Kajkwakratxi (Tapayuna), Kawahiva, Manoki (Irantxe), Myky, Munduruku, and Rikbaktsa, as well as other isolated groups. For the indigenous peoples of this region, memory is something that is manifested in the landscapes of the Juruena. These are their sacred sites; their temples embedded in the woods, waters, and other geographical features. Each one of them is proof of a past that links people to their home territories.

The world, as it is today cannot be separated from the impact of the ancestors' actions. It was they who were responsible for shaping the landscape, defining boundaries, regulating the proper ways of living and being in this world, as well as managing it, all to guarantee the sustainability of a certain quality and way of life and the well-being of future generations. The way the indigenous peoples of today live in this world follows their lead, and it has been so for many generations. That is why Anapuáká Tupinambá Hãe-hãe, an indigenous spokesperson, warns that the sacred, from the point of view of indigenous peoples, must be understood based on the notion of ancestry. The indigenous peoples of the Juruena consider themselves to be passive inhabitants of their sacred land, which was left to them by those who lived there before them.

The Juruena is alive and gives life. For the people of the region, the Juruena has daily secured for them with the fundamental conditions for the maintenance of their way of life. It is the waterway for getting from place to place, a place where children and adults enjoy leisure time, a place for bathing and washing, and a source of food for all. The Juruena is a political subject that needs to emerge to the national forefront so that more people can hear its silenced voice.

<sup>1</sup>Translator's Note (TN): The Cerrado is a vast tropical savanna ecoregion of Brazil, particularly in the states of Goiás, Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso, Tocantins and Minas Gerais. The Cerrado biome core areas are the plateaus in the center of Brazil. The main habitat types of the Cerrado include: forest savanna, wooded savanna, park savanna and gramineous-woody savanna. Savanna wetlands and gallery forests are also included. The second largest of Brazil's major habitat types, after the Amazonian rainforest, the Cerrado accounts for a full 21 percent of the country's land area (extending marginally into Paraguay and Bolivia).

<sup>2</sup>TN: Vereda is a type of Cerrado vegetation that occurs in the gallery forests.

.....  
Middle course of the  
Dos Peixes River.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





Demanding that its course be allowed to flow free and now threatened by the construction of dams whose purpose is the production of electricity for distant regions, the Juruena calls for the integrity of its waters, which have been contaminated by the pesticide sprayed on nearby crops and mercury that leaks from alluvial gold panning, to be protected.

Despite being the scene of many important chapters in the country's history, the Juruena is still unknown to most Brazilians. In the past, the river was one of the main routes between the Captaincies of São Paulo and Grão-Pará, a link between the Central-West and Northern regions of the country. It was precisely the turbulence of its waters and the bellicose fame of the people who inhabit the region that kept it free of the presence of the colonizing fronts until the eighteenth century.

Unfortunately, the eagerness to conquer of the invaders was unstoppable and, little by little, they appropriated the region. At first, they were the *Paulista Bandeirantes*<sup>3</sup> in search of mines for extraction and natives for enslavement. Then, rubber companies began to silently occupy the Juruena, exploiting its forests and local populations. More recently, the agribusiness model promoted by the Brazilian

government has been usurped the land of the local native residents.

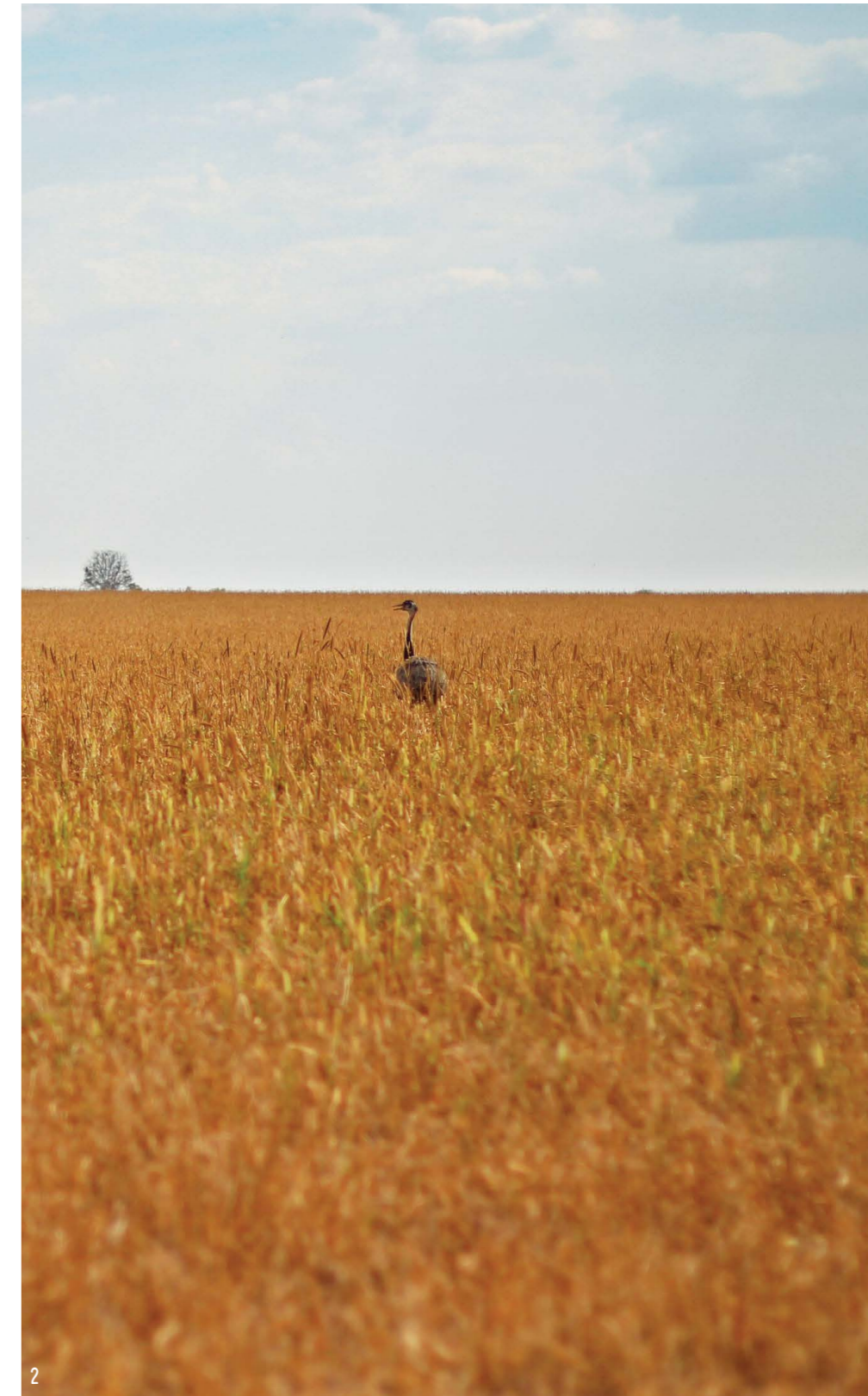
Many believed that the wealth that would raise the country to a higher level of development would emerge from the Brazilian backlands. An essential step in the advancement of this strategy was the creation of the myth of *demographic emptiness*. According to this, the occupation of these spaces is a requirement for guaranteeing national sovereignty. Like the forest and the savannah, the indigenous peoples were seen as an obstacle to be overcome to execute this plan and, as in the rest of the country, the colonial invasion of the Juruena resulted in great population and territorial losses for them.

Over the last decades, the change in the land use model for the Juruena region has led to a drastic change in the landscape due to deforestation, urbanization, and the flattening of large areas for intensive agricultural use. The implementation of energy and transport infrastructure projects—whose sole objective is to strengthen agribusiness, not to improve the quality of life of the people living there—has caused the fragmentation of the few remnants of areas that are still conserved. With the establishment of more than thirty hydroelectric plants, the Juruena and its tributaries have struggled because of the damming and the reduction of their water flow—a scenario that may worsen, as there are more than one hundred hydroelectric power plants planned for this sub-basin.

Frontiersmen, once seen as heroes, have become the villains who are transforming the largest area of flat, arable land on the planet into an immense desert of monocultures. Their connection to the land is one defined exclusively by profit. The limits imposed by environmental legislation are seen as obstacles to the increase of their financial gains. The results of these are two of the most significant ecological problems on the planet – deforestation and a loss of biodiversity in the Cerrado and the Amazon.

In the midst of all of this, indigenous governance over their ancient territories is gradually restricted. In addition to being survivors of massacres perpetrated by the colonizers, these groups were, in many cases, victims of forced displacement and territorial confinement. The very demarcation of the indigenous lands of the Juruena came about because of the need imposed by the Brazilian government to delimit areas for the indigenous groups, freeing the rest for colonization by migrant fronts from other regions of the country. By delimiting only portions of the ancestral territories, many of the sacred sites became vulnerable to the developmental advance.

The impact on sacred areas or areas of historical significance for the indigenous populations of the Juruena goes beyond issues related to the right to territory and their history. The destruction of these sites has generated direct impacts on the well-being of these peoples. Any aggression to their sacred sites is immediately felt by indigenous peoples in the form of diseases and a host of other misfortunes. That is because sacred sites are not



<sup>3</sup>TN: The Bandeirantes were 17th-century Portuguese settlers in Brazil and fortune hunters. This group mostly hailed from the São Paulo region, which was known as the Captaincy of São Vicente until 1709 and then as the Captaincy of São Paulo. They led expeditions called bandeiras (Portuguese for “flags”) which penetrated the interior of Brazil far south and west of the Tordesillas Line of 1494, which officially divided the Castilian, later Spanish, (west) domain from the Portuguese (east) domain in South America.

1. Chestnut grove cleared for pasture land.  
Juliana Almeida

2. An emu walks in the middle of crops.  
Juliana Almeida





inert spaces, but rather endowed with subjectivities and the ability to affect humans. The connections established between the natives and their territories are not only instrumental but above all social, for they are the home of spirits and other intangible beings with whom such peoples maintain direct relations. To inhabit this world requires the constant maintenance of these relationships, and the continuity of life itself depends on them. This can best be understood with the words of the Enawene-Nawe master of songs, Kawali Aweresese: “If you continue to destroy rivers and fish, the spirits will take revenge. They will kill everyone. There will be nothing left. No fish, no ritual. Everyone will die! It is not only the Enawene-Nawe people that will be annihilated but the white people as well. The difference is that we know this, but you don’t.”

In this sense, the success of colonization is due to the rupture of the bond between the natives and their territories. It requires the transformation of the territory into land, erasing any link it has to cosmology and adapting it to the logic of the commodification. Oriented toward the opposite direction, indigenous cosmopolitics becomes an obstacle to the advance of the dilapidation of rivers and forests.

The Juruena resists! As the Juruena is the materialization of the ancient human occupation of this region, recognizing its history is a fundamental step toward building bridges to and establishing a better plan for its future. But the bridges to the future are not made of concrete or stone, whose predatory, evolutionary, and developmental paradigm are pillars of Western

society. As Berta Ribeiro said, they are made of the straw civilizations that have a deep understanding of the cycles of the Earth, and that, by coexisting closely with nature, are aware of the unpredictability, impermanence, and transience that characterize life. Thus, as in indigenous philosophies, this type of bridge is an anaconda-canoe, a snake responsible for connecting different layers of the cosmos that, transmuted into a rainbow, connects possible, lived, and dreamed worlds, linking the time of the ancestors with the present.

This book, which references some of the sacred places of the Juruena, took shape based on dialogue in the field with representatives of different indigenous peoples residing in the region, especially the Haliti (Paresi), Manoki (Irantxe), Kawaiwete (Kaiabi), Apiaká, and Rikbaktsa. In numerous passages of the book, there are recurrent mentions to other peoples, mainly the Enawene-Nawe, and the subgroups Nambikwara and Kajkwakratxi (Tapayuna).<sup>4</sup> Although these groups are not the focus of the research that gave rise to this publication, reflections of previous studies and of bibliographical readings related to them and that converge with this publication’s theme will appear in the following pages.

The aim is to foster a wide-ranging debate on an issue that has been largely neglected throughout the developmental advance on indigenous territories, namely, recognition and safeguarding of the territoriality of these groups, which guides their way of being and living in the world. Brazilian society needs to give much



<sup>4</sup> Although the Kajkwakratxi currently reside in the Xingu Indigenous Park and the Wawi and Capoto-Jarina Indigenous Lands, their traditional territory is located in the micro-basin of the Arinos River, tributary of the Juruena that feeds into its right bank. The Kajkwakratxi are demanding the regularization of this area (including the annulment of Decree 77.790/1976, which dissolved the Tapayuna Indigenous Reserve) and an investigation into the presence of isolated groups in the region.

.....  
Canisio, elder of the Kawaiwete people.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



SACRED SITES



more thought to the much-needed valorization and safeguarding of indigenous cultural heritage, as well as its cultural landscapes.

Certain criteria were considered to narrow down such a broad topic. The first is a focus on waterfalls, which are elements of the landscape with which the natives have personal relationships pervaded by many meanings. Waterfalls are associated with concepts of territorial limits, places of learning, and connections with spirits and ancestors, or zones of interethnic contact.

Given the number of places and peoples, it was necessary to further reduce the scope of the research. Thus, efforts were focused on five sets of waterfalls: Ponte de Pedra, on the Sucuruina River; Utiariti, on the Papagaio River; Salto das Mulheres, on the Cravari River; Ytu'u, on the Dos Peixes River; and Salto Augusto, on the main course of the Juruena River. What do all of these have in common? All of them are sacred sites for the indigenous peoples of this region and are being threatened by the construction of hydroelectric dams.

Conceptual and poetic formulations of indigenous peoples, which are usually referred to as myths, are understood here as the privileged route of access to the relations established between these groups and the landscapes. However, it is important to clarify that the word “myth” can be a tricky one. It is often interpreted to mean a fantastic story or half-truth. It so happens that postmodernity has brought us the challenge of dealing with the simultaneity of different paradigms of truth because we no longer live—at least not entirely—



A fragment of forest on the right bank of the Juruena River. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



under the primacy of the West, which claims for itself the position of a universal model. As Renata Tupinambá quite assertively puts it:

Researchers try to decipher or find answers to many of these narratives that they consider part of a magical, wonderful, and imaginary universe because they are not part of their worlds. Therefore, they are far from what they believe to be real. The truth is a matter of perspective. A lie is everything they're not familiar with. Myth is the name given to the narrative of people who they think have no science. [...] What seems only poetic to many is, in fact, a strong vision that we hold about our place, relationship with the elements of nature, and origin. Our books are spoken, and our dialogue with all beings visible or invisible is unlimited. While metaphorical, these are discursive resources used by the great white thinkers, while our most important indigenous thinkers have gone unnoticed through the centuries.<sup>5</sup>

This book invites readers to think of indigenous history, memories, and thought as philosophy, or rather, as critical theories since they constitute conceptual analyses that simultaneously direct indigenous peoples' way of living in, interacting with, and transforming the world. We must take into account that the appreciation

of the cultural heritage of the Juruena is not just a confrontation between different narratives. Indigenous and white peoples are not only creating versions or visions of the same world, for the natives of the Juruena assert the existence of other worlds, which must be known, recognized, and respected.

Another relevant aspect concerns the polyphony found among the peoples of the Juruena. Many Brazilians understand indigenous peoples to be a single, cohesive bloc. Perhaps this is yet another effect of the colonialist vision that has been so impregnated into common ways of thinking, the result of ignorance, prejudice, and the belief that indigenous ways of life are unworthy of respect. When looking at indigenous stories and memories, one can notice the existence of different versions of the same narrative, presented by different peoples and, among them, versions of these versions, which may change according to the narrator. This variety is not just challenging, it demonstrates the complexity of these philosophical systems. One must avoid the risk of crystallizing this knowledge and forget the unproductive search for the "true version." This multiplicity of versions, in fact, be seen as a starting point since all points of view are equally important.

The content that follows consists of a cartography of memories based on the perspectives of the indigenous peoples who have resided along the Juruena for time immemorial. It is an invitation to analyze the conceptualizations these people have developed, and continue to develop, about the ancient human occupation



<sup>5</sup> "Filosofias invisíveis." Available at: [http://radioyande.com/default.php?pagina=blog.php&site\\_id=975&pagina\\_id=21862&tipo=post&post\\_id=739](http://radioyande.com/default.php?pagina=blog.php&site_id=975&pagina_id=21862&tipo=post&post_id=739).

.....  
Shaman Zeferino, during a christening ritual at the Sacre village. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





of their territories, and events that, materialized into the regional geography, recall the time of their ancestors. In the case of the peoples of the Juruena, this cartography engages with a paradigm of rooting, branching, and interconnectivity. They are like the roots of a tree, the web of arteries that carry and circulate the blood, the neurons and nerves that interconnect all of the limbs of the body, the electric shocks of lightning that spread through the sky before hitting the earth and, mainly, the streams and rivers within the hydrographic network, making their continuous way from the spring to the mouth. An eternal beginning and end, interconnected and uninterrupted. Routes that interconnect in a permanent come and go, carrying energy, raw materials, and vitamins, irrigating, moistening, and generating life. They are paths by which only those who are dedicated to understanding the deep memory of their people can navigate safely, knowing from where to leave and how to return. As the young Haliti, Adylson Muzuywane, has said: “The stories are all related. It is a thread that you unroll and has no end. All of this is kept in the memory of our elders.”

This book is divided into two parts. The first part, called “The Backlands of the West,” presents an overview of first human occupations, touching on the advance of colonization in its different waves and fronts. It aims to promote a recuperation of history whose relevance is to provide readers with a broader understanding of the Juruena and the genocidal and ethnocidal process of erasing indigenous knowledge and territoriality taking place in this region. The second part, “The Land as a Witness,” presents the five sacred sites chosen for this publication and some of the narratives and conceptions related to them. In the end, the book addresses, in a propositional way, how efforts to value, divulge and safeguard the Indigenous Cultural Heritage of the Juruena can be consolidated in a strategy to fight the threats arising from the advance of development in this region.

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Nambikwara weaving baskets, a practice described by anthropologist Anna Maria Ribeiro de Costa as the construction of the threads of memory for the group. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





Wake below Ytu'u Falls.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





# PART I

## The Backlands of the West

White people draw their words because their thinking is filled with forgetfulness. We have long held the words of our ancestors within us, and we continue to pass them on to our children.

(DAVI KOPENAWA)



## The writing of the indigenous peoples

Writer Ailton Krenak says that indigenous people are the only ones who can tell the deep history of Brazil. All that white people have to do is research. In the Juruena, such ignorance reveals how far disconnected the settlers are from this territory, which they understand only in relation to the Brazilian coast, and, therefore, define as the “backlands of the West.”

For the indigenous peoples, it’s the opposite. Occupants of this territory since time immemorial, indigenous peoples hold infinite knowledge about the remote past of the lowlands of South America, which is safeguarded in their stories, songs, and other expressions of their oral tradition. For the people of the Juruena, the deep memory of this region is also inscribed in the landscape—the hills, the stones, the waters, the trees. It is like an open-air library, a witness of this history that is intertwined with the marks left by the past in time and space. Accessed on a daily basis by the indigenous peoples, the landscape is the materialization of the experiences of the ancestors, those responsible for the transformation of the world, for making it habitable, and thus defining the correct form of occupation for generations to come.

The different indigenous peoples of the Juruena have established different hypotheses for understanding the process of human occupation in this region. Many of them share the theory that, in the past, humans lived underground, inside of a rock located at the headwaters of the Sucuruina River, a tributary of the right bank of the Juruena. Only the families of the spirits called Enore (by the Haliti), Enoli (by the Enawene-Nawe) or Inuli (by the Manoki) lived on the surface of the Earth. One day, a bird found its way out of the rock and saw the world outside. Enchanted by the beauty of this world, it returned to the rock and persuaded the others to seek a way to establish a new life in this beautiful and, at the time, unfamiliar place. With the arrival of humans to the surface, the spirits who lived there decided to become their protectors, so they left for the heavens, where they live to this day.<sup>6</sup>

The human occupation came about through a break with the established border between the surface and the underground. It is precisely at this intermediate level of the geography of the cosmos, between the celestial and subterranean layers, that humans have established themselves. The region of the Juruena is understood by the natives that inhabit it as a gift of the gods, given to them so that they might occupy it. An opening in the stone created the necessary conditions for human expansion into this new space. In the midst of this passage from within the lithic world



Petroglyphs on the left bank of the Juruena River.  
Edison Rodrigues de Souza

<sup>6</sup>Other peoples in the northwestern region of Mato Grosso, especially Tupi-Mondé groups occupying the Juruena-Guaporé and upper Aripuanã Rivers, have established similar hypotheses also related to the idea of a subterranean past life in rocky shelters or hills of the region. Likewise, for them, life on the earthly plane began with a break from these spaces that had previously contained the humans. In the perspective of the Nambikwara subgroups, the exit from the rock was not due to a choice made by the humans, but rather the curiosity of shaman animals that lived on the Earth. Upon hearing the unfamiliar sounds that came from the black stone, they decided to open it to see what was inside. To do so, a shaman bird used his sword. Upon impact, several people died. The survivors became the ancestors of the Nambikwara people.





to the surface, death was established as the ultimate form of transformation. On the surface, perishability is the counterpoint of beauty. Life on the terrestrial plane is transient, everything is extinguishable, including humans, who became mortal when they left the stone. The only possibility of escaping this condition is to return to the underground or to rise to the celestial plane, where the intervening spirits, their protectors, reside.

Indigenous conceptions about the antiquity of human occupation along the Juruena (and the wider world) are far removed from the scientific concepts that support the evolutionary simultaneity and interaction of distinct species that culminated in the present human species.<sup>7</sup> Their conceptualizations do not define how humans came to exist, but rather a change in their place of occupation; a change in territoriality resulting from the discovery

of. They do not address the creation of humanity, for it already existed (though in the form of proto-humans). The first humans had a tail, membranes between their fingers, and hair on their bodies. The women had no vagina. The ancestors were gradually humanized: it took numerous bodily modifications until humans took their current form.

But the shift from an underground dwelling to the occupation of the earthly plane demanded both the development of physical abilities and the transformation of the world itself. The human ancestors were also responsible for the changes to and definition of a particular “world order;” thus permanently imprinting the marks of their actions on the landscapes. All of the interventions promoted by the ancestors can be understood as a form of domestication of space. Efforts are needed to control

the heat of the sun, making it milder; to conquer and dominate the fire, and to learn agricultural techniques. This management of the landscape made it possible for the generations that followed to inhabit the world and promote the continuity of human existence on the earthly plane.

On the other hand, the world, as we know it today, has faced a series of critical events. Its geography was also shaped by cataclysms: hills are displaced and change in size, ponds arise in dry places, great open fields are created with the force of the winds. Possibly the most relevant of these events was the flood that devastated the region in ancient times. It is a recurrent narrative among various peoples, presented here in the version of the Haliti people.

According to the Haliti, after leaving the stone, life is characterized by the daily tasks of food production, body care, and the execution of rituals dedicated to spirits. But there was a time when the members of the group were quite discouraged. There was little food, and many believed that they had been abandoned by the gods, and so they failed to continue the practice of making offerings, especially the daily offerings of food, drink, and tobacco to the Sacred Arrow responsible for the connection between humans and celestial spirits. Only a young woman who was in seclusion because of the arrival of her first period (and therefore was waiting to undergo the rite of passage into adulthood) kept up her daily devotional practices.

It was during that time that a great flood was caused by the Yakane, water spirits residing in the rivers, waterfalls, rapids, and ponds. They built a massive dam on the Juruena River, using coiled anacondas and generating a huge flood in the region. In an attempt to save themselves, people fled to the top of the hills. As the waters rose, the hills grew in size to try and help the Haliti. Sheltered high up in the hills, the Haliti cast menstruating girls into the water to be devoured by the water spirits and appease their fury. When the end seemed to have arrived, the wise men of the Haliti then decided to use the sword of

the celestial spirit, Enoharé. Using the sword, they sent a strong bolt of lightning that broke the anaconda dam and, finally, the waters began to recede.

Forbidden to leave the house, the girl in the room of seclusion could not escape. But since she was the only one who had kept making offerings and giving gifts to the Sacred Arrow, the wise spirit Wakalamenaré decided to save her. To do this, he opened the central pillar of the house and asked her to enter it, where she stayed until the end of the flood. Upon returning to the village, the family of the secluded girl wept for her, as they believed she had met her death. But before long the family was astonished to notice signs of smoke in their house. Upon arrival, they found the daughter alive and thus understood the importance of fulfilling their ceremonial obligations.

Within this narrative, there is a dimension of the landscape being a record of the event, but there is also a pedagogical dimension, as it deals with the importance of

.....  
Ceramics fragments found on the Sumaúma Farm, on the right bank for the Juruena.  
Juliana Almeida



<sup>7</sup> For the Enawene-Nawe, it makes a lot of sense that white people would believe they have a common ancestry with apes, as it would explain why they are so hairy.

.....  
Rock paintings in rock shelters on the right bank of the Juruena. Luiz Vinicius Sanches Alvarenga



ritual and religious practices. In indigenous philosophies, everything that has been destroyed is capable of being recreated. Thus, as in the story of the flood, the world has been destroyed and recreated many times. The marks that remain in the landscape are the testimony of such transformations. The hills that harbored those affected by the flood became larger, constituting an example history inscribed in the landscape.

Amazon archaeology has also shown us the need to decolonize certain deep-rooted conceptions about the ancient occupation of the forest and the Cerrado. For archeologists that work in the Amazon, the Lowlands of South America were the basis for other models of urbanism. If there is something that could be categorized as a ruin of ancient times, it's the landscape itself. Both the forest and the savannahs are understood as the results of the acquisition of space by pre-Cabral groups, and no longer as a stronghold untouched by civilization. The landscape becomes the material evidence of this past model of human occupation and, in this respect, archaeology is closer to indigenous conceptualizations.

It is important to emphasize that archaeological studies need a more in-depth understanding of the ancient human occupation along the Juruena. In this region, most of the research developed have fallen within the scope of rescue archaeology conducted as part of environmental licensing processes. This being the case, one can say that these analyses are less exhaustive than they would be otherwise, and their choice of sites for prospection is based on the area being considered for a development project. Thus, what we have today are some indications derived from research carried out on sites located in nearby regions,

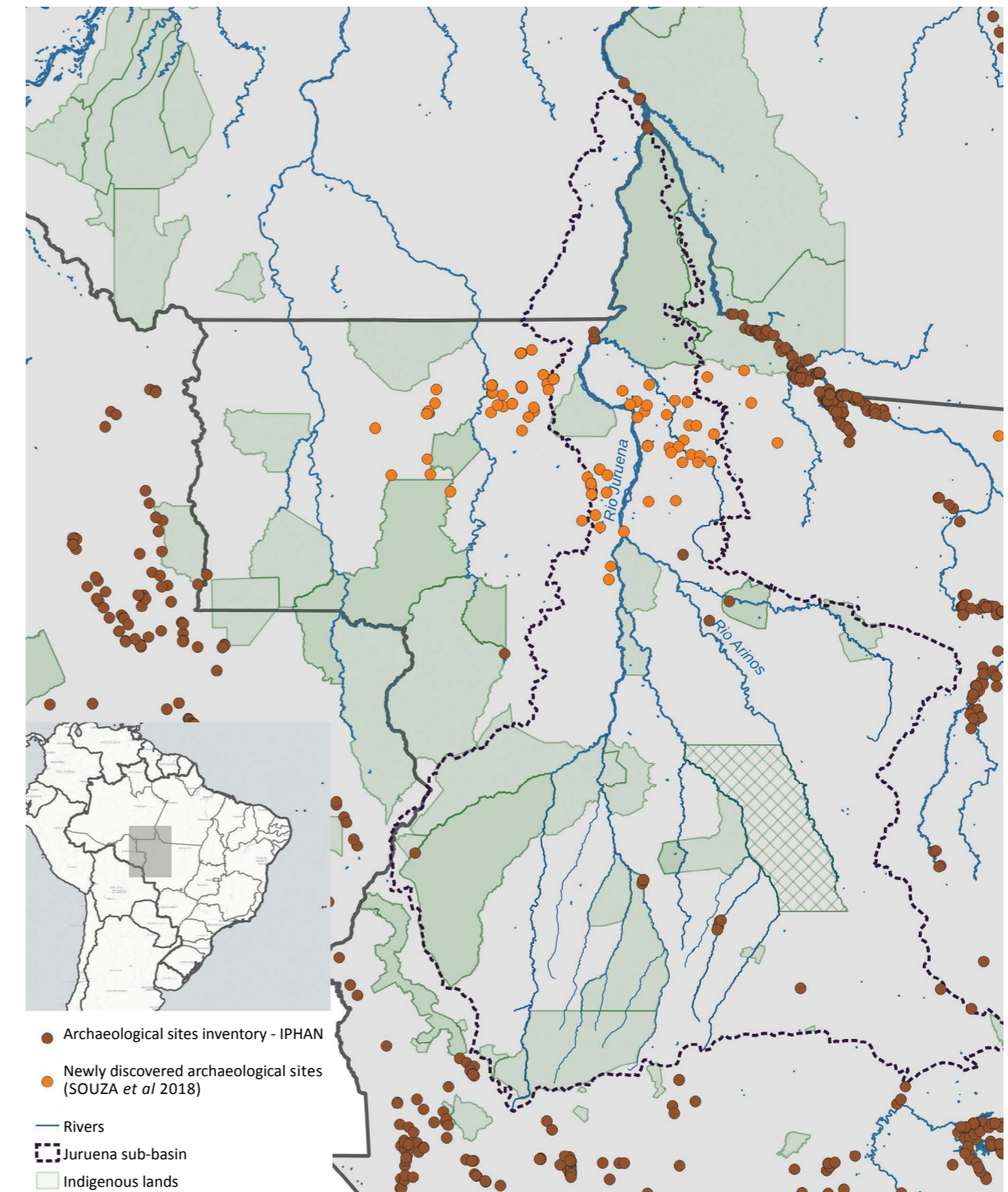
among which those in the Araras Mountains and the Guaporé River Valley stand out.<sup>8</sup>

Recently, research conducted on the lower Juruena<sup>9</sup> revealed the existence of a network of fortified villages that are interconnected by a series of roads. It is estimated that, together, they reached a population of between five hundred thousand and one million people, peaking between the years 1200 and 1500. Such a finding reinforces the broader hypothesis that the southern border of the Amazon was densely populated until the mid-16th century.

Contemporary indigenous populations are the result of tens of thousands of years of human occupation in the Americas. Understanding of the ancient dynamics of the occupation of these places could be advanced if, as indigenous philosophies suggest, efforts were concentrated on understanding the profound transformations of landscapes, which, if observed from the point of view of the history of indigenous groups, could reveal precious keys to understanding this puzzle.

It is evident that ignorance about the profound memory of the Juruena (as well as the rest of Brazil) is one of the traces left by the massacre of indigenous peoples that began five centuries ago with the arrival of European settlers—certainly one of the most significant demographic catastrophes in the history of humanity. According to the perspective of indigenous peoples, the colonial invasion constitutes the return of the white people, a violent, stingy and antisocial group who do not keep the social pact established after humans left the stone, which determined that every people would have their own territory on which to live.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE JURUENA SUB-BASIN



<sup>8</sup> In the first case, at the paleo-archaeological site known as Abrigo Santa Elina, the analyses indicate at least 27,000 years of human occupation. But to the east, at the Abrigo do Sol, evidence seems to indicate 10,000 years of human occupation.

<sup>9</sup> Souza, J. G. et al. (2018). "Pre-Columbian earth-builders settled along the entire southern rim of the Amazon." *Nature Communications*.





Ponte de Pedra (Stone Bridge)  
Luiz Thomaz Reis

## The return of the whites

Countless indigenous peoples of the Juruena conceive of the human genesis on the earthly plane of the cosmos as their founding event. Once residents of the inside of a stone, it is precisely the discovery of the existence of a world beyond the underground dimension that enables the emergence of humans on earth.<sup>10</sup> The Juruena is conceived as the epicenter of human spread of humans across the Earth. All peoples came from there, each following a path guided by an ancestral demiurge to the place designated to be their new abode.

The social differentiation between peoples is reaffirmed after the rupture of the stone. The Manoki say that just after they left the stone, each people sat down to rest under a specific tree: the Haliti sat at the foot of a *jatobá-do-mato*, the Nambikwara under the *jatobá-do-cerrado*, the Kajkwakratxi under the *pindaíba-do-mato*, white people sat beneath a pau-mole tree, and the Manoki sat under the *cambará* tree. Each group marched from there to their specific territory.

For the Haliti, the difference between peoples is based on the separation between the brothers of the demiurge Wazare. After leaving the stone, each of the brothers went in a different direction, guiding their group to the territory that was chosen for them to settle definitively. This gave rise to the Waimaré, Kaxiniti, Kozarene, Kawali, and Warere subgroups. The descendants of the Wazare brothers are regarded as the ideal humans.

The rest of the peoples living on the terrestrial plane are descended from other demiurges who also lived inside the stone. The Manoki, descendants of Nahi, went north along the Do Sangue River, becoming a kind of protectors of the Ponte de Pedra sacred sit, the place where the genesis of the peoples of the region occurred. White people, guided by their ancestral demiurge, Kuytihoré, followed eastward, from which they would return some time later.

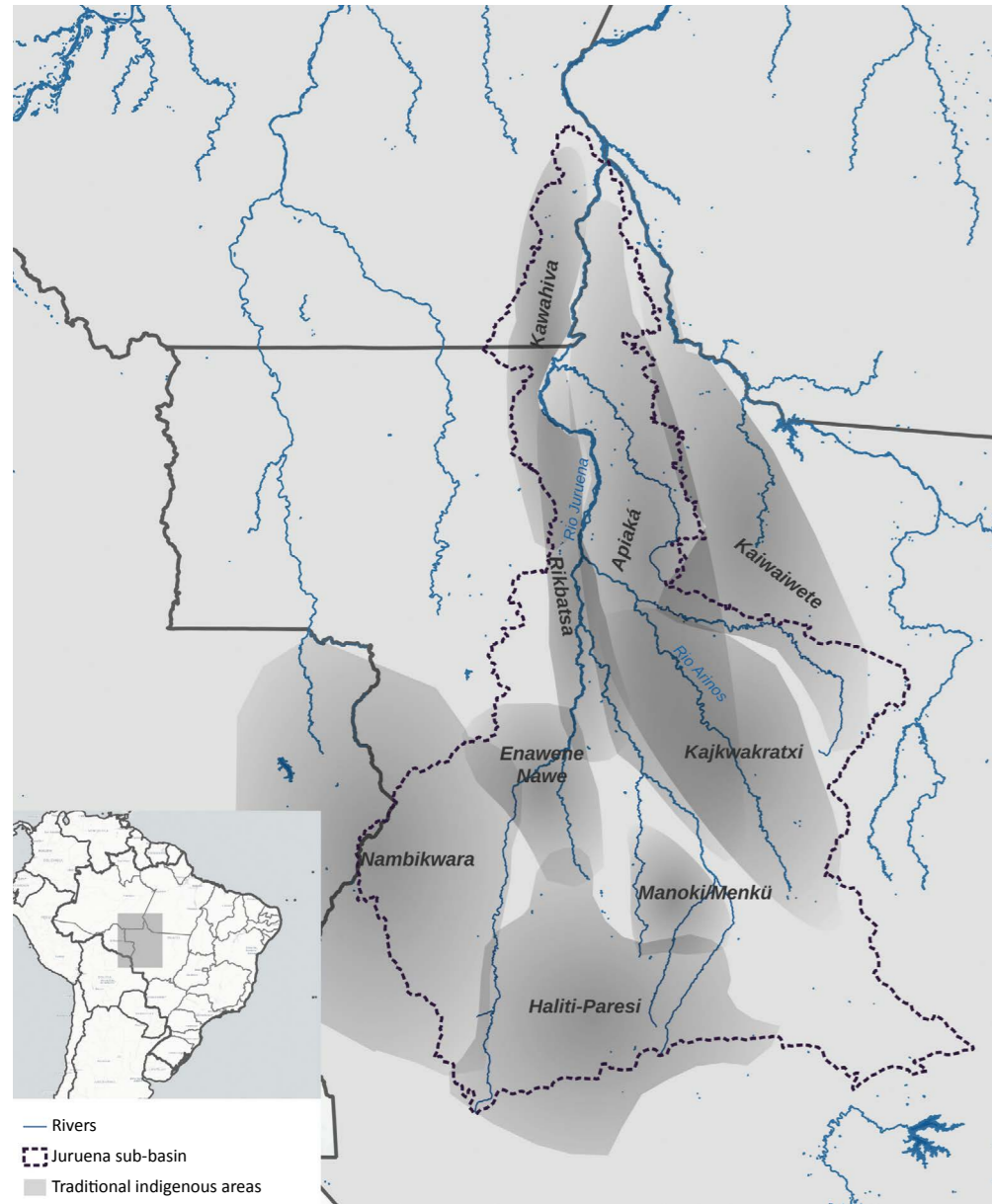
After leaving the stone, humans had to make an important decision in which they would choose between the different technologies available. Notably, they had to decide whether they would stick with the stone ax or the iron ax. The model of each people's society, which was more or less egalitarian and more or less collective, would be defined by this choice of technology. It was precisely the choice of iron tools that solidified the whites' way of being truculent, petty, selfish, angry, and incapable of being sociable.

For the natives, the humans of the past were not necessarily less evolved than their contemporary counterparts. Technologies are not seen as discoveries, but choices. Everything

<sup>10</sup>The cartographies of the indigenous peoples relate different conceptions about the landscapes, valuing in particular geographic features (hills, rivers, waterfalls, rapids, patches of savanna in the tall forests, areas with concentrations of certain plants, cliffs and ravines, mud pits, lakes) and giving special emphasis to the importance of internal compartments of such features (the hallows of trees, the interior of hills, holes river beds), which are responsible for the interconnectedness of various layers of the cosmos.



INDIGENOUS OCCUPATION IN THE JURUENA SUB-BASIN (XVIII-XX CENTURIES)



has already existed since the beginning times, including technology. The mastery of iron is not associated with a higher level of progress, but with the idea that certain objects can compromise the daily construction of social life, for objects are endowed with agency and subjectivity. Humans manipulate tools, but tools also manipulate

humans in turn. Thus, what some whites understand as intellectual or evolutionary superiority, the natives conceive of as social incompetence.

As mentioned before, the event that gave origin to human occupation of the earthly plane involves the social pact established between the different peoples, all of whom accepted the territory assigned to them by their ancestors. It is a pact of coexistence and mutual respect in response to an order established a long time ago. But the problem is that the white people do not keep this agreement and, using the same path by which they went eastward, they have returned to the Juruena to take over the territories of their peers. This is to say that, for the peoples of the Juruena, the emergence of the colonizing fronts is conceived of as *the return of the whites*. Obviously, this perspective contradicts the notion of contact that guides the view of the colonizers. It was, in fact, a reunion between groups who were scattered in the past. And this return, for the natives, is driven by the white people’s obsession with metals.

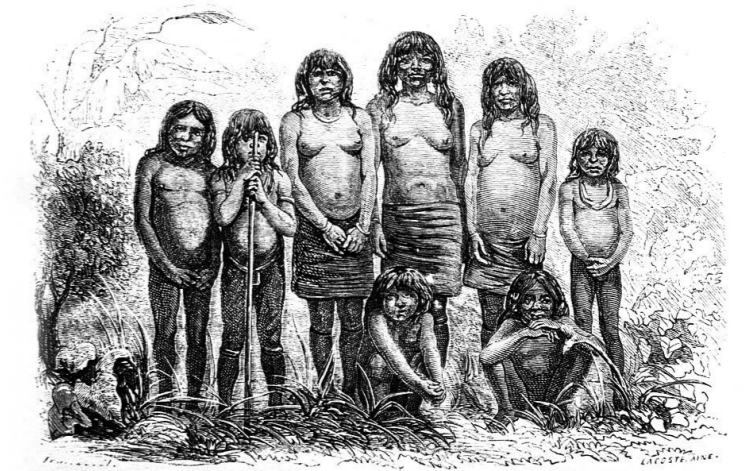
The search for mines is what drove countless *Paulista*<sup>11</sup> expeditions to depart for the unknown backlands of the West, of which there had been many reports of the hostility of the forests and the bellicosity of its inhabitants. This eagerness for metals pushed the invaders toward the innumerable dangers reported, becoming the hope that the natives would provide the key to the dreamed *El Dorado*.

Even before the first Portuguese colonizers took a chance on the Juruena, Spanish expeditions departing from the Guaporé River (to the west) possibly reached its headwaters before them. At the time of the creation of the Captaincy of Mato Grosso by the Portuguese Crown, Juruania was the name given to the region located at the

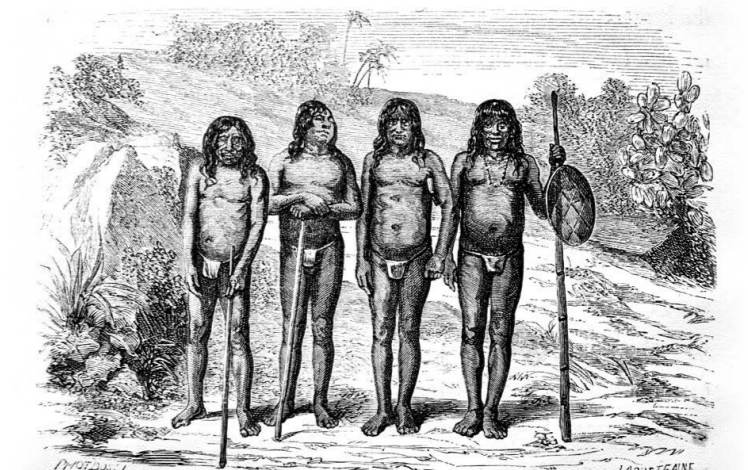
interfluvium between the Juruena River and the Guaporé River, implying that this was already the well-established toponymy of the region. According to the Geographical, Historical and Descriptive Dictionary of the Empire of Brazil (*Diccionario Geographico, Historico e Descriptivo do Imperio do Brazil*) – Volume I, published in 1845, it was the “Land of the old border of the province of Mato Grosso, which lies between the Juruena River to the east and the Madeira and Guaporé rivers to the west. There will be 100 league-long structures, from the North to the South, and many more from the East to the West; but still very little has been explored, except for the banks of the Guaporé River.”

Similarly, it is not known for sure how Juruena came to be the name of this river. Based on historical documentation, one can note that this was an established hydronym since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. The word Juruena—associated with both the Arawak and the Tupi languages—seems to be the conjunction of two names: *juru* (or *ajuru*), which means parrot, and *ena*, which means river. Together they mean Parrot River. Coincidence or not, this is the name given to an important tributary of the right bank of the Juruena (Rio Papagaio). On the other hand, the *-ena* suffix is similar to the suffixes *-ina* or *-wina* from the Haliti and Enawene-Nawe languages (both belonging to the Arawak family), which are used in the naming of rivers. Another hypothesis, less popular, is that the name Juruena derives from the recognition of this area as being home to the Ajuru indigenous people, residents of the interfluvium between the Juruena and Guaporé rivers.

In the oldest historiographical records found, the presence of Arawak groups (called Pareci, Parecisis,



Grupo de Indias Paresis (pagina 114).



Grupo de Indias Paresis (pagina 114).

Paresi, Ariti) in the region where the headwaters of the Amazonian and Platinium River basins are found stands out. The presence of Tupi-Guarani groups (called Apiacás, Apiassás, Apiacasses), scattered along the Arinos River Valley, all the way to the lower Juruena, is also noteworthy. Such records account for a dense occupation by indigenous peoples. Even before the recognized reduction of the indigenous population during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, French doctor Amédeé Moure estimated the population of the “Apiacás”

.....  
One of the earliest recorded visual representations of the Paresi people. Bartolomé Bossi

<sup>11</sup>TN: Same as footnote nº 3.



to be around thirty-five thousand and the population of the Paresis between five and six thousand people. The marked presence of these groups in the region motivated the distinction between upper and lower Juruena as “The Kingdom of Paresis” and “Kingdom of Apiacás” (or “Baixio dos Apiacás”) respectively.

Other groups, less mentioned in the historical documentation, apparently opted for the occupation of interfluvial zones with little penetration by the colonizers. Anthropologist Edison Rodrigues de Souza maintains the hypothesis that, in the case of the Enawene-Nawe, this was a deliberate strategy to distance themselves from the invaders. In fact, the left bank of the Juruena, especially at its middle and lower courses, constituted a sort of refuge that was later reached by the colonizing fronts, where first contacts occurred only in the second half of the twentieth century.

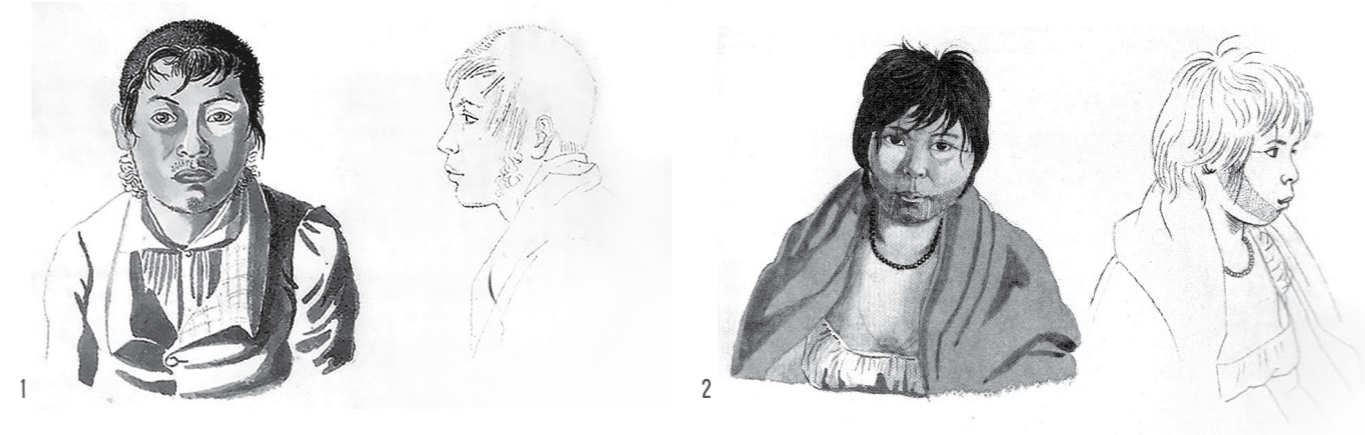
The return of the white people brought profound transformations for the peoples of the Juruena. From

the indigenous point of view, their abrupt and violent return reaffirms the idea that white people are inept at or incapable of forming political alliances. In the seventeenth century, the first waves of *Bandeirantes* in search of slaves and minerals set out to the Central-West region of the Portuguese colony, departing mainly from São Paulo. And São Paulo was also the final destination of most of the natives kidnapped by them. Stories about the imprisonment and devastation of the villages are still present today in the memory of these peoples.

Native Maximiliano Enoré recounted to anthropologist Maria de Fátima Roberto Machado details passed on by his elders about the enslavement of their people. According to him, the Haliti were very numerous and had many villages in the past. That’s when the whites approached them in search of gold. In the beginning, a friendship was established with the outsiders, but after the revolt of several chiefs, the whites ordered their capture. Many people were taken to Cáceres and São Paulo to work as slaves in the houses of the colonizers. Marshal Cândido Rondon, who traveled through the region in the early twentieth century, would come to meet several people who were enslaved but managed to escape and return to their ancestral territory.

The memory related by Enoré finds echoes in the narratives present in some of the songs of the Enawene-Nawe people, which deal with the saga of Waitowa, a young man who had been taken by the whites. After living for many years in a region far from his village, he was able to return and told others what he learned during the time of his enslavement.

Waitowa was a young man who, like so many other Enawene-Nawe, lived with his family in a village located along the Arimena River (Olowina to this group), at the left bank of the middle course of the Juruena. The Enawene-Nawe knew of the return of the white people and knew of their ferocity and violence. However, in



the beginning, the whites introduced themselves as friends, offering metal tools and other gifts. Despite the discontent of the elders, the young men approached the strangers, interested in acquiring the gifts offered. But this did not last long, for soon the white people began to plunder the villages. And it was only after the abduction of the first young men that the natives realized the extreme danger they were in.

Since then the Enawene-Nawe have come to use various strategies to resist the attacks against them. When the whites came to the villages, the children were hidden inside pots to avoid their capture. They tell the story of a young man who managed to escape, having been hidden by his mother in a large basket. Fearful of the attacks, some groups decided to found new villages in distant regions.

But one day the village where Waitowa lived was overtaken by the whites, who attacked and took away with them several young men in chains. Waitowa, one of the kidnapped young men, was taken to a farm, where they put him to work from sunup to sundown. The whites’ food was poor and scarce, and so Waitowa was in charge of hunting. He would go out with a shotgun and only three shells. If he missed the shots and brought

back nothing, he was whipped and denied a meal.

Time went by, and when he grew old, Waitowa was abandoned by those who enslaved him. That was when he decided that he would try to return to his village and find his relatives. Waitowa walked for many days. Old and weak, the way had become even more difficult, and he almost died during his journey. Sustaining himself on only water and honey, he used his knowledge of the forest and was able to find his old village. Upon arrival, he told the others about the punishments he had suffered. He also told them about the new things he saw, such as horses, oxen, injections, and firearms.

There were numerous attacks on the Enawene-Nawe, and Waitowa was not the only victim of the whites’ violence. The memory of the kidnappings includes another group—the women, who gradually became favorite targets. Their stories mention the difficulty of some men in obtaining wives due to the increase in the number of kidnappings. In the Kawekwalikwa village, also located on the Arimena River, the wives of two great chiefs, Daliyamase and Daleokoto, were taken by the whites. This left the chiefs greatly saddened and shaken. It was an extremely difficult situation, since, besides having lost their wives, they did not know their

.....  
Apiaká group.  
Hércules Florence



.....  
1. Gabixi indian, a resident of Diamantino.  
Hércules Florence

.....  
2. Apiaká women, a resident of Diamantino.  
Hércules Florence



whereabouts. Believing that it wouldn't be possible to find them, the chiefs' only option was facing the risk of seeking new wives from other peoples of the region.

Daliyamase and Daleokoto headed toward the village of Towalinere to the north, located at the headwaters of the Aripuanã River. There, they found an atypical situation. All the men had gone out, probably to hunt. There were only women and children in the village. The chiefs then persuaded two young women to become their wives. The young women were told that the food was good and abundant in the chiefs' village and that there were no quarrels or fights there. The women accepted the invitation and left with them.

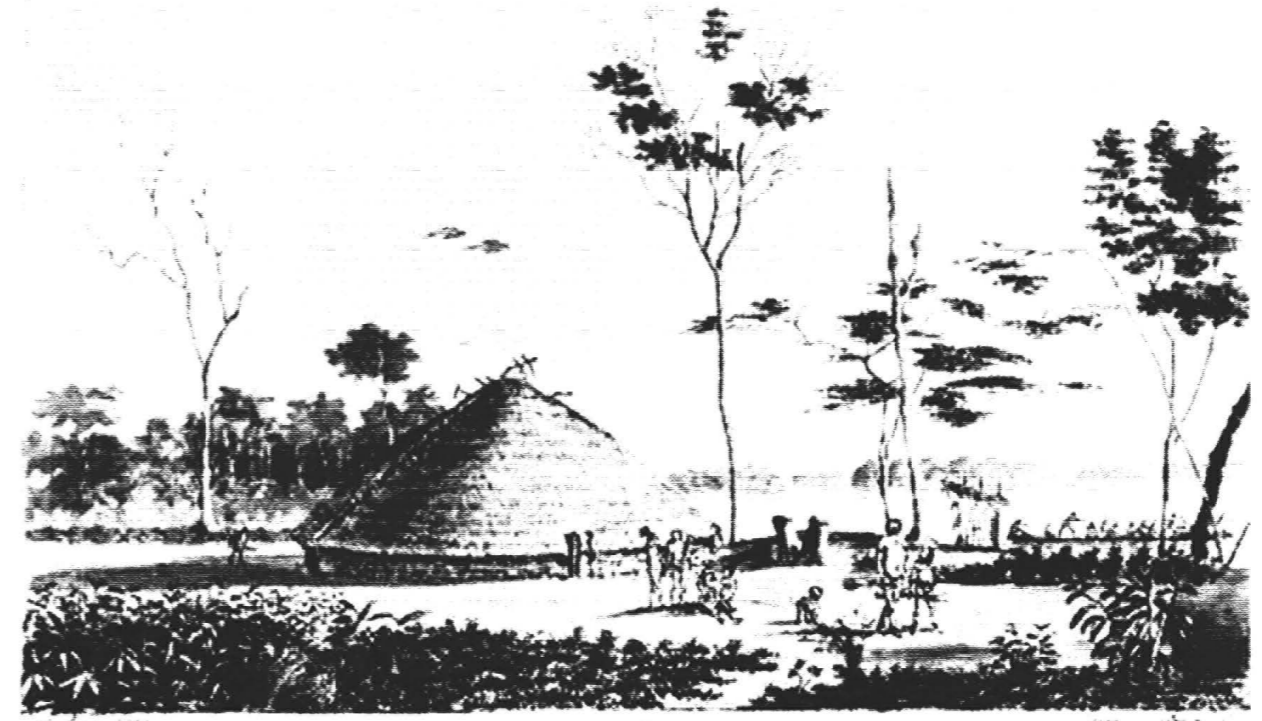
When the men of Towalinere returned from the hunt, they soon noticed the disappearance of the two girls. Their father asked who had taken them and where. Having received no answer, he was overwhelmed with immense sadness, a feeling that prompted him to go out and look for them. He considered the possibility that they might be with the Enawene-Nawe, armed himself with arrows and borduna clubs and, accompanied by his sons, went to Kawekwalikwa. Upon arrival at the village, the other Enawene-Nawe feared retaliation for the chiefs taking the girls. Daliyamase argued that it had been an extreme situation, "The whites have long taken my wife. That was not right. They left that way. They took our two wives, mine and Daleokoto's. Why do whites want our women? Maybe they'll shoot them. So I went to that far away village. I went to find a wife."

It was many days before the Towalinere made it to the village of their neighbors, the Enawene-Nawe. Exhausted, they made a peaceful approach, which was

soon answered with hospitality. Daliyamase promptly provided a clothesline, requesting that all villagers tie gifts for the Towalinere chief to it. As the two young women were satisfied with their new life among the Enawene-Nawe, and considering the hospitality the neighbors had provided, the father accepted that his daughters remain. This first meeting with a peaceful outcome would decide the future of these peoples. A few days later the Towalinere village succumbed to the attack of another people. Few villagers remained. Not knowing where to turn, the survivors decided to settle at Kawekwalikwa and, to this day, their descendants live with the Enawene-Nawe.

This is yet another of the numerous reports on the kidnapping and enslavement of indigenous youth, which demonstrates the pain and suffering that the Enawene-Nawe have faced, and it is clear how this situation brought about changes in the interethnic dynamics established between them and other indigenous peoples of the region.

The enslavement of natives of the Juruena is also documented in many historical records. During the eighteenth century, while the Paresí became the primary target of the São Paulo Bandeirantes, the Apiaká were recruited as guides by the groups that crossed the Juruena in the direction of the Tapajós. According to historian Loiva Canova, the Paresí were seen as excellent farmers, in addition to being considered a meek and civilized people in comparison with other groups of the region. The men were deemed to be hard workers and good collaborators, who carried out with dedication the roles that were assigned to



them. In turn, both the Paresí and the Apiaká women were known for their beauty and cleanliness, seen as taking great care with their personal hygiene and being skillful at their everyday activities. Considered whiter and less barbarous than the other natives, they were, therefore, singled out as ideal for housework in the homes of the settlers.

Unlike with the Paresí, an approach strategy was established in relation to the Apiaká. This strategy sought their participation as guides of the river expeditions, which aimed at identifying the best navigation routes between the Captaincies of Mato Grosso and the Grão-Pará. The hope was to overcome the natural obstacles imposed by the waterfalls of the lower Juruena, besides the bellicosity of the indigenous peoples who lived along the route (generally called Tapanhuna, Nambikwara or Kawahiva) and systematically attacked the boats.

Documents and records account for the reduction in populations caused by the action of the Bandeirantes. The result of this period was the decrease of the indigenous population of the Juruena,

especially those who were the first to be contacted. The groups that collaborated more comfortably with the colonizers were those who suffered the first injuries caused by the predatory advancement on their bodies and territories.

Progressives of the time argued that the alliance with the indigenous peoples of the region was strategic for the defense of the western border—the boundary between Portuguese and Spanish colonization, and for that reason, a point of dispute for both. In 1732, King Dom João intervened with the governor of the Captaincy of São Paulo to suspend the slave expeditions to capture the Paresí. Instead of enslavement, the king suggested catechesis as a means of securing a political alliance with the group.

However, the massacre that befell the populations of this region did not stop there, since the colonial advance continued on other fronts. Thus began the rubber cycle. The natives, who resisted the Bandeirantes, entered a new struggle, this time against hordes of rubber tappers.

Indigenous village.  
Hércules Florence



## Fierce clothed natives

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, with the advent of rubber exploitation, waves of new populations began to arrive at the Juruena. In 1861, English geographer William Chandless traversed the region, leaving the first historical record of the presence of rubber tappers. The rubber advance took place on two fronts: to the north, the fronts coming from Manaus advanced via the Madeira and Tapajós Rivers; and, to the south, the advance took place first via the Guaporé River, and, later, the Arinos River.

But it was mainly at the beginning of the twentieth century that rubber tapping activity took off in the region, inaugurating a new stage of colonization along the Juruena. If until then the whites were advancing on the region to kidnap people, to look for metal ore, or to discover new routes to the north, from that point on, small groups of rubber tappers were now beginning to establish themselves more permanently in the area, inhabiting barracks to support the extractive activity. This more permanent occupation in the middle Juruena began what the Jesuit missionary João Dornstauder called the “Juruena War,” marked by bloody conflicts between natives and rubber tappers.

Gradually, the people of the Juruena realized that the whites had become numerous. In the dreams of the shamans, the warnings about the arrival of an increasing number of people multiplied. Cities were popping up here and there and growing. According to the Kawaiwete, it was imperative that the *tappy piat* (fierce clothed natives) be domesticated. Otherwise, their inability to establish social relations would result in the end of all indigenous populations.

Rubber trees have cosmological importance for indigenous peoples. In many narratives, the tree’s sap is associated with breast milk. For the people of high Juruena, who played *cabeçabol* – a ball game played with the head<sup>12</sup> – the sap of trees like the rubber tree and the mangabeira constitute the raw material for the making of the main object used in the game. The *cabeçabol* is tied to the past, being a milestone in the cosmo-geographic expansion of humans on Earth. According to the Haliti, the game, whose purpose is to promote the full individual and social development of the members of the group, was a kind of gift given to them by the demiurge Wazare just after leaving the stone.

The Haliti and the Enawene-Nawe also use the sap of the rubber tree and the *mangaba* for making body adornments, especially the hoops that, dyed with red *achiote* seeds, serve to decorate women’s calves.

<sup>12</sup> Zikonahiti for the Haliti, Haira for the Enawene-Nawe.



The extraction of rubber, whether for making balls or adornments, involves a series of rules. Among the Haliti, the *mangaba* sap used for making the ball can only be collected by mature men. Among the Enawene-Nawe, the sap of the rubber tree used to make adornments must be collected by women who have entered the menopause. In the latter case, an incision is made in the tree through which the sap flows, which is later collected with their mouths. The technique requires a preliminary and post-collection diet, at the risk of the tree otherwise stealing the vital energy of the collector.

In the Enawene-Nawe narratives, latex is also portrayed as a potent poison. In the past, the mother’s milk of the Katotonero spirit woman was, in reality, composed of sap from the rubber tree. When squirted in the eyes of an enemy, it had a devastating effect, causing the immediate death of the one who was struck with it.

The expansion of the rubber business along the Juruena had a similar effect to that of Katotonero’s milk. For the peoples who were devastated and whose populations were reduced by the actions of the *Bandeirantes*, the advance of rubber exploitation brought new forms of enslavement and violence.

The men who engaged in it often ended up removed from their territories, unable to continue with their cultural and religious practices and imprisoned by debt. Women, on the other hand, experienced violence and sexual exploitation by the workers engaged in the waves of rubber extraction.

At that same time, new fronts of government and religious activities were advancing on the region. During the Republican Period, the installation of the telegraph lines under the command of Marshal Cândido Rondon was one of the first efforts toward national integration promoted by the Brazilian government, constituting a watershed in the life of the people of the Juruena, especially those residing along its upper course. Rondon’s passage through the region marks a new time: the “discovery” of the Juruena by Brazilian society in a broader sense.

Rondon inaugurated a new page in the history of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena, superseding the native hydronyms and toponyms and replacing them with names in Portuguese referencing personages important to Brazilian society. As anthropologist Maria Fátima Roberto Machado argues, in doing so, Rondon engaged

.....  
Father João Dornstauder and members of the Rikbaktsa people. MIA Archives



in a similar activity to that of the ancestor Wazare. The naming of the places by Wazare was one of the primordial actions of the human occupation conducted by the peoples who had recently emerged from onto the earthly plane. A symbolic adaptation occurred between these two figures: Wazare defines the territorialities in the post-stone world, while Rondon redefines them in the time marked by the return of the whites.

Superseding indigenous nomenclatures, boundaries, and territorialities was also a way of breaking with the original right to the territory, erasing the ancient references and names that validate the indigenous occupation of the region because, as Ailton Krenak puts it,

Each *igarapé*<sup>13</sup> has a name, and its name is an invocation of other beings, kinship, and the oldest narratives that come to our memory. That is what provides the meaning behind calling the land “mother” because it is not a thing; it is not a bunch of dirt, a lot, a plot, a farm. No matter how much they try to transform it into a mere resource or take away the meaning of life that the land has, these people who were born on the land, and have the memory of the land, won’t accept it. They protest, die, other names appear, but they continue fighting and shouting, asserting that it is Mother Earth.<sup>14</sup>

The mapping carried out by the Telegraph Commission (Comissão das Linhas Telegráficas) was instrumental in subsidizing the expansion of

the agricultural frontier in this region decades later. The records left by Rondon leave no doubt that the identification of places with hydraulic and mineral potential was one of the responsibilities attributed to this commission.

Along the Juruena, as with the rest of Brazil, the return of the whites is marked by the simultaneous arrival of the waves of exploitation and evangelization. They complemented each other within the process of colonization and alienation of the indigenous territories. In their dreams, some shamans predicted the arrival of these “other whites,” who would live in the villages, adhering to the way of life of the Juruena peoples. This assertion is part of the paradoxical relationship that the indigenous peoples of the region maintained with the Anchieta Mission (Missão Anchieta, or MIA), the last Jesuit mission established on Brazilian lands.

The Anchieta Mission was linked to the Diamantino Prelature, created in 1930 to serve a vast area in the northwest of Mato Grosso and the present state of Rondônia. According to the Jesuit priest José de Moura, the region where this prelature was established as an area of long-time interest to the Jesuits. Before the creation of the Anchieta Mission, the Santa Terezinha do Menino Jesus Mission of the Mangabal River was established in 1935, west of the Juruena, near the village of subgroups of the Nambikwara people. But this mission was short-lived since the weather near the Nambikwara was unfavorable. At the same time, the priests found it difficult to structure the mission in the area chosen, as it was an arid and difficult-to-access site with sandy soil that hindered the development of agriculture. An epidemic

of measles with devastating effects on the Nambikwara was the trigger that led to the fulfillment, in 1945, of an old proposal to transfer the mission to the vicinity of Salto Utiariti, where, a few decades before, one of the telegraph posts had been established.

The religious boarding school Utiariti was founded in the heart of Haliti territory. Anthropologist Joana Fernandes da Silva points out that this boarding school, unlike what was common for other Jesuit settlements, decided to focus the work of evangelization on indigenous children. The missionaries believed that children would be more easily “catechized” compared to adults.

Many of these children were orphans whose families had been victims of the epidemics and violence brought with the waves of colonization. The children boarded at the Utiariti boarding school were mainly from the Haliti, Manoki, Nambikwara, Rikbaktsa, and Kawaiwete peoples. Forbidden from speaking their languages and practicing their rituals, the children were subjected to a routine of religious and labor instruction. With an emphasis on catechetical work, the missionary strategy socially displaced these children from their peoples.

Despite having supported these populations in a significant way, the work of the MIA contributed to the expansion of the rubber business and agriculture. Parallel to the missionary work carried out at the religious boarding school, the MIA financed pacification activities whose objective was to establish contact with the peoples who, up to that point, had not maintained a systematic relationship with the colonizers. It was argued that given the drastic reduction in population



– resulting from clashes between indigenous peoples and colonizers – intervention was needed to calm the conflicts. The MIA began to act as a pacifying agent of the disputes arising from the process of colonization. The primary targets of these initiatives were the Kajkrakwatxi, Kawaiwete, and Rikbaktsa, groups with a warrior ethos that vigorously fought against the colonial advance on the Juruena, who had, in the end, succumbed like the other peoples.

This revision of their *modus operandi* culminated in the deactivation of the Utiariti boarding school in 1961. Although this boarding school was short-lived, according to anthropologist Machado, the experiment in religious education left such a mark that it ended up defining a new regional identity: that of the “mission natives.”

The end of the boarding school did not mean the end of the Anchieta Mission. It began to adopt a new

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Indigenous children at the  
Utiariti boarding school.  
MIA archives.

<sup>13</sup>TN: A watercourse in the Amazon rainforest.

<sup>14</sup>“A Potência do Sujeito Coletivo – Parte I.” Revista Periferias. Available at: <http://imja.org.br/revista/materia/a-potencia-do-sujeito-coletivo-parte-i/>.





.....  
 Jesuit priest Vicente Cañas,  
 who lived with the  
 Enawene-Nawe people  
 during the 1980s.  
 OPAN archives

action strategy called enculturation (or incarnation), based on coexistence in the villages and adherence of the missionaries to the local way of life. Before evangelizing the natives, it was the missionaries who should indigenize themselves to carry out social mediations that would strengthen the rights of these groups. Since then, the strategy to support the recognition of the territories of indigenous peoples was adopted with greater commitment. With this change in orientation, the mission became one of the main allies of these peoples in the struggle for land regularization of at least some portions of their traditional territory.

Indeed, as anthropologist Aloir Pacini states,

regularization of indigenous lands along the Juruena is intrinsically related to the bargains that occur in the expansion of the agricultural frontier. Indigenous areas are not demarcated to ensure the rights of these peoples. On the contrary, they are demarcated to meet the demand to delimit as little territory as possible for these populations so that the rest of the land can be made available for colonization.

The history of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena has been marked by population and territorial losses due to the advance of colonialism in its different aspects. Estimates project a mortality rate that ranges from 75% to 95% of the people living in the region, figures

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## Índios antropófagos aceitam pela primeira vez encontro com homens civilizados

Conclusão, segunda-feira pp. Foi o resultado de um paciente e metódico trabalho que há muito vinha sendo feito pelo sr. Morim A. porquanto em suas viagens sempre que passava pela região dos Beíço-de-Pau deixava presentes e objetos de utilidades que despertavam a atenção dos índios. Para a CONOMALI, que forneceu-nos esta notícia

captada pelo seu serviço de rádio, esse primeiro contato pacífico entre civilizados e os índios Beíço-de-Pau, é motivo de justa satisfação pois abre a perspectiva de rápida integração desses selvagens na civilização, cessando assim as hostilidades que os pioneiros de Porto da Galinhas vinham sentindo há mais de doze anos.

that show the extent of the genocide that has been committed against these peoples. The Kajkrakwatxi and Kawaiwete underwent forced displacement and now struggle to return to their traditional territories. The Haliti and Rikbaktsa accumulated great territorial losses, having succeeded in securing only a small portion of their ancient territory as regularized indigenous land. The Apiaká were expelled from their territory and forced to disperse throughout the region, hiding their ethnic identity as a strategy to try to survive persecution. In the case of the Enawene-Nawe, Manoki, Myky, and subgroups of the Nambikwara people, parcels of their territories of inestimable importance were neglected in the demarcation processes.

The expansion of the agricultural frontier along the Juruena occurs at a time when the indigenous peoples of this region are physically and socially fragile. In addition to the population decline, these groups have been subjected to numerous strategies of acculturation or pacification perpetrated by the government (Comissão das Linhas Telegráficas) and religious institutions (Anchieta Mission and ISAMU, the Inland South America Missionary Union). There is a drastic process of territorial confinement, based on the excuse of safeguarding the indigenous population against the harmful effects of the expansion of colonization and, at the same time, of promoting their integration into national society.



## The world's farm or cradle of the waters?

**T**he Juruena has been the target of numerous government efforts to boost migration to the Brazilian Central-West region, such as the National Integration Program (Programa de Integração Nacional, PIN) in the nineteen-seventies, the Polonoroeste in the nineteen-eighties, and the Prodeagro in the nineteen-nineties. The promotion of the occupation of the region was based on its low population density. It did not recognize that this was a result of the strong depopulation suffered by the indigenous peoples due to the genocidal action of those involved in the waves of colonization that took place between the seventeenth and mid-twentieth centuries.

The construction of highways BR 364 (from Cuiabá, in the state of Mato Grosso, to Porto Velho, in the state of Roraima) and BR 174 (from Vilhena, in Roraima, to Aripuanã, in Mato Grosso) in the nineteen-sixties, consolidated the process of colonizing this region, characterized by the settlement of migrant fronts originating in the south and southeast of the country that brought with them a new model of development. Many families dreamed of making a fortune in the far corners of Brazil. At that time, the whites were now moved by a different eagerness for a new treasure: green gold. And so, numerous chestnut, tucum, bamboo, and moriche palm groves were cleared for logging, the planting of crops, and grazing on a large scale. This process led to several territorial disputes between the indigenous populations and the new fronts of agribusiness, conflicts that continue to this day.

This is a still-recent page in the history of this region. Until 1979, the sub-basin of the Juruena River had only three towns: Diamantino, Aripuanã and, Porto dos Gaúchos. The other towns have only been established since the nineteen-eighties. As Lolawenakwa'ene Kairoli of the Enawene-Nawe people has said:

Whites were not born on this land. It was our grandparents who were born here. Where were your grandparents born? In São Paulo? In Europe? That's why whites do not know anything about this place. They only think of cattle. They do not know that our territory is ancient. That it was given to us by our ancestors. That many spirits reside on it. It's been like this for a long time. Why is it that the white people don't know this? Because they are outsiders, who have come to take our land.

This situation has been a complex challenge for the indigenous peoples of the Juruena. In addition to territorial losses, the advance of agriculture has brought a series of threats to the places that are the references of their memory: sacred hills have been flattened to open arable areas for farming or for the harvest of gravel, bridges to transport timber and grains have interrupted the course of small rivers, old cemeteries have been dug up by tractors during soil preparation. Agricultural projects have caused such impacts for which there is still no better form of diagnosis. In the words of a member of the Kawaiwete people: "They are killing the tapirs to replace them with cattle. The natives aren't the only ones dying. First, they kill the land, then the natives will die as well."

The access of the indigenous peoples to their territory is curtailed as soon as any of their sacred sites come to be encompassed by private property and not indigenous lands. The numerous lawsuits for the regularization of plots of traditional territory not considered in the demarcation processes point to this situation. "That land was ours, and even today there are pieces of clay pots there. I can't step foot there because I get sad, and even cry! I don't know if everyone gets like this! We should be able to live where our elders died," said Elder Maurício Tupxi of the Manoki people in an interview given to Father Adalberto de Holanda Pereira.



The scientific-capitalist model conceives of these territories, environments, and landscapes as amorphous, constituting only raw material for the taking by humans. As resources, they must be transformed and not safeguarded. Such an understanding is in direct contradiction with indigenous thought, for which the maintenance of an adequate model of life is the only guarantee of the continuity of humans on Earth.

Surrounded by agribusiness, some people have come to recognize in large-scale agriculture a possibility of income generation and obtaining greater respect from non-natives. However, in these cases, such activities are governed by the socio-cosmological zoning of the sacred areas, with the shamans playing a leading role in defining the areas that can or cannot be the target of such endeavors.

With the establishment of new urban centers and the agricultural export models—which is often evoked by politicians and business people as the calling of the state of Mato Grosso—there is as a demand for improvements to the energy and transportation infrastructure as a way to encourage the expansion



of agribusiness and ensure a reduction in the cost of production in this sector. Added to this is the recurrent speculation aiming to coordinate hydroelectric projects with the establishment of waterways for the transportation of commodities (grains, cotton, meat, and ore). The scenario the Juruena faces is even more worrisome when the cumulative development of the large-scale projects planned for the Teles Pires and Tapajós Rivers is taken into account.

These initiatives may also serve to encourage even more the expansion of agriculture into these lands, increasing the pressure being exerted on the Cerrado and the Amazon rainforest. Added to these threats is the expansion of mining, especially of the large iron and limestone deposits that have been identified along the middle and lower course of the Juruena. In light of this, there is no way to avoid evoking the Mariana tragedy. The degradation of the Doce River, caused by the most significant environmental disaster in Brazilian history, may be a preview of the scenario planned for the Juruena's future, which has already been ravaged by the advance of deforestation and intensive use of agrochemicals.

With their return to the Juruena, white people have left a trail of violence and destruction in their wake.

Guided by the myth of development, they advance upon the indigenous populations, taking their bodies, their labor, their language, their culture, their natural resources, and, finally, trying to take their territories for good. Devastating the sacred soil from which spring the waters that feed the greater part of the Brazilian Amazon, they ignore the fact that the true calling of the backlands of the West is to safeguard some of the greatest biodiversity on the planet.

After five centuries of clashes, indigenous peoples continue to be on the front lines of the resistance against the ferocious advance of the state-capitalist machine, the chimera of the white people, promoter of the glamor of the markets that, promising wonders, brings poverty and destruction to many in order to provide great financial wealth to a few. Conscious of the fact that they need to tread lightly on this land, which is ancient and has for many years guaranteed their very existence, the indigenous people of the region continue to engage in this battle, which is not only physical, but also symbolic, resisting and re-existing in face of the advance of colonialism, and reaffirming their way of seeing the world and their ancient knowledge handed down from generation to generation, to which the marks left on the landscape by history attest.

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Boarder between  
farmland and the forest.  
Juliana Almeida







.....  
Middle course of the  
Dos Peixes River.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





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Rapids on the  
lower Juruena.  
Adriano Gambarini/OPAN

## PART II

### The Land as a Witness

On the land of the indigenous peoples reside many different living beings with different roles that contribute to the balance and management of a life system that also includes humans and animals.

Many micro and macro subsystems help to clearly exemplify this. For example, mountain ranges, mountains, boulders, waterfalls, hills, lakes, and so forth are all home to beings that are responsible for the reproduction of the animals, fish, and other fundamental beings that also live there. These places are connected, have paths that go between them, and are mapped and recognized by the indigenous people of the region, constituting part of their traditional management of food security. But religion, capitalism, and the government irresponsibly level these important places, just as the Americans leveled the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945, during the Second World War. However here in Brazil, this has taken place through the beliefs imposed upon the indigenous peoples of the region, and now many of these places have become bare as a consequence of contact, much to the detriment of the indigenous peoples and their lands. Indigenous lands are not lands that have been conquered through wars of domination over others. Indigenous lands have been inherited by indigenous peoples from the Creator of the world and the land.

(ANDRÉ BANIWA)



## Beyond what is seen

For indigenous peoples, the land is much more than a resource. It not only guarantees the necessary conditions for their subsistence but, principally, holds the fundamental elements that define their way of life. People are tied to the land, just as the land is tied to its people. In the regional landscape of the Juruena, every element recalls a story that exists as part of a web of other stories remembered in narratives and other forms of expression, such as songs. They contain knowledge passed down from generation to generation that reaffirms the connection between indigenous peoples and their territories.

For the indigenous peoples of the Juruena, the regional landscape is not home to just humans. It is also home to countless spirits, who are considered to be the “owners” of the resources it holds, but in a sense much less like a proprietor and much more like a guardian. As they are seen in this light, these spirits have determining roles in the regulation of the way the territory is managed. Because of this, there is a need for humans to be permanently attentive to the spirits’ needs and desires and to be steadfast in carefully managing resources or they run the risk of incurring the wrath of these beings. Many of the spirits that currently reside in sacred places were people who, in the past—whether it be due to carelessness, the violation of social rules, an attempt to escape an enemy or personal choice—came to occupy the space.

As an example, the Rikbaktsa say that, during one of their diasporas, they were given assistance from an alligator to cross a river. Sloth warned everyone that, during the crossing, when they smelled the foul odor of the alligator, they would have to endure the stench without spitting in the water. The people crossed the river in different groups. The first group was composed of ugly women. They bore the foul smell and arrived safely to the other side of the river. But during the second crossing, the group composed of beautiful women was unable to bear the stench emanating from the alligator and were tossed into the river, and since then they have lived at the bottom where they have turned into fish.

For most of the people of the Juruena, the structure of the world is related to the presence of a giant fig tree located in the celestial dome. From the perspective of the Haliti, this tree, which is responsible for maintaining the earthly plane, is the source of wisdom and healing. According to shaman Zeferino Koloizomae, humans’ neglect of social rules and the management of the world has brought about the ire of the spirits. In reprisal, Wazare, the ancestral demiurge of

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Sunset on the Ponte de  
Pedra Indigenous Land.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN







his people, has cut off part of the roots of the sacred fig tree. As a consequence, disasters have fallen upon the world in the form of earthquakes and harmful climatic events. These are warnings that all is not well. Part of the land, in regions where many white people live, has already “come loose.” Many of the people that live there have no idea of the risk they’re running: they are literally hanging by a thread.

Every one of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena has learned how, in their own way, to establish a specific understanding regarding the landscapes of this region. Some of them are convergent, while others are completely distinct. This being the case, for the Kajkwakratxi (Tapayuna), more important than how the world or human beings came to be is the event that ensured that all beings could be named.

At the beginning of time, everyone was called by

the same name. During this time, the Kajkwakratxi often suffered attacks from a people that lived inside of holes in the ground. In retaliation, the Kajkwakratxi attacked this group, leaving only a young boy who had been hidden under a pot by his mother. Upon being taken to the village, it was he who gave a distinct name to each member of the Kajkwakratxi. Everyone having a proper name is fundamental to the humanization of people and the definition of a group’s identity, as, thanks to the naming, the Kajkwakratxi came to have their own language and rituals.

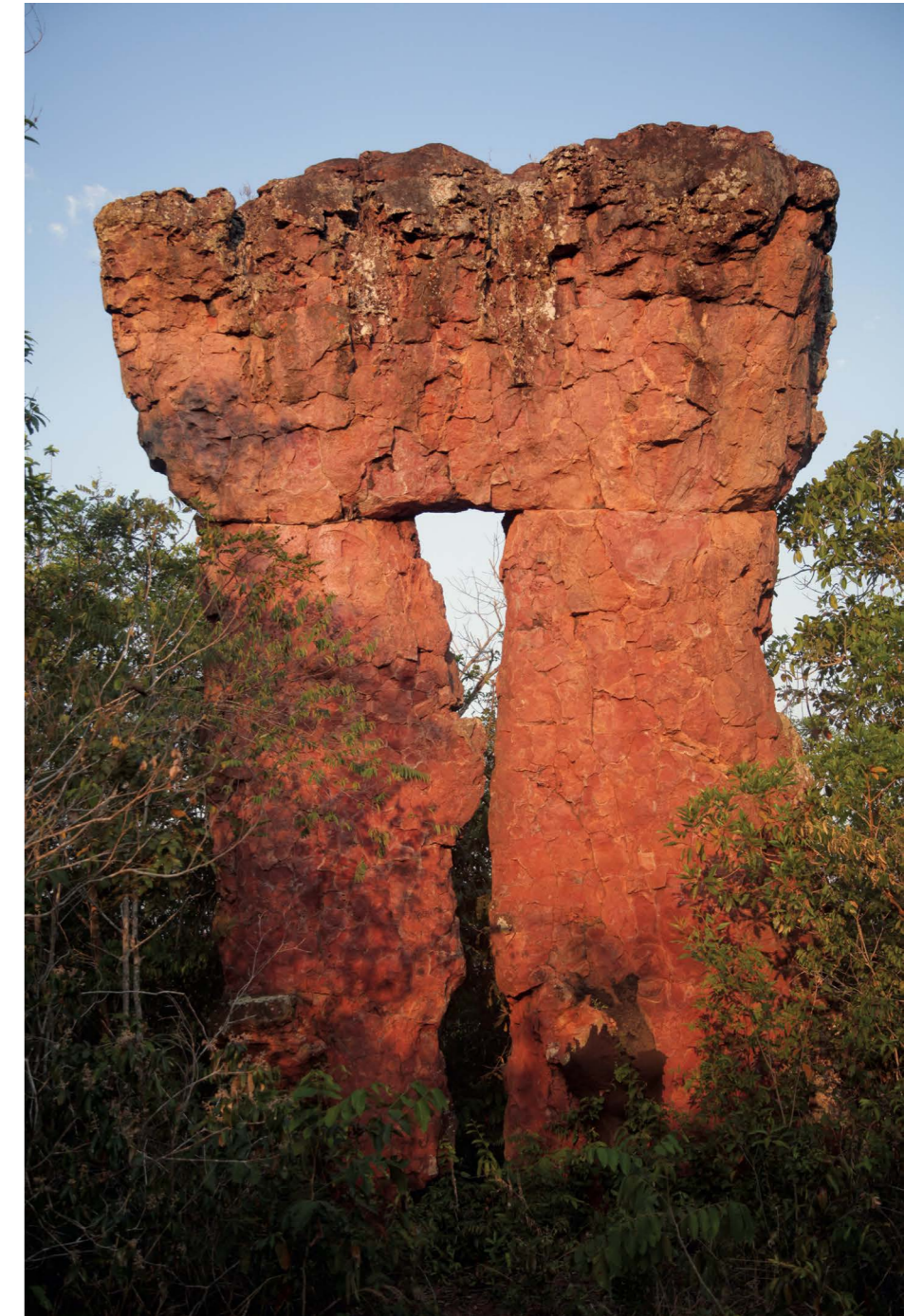
In turn, a vast majority of the peoples of the upper Juruena believe that all the distinct sacred sites are interconnected using a circuit formed in the pattern of ramifications similar to the water network, leaf veins, the circulatory system, and lightning. What these people value above all is the ability to traverse these

possible routes, a technique that is generally only fully mastered by shamans or singing masters. There is a direct connection between humans and the landscapes, as well as a connection between the two and non-human beings: spirits, plants, and animals. All are inter-related through these travel routes, which are also routes of transformation. This being the case, telling the stories of the time of origins becomes a way of traversing the territory, reaffirming these routes and remembering the paths traveled by the ancestors.

These paths, registered in the landscapes and in the songs, equally compose the practices of healing. Traversing them is an act with therapeutic capabilities. From the point of view of the indigenous peoples of the region, sickness is invariably caused by spirits who steal the vital energy (soul) of the sick person. This being the case, healing is achieved by retrieving what was stolen. To do this, a shaman needs to travel along the paths marked across the territory, making offerings and trying to locate the soul of the sick person. It is essential that he know all the routes in their entirety, not only to find where the vital energy is hidden but, above all, to be able to make the journey back. The blessings murmured by the shamans connect with the landscape and the origin stories to purify the bodies and guarantee the physical integrity of the person for whom the prayers made. Traversing the sacred sites through his songs and prayers, the shaman ensures the protection needed to ward off any danger.

The stories that follow relate to several of the sites that hold socio-cosmological importance to the people of the Juruena. They are just a small sample of the immense wealth of knowledge and emotions that are recorded in the landscape and are safeguarded by the philosophies of the indigenous peoples. Threatened by the construction of hydroelectric power plants, the Ponte de Pedra, Utiariti, das Mulheres, Ytu’u, and Augusto waterfalls have emerged as the front lines of the debate regarding the importance of the recognition, appreciation, and protection of the cultural heritage of the Juruena.

Rocky outcroppings called Cidade de Pedra (City of Stone), located near Ponte de Pedra (Stone Bridge).  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



The beauty in the small details along the upper Juruena.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





.....  
Ponte de Pedra  
(Stone Bridge).  
Antonio Garcia



## In the beginning, there was the stone

**P**onte de Pedra (Stone Bridge) is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the most important sacred sites of the indigenous peoples of the upper Juruena. The stage on which the beginning of the expansion of the human race across the earthly plane played out, the sacred site of Ponte de Pedra encompasses a waterfall that cascades in two streams along the direction of a hole in the stone, through which the river continues on its course. A few meters upstream, four waterfalls adorn the landscape, making the course of the river more turbulent. It is impossible not to be impressed by the majestic beauty of this scene.

At the beginning of time, the Earth was different than we know it today. The world already existed, as well as humans. In that time, the earthly plane was occupied only by the Enore spirits. Meanwhile, the humans lived inside of a stone located at the head of the Sucuruina River, a tributary that flows into the right bank of the Juruena. Humans did not know of the existence of the world outside the stone, just as they didn't know of the existence of the spirits that lived on the earth. For their part, the spirits were also unaware of the existence of the humans and their subterranean habitat.

One day the chief of the spirits was sitting in the Pedra de Cascavel Creek. Feeling melancholy and reflective, he was contemplating if it would be possible for him to leave more descendants upon the Earth in addition to his sons, Zokozokoiro and Mazaharé.<sup>15</sup> The two of them had gone out to collect fruits from the Cerrado: jabuticaba, guava, locust. Upon their return, they went to the port with gourds to gather water. But when they arrived, they heard a strange noise that frightened them greatly. According to the Haliti, this noise was coming from the sound of the musical instruments the humans were playing during a ritual. However, for the Enawene-Nawe, the sound was due to the shouts of players in the midst of a game of *cabeçabol* inside the stone.

Terrified, the children of the Enore ran to their father to tell him what happened. Even faced with the terror shown by his sons, his first reaction was to doubt the existence of other beings. He went on to say that such a thing would be impossible, claiming that no other beings inhabited the Earth. Annoyed and thinking that this was the work of the Yakane, water spirits who wanted to dominate the earthly plane, the chief Enore decided to intervene on behalf of his children, using a *borduna* (type of club) to launch a bolt of lightning at the rock, making a direct hit, as well as a crack in the stone.



<sup>15</sup> In some versions, a couple, in others, two girls.



The impact of the lightning bolt caused everyone inside the stone to lose consciousness. It was at that moment that the Enore realized that there were good people inside the stone who held great parties and shared a great deal of food. He felt deep regret for having harmed those people, who hadn't deserved such treatment. Ashamed of his error, he gathered his sons and made the decision to move to the celestial plane.

Inside the stone, the people slowly began to regain consciousness but remained oblivious to the reason for the ill that had befallen them. Only a little vulture noticed the crack in the stone and, curious, approached to examine it. It was then that he realized that he could go through it. He managed to squeeze through the opening, carrying a basket on his back. As soon as he came out, he sat atop the stone, looked out and admired the world that had been hitherto unknown to him. Outside the stone, he soared high and sat on

the top of a locust tree, where he looked out over the horizon at the immensity of the place. Before returning to the stone, he gathered a few flowers and put them inside his basket as proof of his discovery.

Back in the stone, he laid in his hammock where he nevertheless kept silent, unsure about telling the others about everything he had seen. Inside the stone, everyone was celebrating, but the little vulture no longer saw any sense in living there and became a little sadder every day. Noticing the small vulture's sadness, his nephew, Wazare,<sup>16</sup> asked him why he was feeling so down, suspicious that he had been messing with poison. The small vulture responded by telling of his adventure and the existence of a beautiful world outside the stone. The others didn't believe what he told them. Therefore, to prove that he was telling the truth, the little vulture took out of his basket the many flowers he had collected during his visit to the outside world. The flowers were incontestable proof of the beauty of this unknown world. Enchanted by the aroma of the flowers, all the others rubbed them over their bodies.

Immediately, everyone was full of curiosity and interested in seeing this new world. However, they saw that the opening was very tight and they would only be able to leave by making it wider. Chief Wazare called on everyone to help with the opening in the stone, promising everyone who helped with the effort that their descendants could live in the new world. Various different animals embarked on the task. First came the agouti, but as soon as he began to chew the rock, his tooth broke. Then came the squirrel, who managed to open the crack a little more, but his teeth could not take any more. The macaw also tried, his beak also broke. Last came the woodpecker. He was used to pecking very hard things, as his beak was made from a stone ax. The woodpecker prepared himself, but it didn't take much effort as the opening had already been worn down by his predecessors.

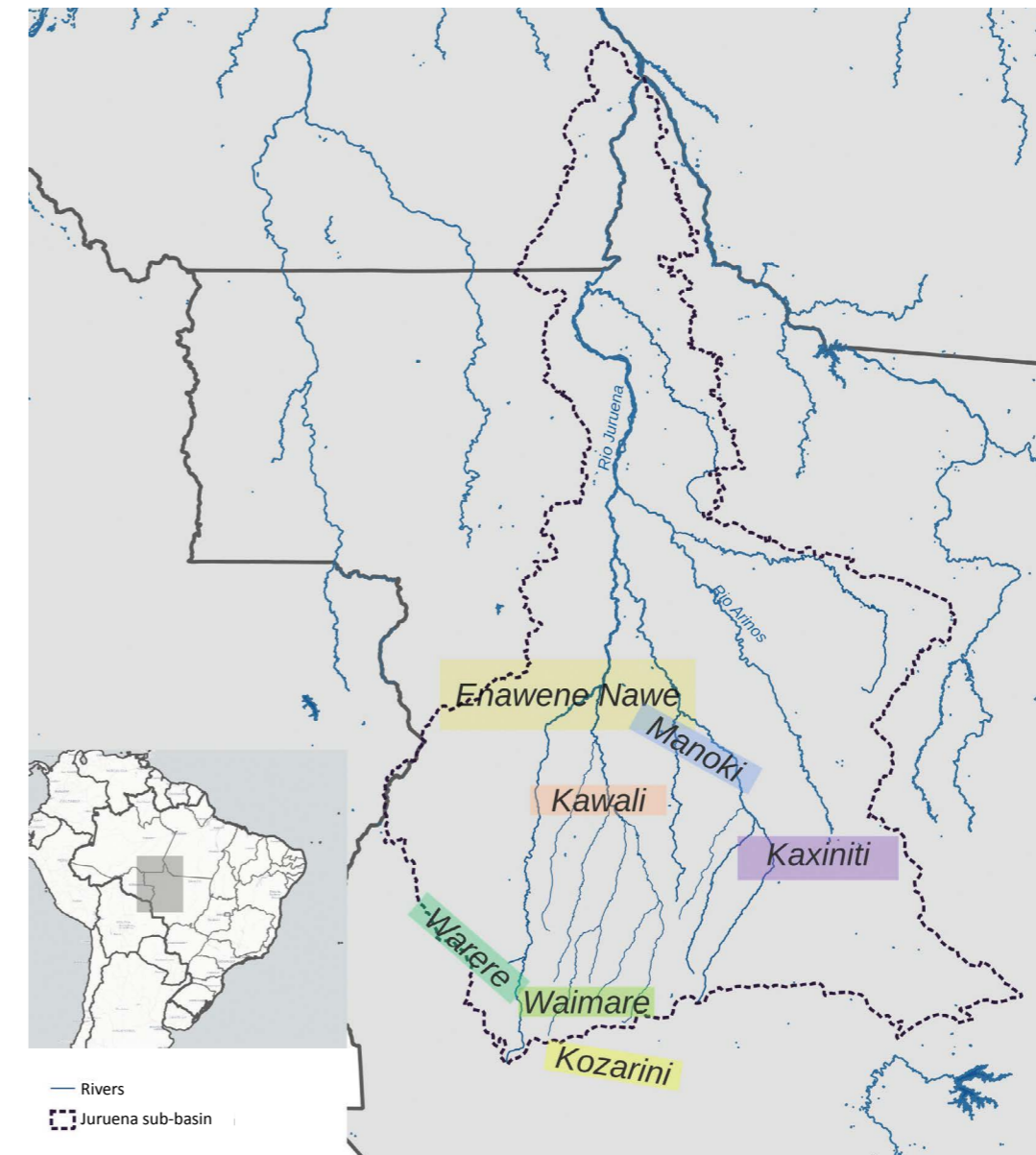
Along with the rodents and beaked animals, according to the Manoki, the widening of the opening

<sup>16</sup> Known as Wazare by the Haliti and Wadali by the Enawene-Nawe.

From atop the rocky outcroppings of the Cidade de Pedra, shaman Zeferino tells the stories of the Haliti people. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



TERRITORIES DEFINED BY WAZARE



in the stone was also helped by the wasp, whose saliva helped to soften it. With the help of the animals, the crevice became large enough for everyone to leave through. However, their exit would have to be fast, as the opening soon began to close due to the regenerative power of the stone.

From the point of view of each one of the distinct peoples of the upper Juruena, certain significant differences run through the narratives about the origin of humans on the earthly plane. But a point they

have in common is the representation of envy as the driver of conflict and, consequently, of establishing a social and territorial order. In different versions of the story about the exit from the stone, there are accounts of episodes of envy directly associated with the order of the exit (who left first) and the manner of the exit (who left happy). It is also recommended that envy be combated, even to the detriment of the exultation of benevolence in this new life established on the earthly plane.



For the Haliti, envy took hold between Wazare's group and Nahi's group. Wazare was saddened to see Nahi's people leave the rock feeling overjoyed, dancing arm in arm with the women and playing their pan flutes. Upon letting out a sigh of envy, Chef Wazare was warned by Kamayhié about the need to avoid sadness or risk his people becoming equally sad. Envy, according to him, causes unnecessary sadness. Thus it impedes happiness, which is what drives social life.

According to the perspective of the Enawene-Nawe, the adorned men, as well as the spirits, were resentful of the fact that the women exited the stone first. The women left singing like they would during the Kateokō, a ritual dedicated to the celestial spirits. This was because the women did not need to prepare so as much for ceremonies. Their dress is simpler, different from the men, who, in addition to wearing ribbons made from moriche palm and other adornments, have to spend a lot of time covering their bodies in clay. Envious, the men blew achiote seeds toward them, sending a strong whirlwind to knock them over, but to no avail.

The Haliti detail the hierarchical order of the exit from the stone. A group of brothers was responsible for the origin of the different subgroups of this people. This being the case, the first to leave was Wazare, who never had children and, after a time, returned to live inside the stone. Next came his brothers Zakálo and Zalóya, who married the same women and whose descendants are the members of the Waimaré subgroup. Soon after came

Kamazo, ancestor of the Kozarene. Next in order came Zalore, who originated the Kaxiniti. Then came Kono, whose descendants are the Warere. He was followed closely by Tahoe, the originator of the Kawali. Next came Kamaihiye, a very wise man who, like Wazare, had no children and returned to live within the stone. Last came Kuythoré, ancestor of the white people.

The order of the exit determined certain peculiarities of each subgroup and set the stage for relations of alterity between them, marked by their territorial dispersion (each subgroup holds their own specific territory) and endogamy. Having spread out to different distinct territories, each one of the brothers followed Wazare's recommendations, who directed them to have many children and populate the region. The preoccupation with the continuity of the groups served as the driving force that gave meaning to the new life on the earthly plane, also characterized by the transience of the humans, imposed by death.

Among the Manoki there is the idea that the exit from the stone represents the transition from a model of virtuous sociality that is more egalitarian and free of conflict to one rooted in disunion and illness. This new world, despite its beauty, seems to be the world of imperfection and disorder. This is due to a curse made by an ugly old man who stayed trapped inside the stone. He exited the stone but forgot his comb. When he went back inside to fetch it, the opening closed itself off, and he remained trapped within.



In the version of the Haliti and Enawene-Nawe, Wayhariro also remained within the stone because, while he had a skinny waist, he also had very thick legs. Remaining within the stone, he transformed into a spirit woman. Both peoples also detail the attempts to leave within the stone all those who might pass on imperfections or bad habits to their descendants, who would come to occupy the earthly plane from that day on. Feelings such as jealousy, sadness, anger, laziness, and envy, as well as illness, are considered disruptions to

the social order and, therefore, elements that should be eliminated. Such avoidance points to a striving to break with the repetition of a pattern that is not conducive to the longed-for ideal model of society.

The Manoki also relate that after the exit from the stone, each group sat beneath a certain tree. They sat beneath the *cambará-branco*, and the Haliti beneath the *jatobá-do-mato*, followed by the Kawaiwete, who opted for the *carambola-do-mato* tree. The Nambikwara sat beneath a *jatobá-do-cerrado* and the Kajkwakratxi beneath



the *pindaíba-do-mato* tree. Lastly, the whites came out and sat down under a softwood tree. All of these trees were located around a *cambará-branco*, where the Manoki sat.

For their part, The Haliti and the Enawene-Nawe highlight the order given by Chief Wazare, who asked the little vulture to gather dust left by the animals who worked on opening the crack further. This dust, according to him, was a poison that would make people respect each other in their new life, establishing a kind of policing power.

Different from the Manoki, the Enawene-Nawe do not believe that the stone held all the peoples known in the world today. For them, only the Haliti and white people share this same origin. Several peoples who live more to the north are held to have originated from stones located along the upper Aripuanã. The Nambikwara emerged from a mixture of ash and blood, while the Rikbaktsa came from arrowheads.<sup>17</sup> This is similar to the account of the Haliti, who believe that the Bororo originate from arrows and the Apiaká from a pestle.

The shaman Zeferino affirms that, after the exit from the stone, the people of Wazare sat on the top of the stone beside the opening, where they stayed for a time, resting and appreciating the view of the landscape. Everything was new and they were astonished by the beauty, as well as the novelty of experiencing life in a completely unfamiliar place.

The narrative about the origin of the human occupation of the Earth addresses the idea of space as territory. Wazare is the central character in charge of this primordial mission, guided by a stone ball that, when

he rolled it, would indicate the direction of the specific territories to be made available to each one of the Haliti subgroups, as well as the other peoples of the upper Juruena. The occupation of these territories was fully established with their naming.

This being the case, the distinct subgroups of the Haliti people settled at the headwaters located in the region between the Amazon and Platina river basins. The Manoki say that they received the region around the Ponte de Pedra, along the Do Sangue River, as their territory. Beside them, by the Arinos River, are located the Kajkwakratxi. For their part, the Enawene-Nawe settled on the delta of the Papagaio River, on territory that expands from the Olowina (Arimena) River, through the Adowina (Preto) River, reaching the Tonowina (Juína-Mirim) River, and extending to the east until it reaches the headwaters of the Aripuanã. At the Cidade de Pedra (City of Stone), a rocky outcropping near the Ponte de Pedra, Wazare met with Kuytihoré, where they determined how the indigenous people—who would remain in the region—would disperse, and that the white people, fitted with metal tools, would go east.

With the definition of the areas to be occupied by each people of the upper Juruena, Wazare, with the knowledge that he had completed his task, decided to return to the stone, where he lives to this day. However, Wazare isn't resting. According to the shaman Zeferino, every night he carries out repairs to damaged parts of the stone passage.

The historical records affirm that Ponte de Pedra was composed in the past of two arches. However, one



of them collapsed. According to the Haliti, these arches constituted the passages that gave humans access to the earthly plane, with one arch leading out of the stone and the other leading in. This being the case, the collapse of one of the arches was caused by Wazare to make it impossible for the humans to return.<sup>18</sup>

The Enore spirits themselves are also considered to have an origin tied to stone. But in their case, they didn't live inside of a stone, rather they emerged from a small stone used to make fire (sparks), called *walihasé*. For this reason, they hold the power of lightning. The name of one of the most powerful spirits, Enoharé, can be translated as “lightning bolt,” and the place where he lived in prehistorical times, located in the vicinity of Ponte de Pedra, is today known as Monte do Raio (Lightning Hill).

The relationship between humans and the Enore spirits is a very special one. The narrative affirms that the Enore knew that they would one day be responsible

for caring for a new people that were yet to exist. One of the main concerns of these spirits was to occupy this beautiful world with their descendants, an issue on which they reflected with feelings of melancholy before learning of the existence of the humans. After striking the stone with the lightning bolt launched from a *borduna*, the Enore were saddened to know that it had harmed good people. It is precisely this sentiment of compassion and reciprocity that the spirits demonstrate in their relationship with the humans, as they had foreseen their emergence, as well as the fact that they would become their protectors. As the shaman Zeferino says, “The Enore are our grandfathers. They take care of us.”

For the peoples of the upper Juruena, the exit from the stone represents, in addition to the change in territoriality, a process in which borders are expanded, as well as networks of sociability. The humans broke from a previous order to occupy the intersection of the cosmos, right in the intermediate layer between the

<sup>17</sup> From the point of view of the Enawene-Nawe, the genesis of the Nambikwara and Rikbaktsa are associated with the adventures of a group of orphaned siblings called Taxikiya-Nawe. This group decapitated the Xinikaloli, a fierce warrior people, out of revenge for the death of their father, who was murdered by this group. It was from the mixture of the blood of the Xinikaloli with the ashes of a bonfire that the Nambikwara emerged. After decimating the Xinikaloli, as directed by their grandfather, the Taxikiya-Nawe decided to flee to the celestial plane. To do this, they shot a series of arrows that merged at the tip to form a bow that the Taxikiya-Nawe then used to ascend to the heavens. But the youngest brother remembered that he had left a bunch of arrowheads near the Preto River. He tried to return to recover them, but it was too late, as they had already transformed into the Rikbaktsa.

<sup>18</sup> Until recently, this rocky structure was used as a bridge. It was only when the Haliti retook the territory that a barrier was constructed to keep out motor traffic from the location. In a quick evaluation conducted by the archaeologist Edison Rodrigues de Souza, it was found that the structure has been badly damaged.

Depredation of the rock slabs of Ponte de Pedra. Edison Rodrigues de Souza





subterranean and celestial dimensions. In this new life, the earthly plane itself is the bridge. Marked by transience—as one consequence of life on the earthly plan is death—this space has become a way-point between different worlds, a kind of hub that precedes human access to the celestial plane.

A fundamental characteristic of the earthly world is that everything on it is under the dominion of some kind of being. Everything has an owner, according to the shaman Zeferino. These owners are the spirits, to whom the indigenous peoples must be permanently attentive, providing for their needs and desires, complying with ritual obligations, and managing resources in the correct ways, or risk suffering attacks.

This primordial event was followed by a series of transformations in the bodies of humans and animals, as well as the geography of the region, leaving traces of the past in the rocks, the morphology of plant species, and in the human form. From it was derived all of the necessities for life on the earthly plane: agriculture, mastery of fire, mastery of hunting and fishing techniques, etc.

The memory of the interventions carried out under the command of Wazare is still, to this day, present in the landscape of the region. But the place considered the stage of the beginning of human existence on the earthly plane encompasses a series of important spaces beyond the Ponte de Pedra. On this site exist a variety of other elements of the landscape, which together compose the collection of narratives about the experiences of the first humans. A fissure located in the arch of Ponte de Pedra is a remnant of the opening from which the humans made their journey to the surface of the Earth. Reminiscent of the image of a vagina, this reinforces the concept of the *birth* of the people of the Juruena.

Next to this fissure, a mark in the stone evidences the first burial to take place on the earthly plane, upon the death of a man named Zamakamaré. From this event, the Haliti learned the procedures for burying their dead in a way that would keep them from returning to the subterranean world. Upstream, Morro do Raio (Lightning Hill) marks the ancient abode of the Enore spirit responsible for the opening in the rock. A road on the right bank of the Sucuruina River gives access to the father of trees, whose daughters became the wives of Wazare's brothers. About one or two kilometers from the river, a collection of sandstone formations stands out in the landscape. This is the City of Stone, the route through which Wazare and his people went out into the region and witness to the decision for the indigenous people and white people to separate.

Upstream, a series of other waterfalls show the slope of the terrain, accelerating the waters of the Sucuruina River that flow toward Ponte de Pedra. From the top of one of the City of Stone's formations, one can see that the valley of this river forms a kind of canyon, making the landscape even more breathtaking.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ponte de Pedra was the site where the first telegraph station was built and was home to the first school directed at the indigenous peoples of the region. The school, established by the Telegraph Commission was founded with the objective of training Haliti telegraph operators. Several attacks from groups of Kajkwakratxi are also documented for this location, demonstrating the proximity of their area of occupation to the site.

After the telegraph station was decommissioned, the indigenous people that lived there migrated to some of the urban centers of the region. The area then became gradually occupied by farmers, even though

<sup>18</sup> TN: Funai, the National Indian Foundation, is the Brazilian government body that establishes and carries out policies relating to indigenous peoples.

Rocky outcroppings called Cidade de Pedra (City of Stone), located near Ponte de Pedra (Stone Bridge). Edison Rodrigues de Souza



the Haliti returned from time to time. This sacred site of the peoples of the upper Juruena was transformed into a kind of spa resort visited by many residents of the region during the weekends, even having a motocross track. These visitors were not interested in knowing about the memory of the location, only in using it for their entertainment, leaving a trail of trash and depredation on the landscape.

Indigenous demands for the area to be recognized as part of their traditional territory were only met in the first decade of the twenty-first century, amid political mobilization against the construction of a hydroelectric power plant near Ponte de Pedra, as detailed by anthropologist Maria Fátima Machado. At the time of the dispute, the area was not inhabited by any Haliti group and the construction of this project was paralyzed after a lawsuit was filed by indigenous residents living on the outskirts of Cuiabá, capital of Mato Grosso, demonstrating that, despite their geographic distance, the connection of these people with their ancestral territory remains.

In 2002, the Prosecutor General of the Republic annulled the concession to develop hydroelectric resources and ordered Funai<sup>19</sup> to carry out the demarcation process, which is unfinished to this day. This being the case, several Haliti families, descendants of those who supported the telegraph line operations, decided to occupy the area permanently.

Occupation of Ponte de Pedra should be thought of in broader sense: despite being close to the region designated for the Kaxiniti subgroup and the Manoki people, it is an area to be protected, but not necessarily permanently inhabited by humans. The

sacred dimension of the site entails risks and the need to meet certain determined requirements to remain for a prolonged time in this location. But contrary to what one may imagine, Ponte de Pedra is a densely populated place, given that it is home to a myriad of spirits. As a matter of fact, for the peoples of the Juruena, the cascades, waterfalls, whitewater rapids, and other features of the water network are invariably designated as home to these beings. Local residents relate innumerable signs of this occupation, such as messages sent via dreams, atypical climatic events, and sounds that can be heard close to the waterfalls.

The shaman Zeferino talks about the inability of many people to recognize the existence of other beings that coexist with humans, as well as how the relationships between them should be conducted. “There in Itamarati, close to where you enter the old BR 364 road, there is another spring. Who knows this? Who’s going to say this is not so? I’m the one who knows this. In its core, water flows here and there. Each place has something that God left there to represent Him, as well as where people can do things and where they should leave things alone.

At present, the threats against Ponte de Pedra go beyond attempts to construct a hydroelectric power plant on the site. Satellite images show that the surrounding area is occupied with farms where the agricultural practices have a high environmental impact. Even though the area has been retaken by the Haliti, which has made it possible to inhibit depredation from tourist activities, the timeless site of the peoples of the upper Juruena, initial mark of the paths tread by their ancestors, is today being brutally threatened by the unbridled expansion of the agribusiness.



.....  
 Ponte de Pedra  
 (Stone Bridge),  
 on the Sucuruinã River.  
 Antonio Garcia





.....  
Utiariti waterfall.  
Antonio Garcia



## Utya-haliti, an oasis in the backlands



In the middle of the aridity of the Cerrado, a green area watered by the dispersion of humidity of one of the largest and most beautiful waterfalls of the Juruena has been established as the convergence point and political center of the Haliti people. This is Utiariti, a waterfall approximately 90 meters in height, located between the Indigenous Territories Utiariti and Tirecatinga.

In the surroundings of the waterfall, one can find the ruins of the religious boarding school that was built there in the mid-twentieth century by the Jesuit congregation Missão de Anchieta. Before the boarding school was built, this same location was used for one of the telegraph stations coordinated by Marechal Cândido Rondon, which was also operated at the time by indigenous workers hired for this end.

During his journey through the region, the former president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt affirmed that, except Niagara, there was no waterfall in North America whose beauty compares to that of the Salto Utiariti. The visit by the politician to the region, as well as the release of the film *Os Sertões de Mato Grosso (The Backlands of Mato Grosso)*, included in the series *Para além de Rondônia (Beyond Rondônia)* by Major

Luiz Thomaz Reis, were responsible for making this waterfall well-known to Brazilian society. Utiariti garnered even more attention as a national landmark when it was noticed that its plunge pool, when seen from above, looks like the shape of the map of Brazil.

In the historical documentation, Rondon related that, during his first journey to the region, he was responsible for naming the waterfall that, until then, from the point of view of the Haliti, was named Mayroheté, due to the presence of a prominent cashew tree (*mayro* means cashew of the wild).<sup>20</sup> Edgar Roquette-pinto, also a member of the Telegraph Commission, relates that in 1909, when he arrived at this waterfall, his group saw a member of the bird species *Falco Sparverius*. They immediately tried to shoot it to add it to the collection of Brazilian birds at the National Museum. However, to the surprise of everyone, an indigenous man named Toloiri, who was accompanying the expedition, vehemently protested the attack against the little hawk. He claimed that his people, the Haliti, originated from the bird and that his death would, therefore, be a bad omen for the group. Utiariti was the name attributed by the Haliti to this bird, which today is popularly known as *quiriquiri*.

Quickly, Rondon and his assistant, Roquette-Pinto, noted that the term Utiariti holds a variety of different meanings beyond the name of the hawk. Utiariti was also used as a title for spiritual leaders, shamans, priests, and doctors. They soon found that, for the Haliti, the *quiriquiri* bird is considered a powerful shaman who acts on their behalf when someone is struck with illness. The figures of the shamans, birds, and healing spirits appear in a mixed-together, kind of overlapping form, apparently designating spiritual agents that walk side-by-side.

Among the Haliti, illness is considered to be the result of a person's soul being captured, which is generally carried out by a spirit in the form of a bird. To bring the soul back, it's necessary to discover its whereabouts. By chanting the songs that tell the ancient stories of the Haliti people, the shamans are able to travel through the

traditional territory and locate it. During this task, the quiriquiri hawks help the shaman in his search.

The young political leader Adylson Muzuywane asserts that Utiariti is, in fact, a simplification of the term Utya-haliti. *Utya* means "wise," and *Haliti*, "people." They are the spiritual guides of the Haliti people, greatly wise beings that have mastered the body of knowledge that includes all the songs, healing murmurs, and historical memories, as well as cosmic geography. However, the results of the advance of colonialism were disastrous for the Haliti people. One of the most harmful effects was the interruption of the passage from one generation to the next of this knowledge and, therefore, a break in the succession of the ancient Utya-haliti. Nowadays, the Haliti people have their shamans, but they do not have the same mastery of the ancient knowledge that previous generations did. Nonetheless, the Utya-haliti have not completely disappeared, as the spirits who carry this title continue to work with the Haliti when needed and, therefore, are recipients of daily devotion and daily offerings from this people.

On the central pillar of the *hati*, as the traditional houses are known, there is an arrow that connects the earthly and celestial planes. This is where the offerings to the Utya-haliti should be left on a daily basis, usually cigarettes and drinks. Nowadays, only the shamans are able to communicate with the Utya-haliti, which they do through song, prayer and also dreams.

In former times, before the decline in the population and the territorial confinement brought on by colonialism, the different subgroups of the Haliti people occupied specific territories that were designated by Wazare at the time of the exit from the stone. The members of these subgroups only visited each other during festivals and rituals. But, from time to time, the chiefs of each one, accompanied by warriors charged with their protection, would meet in Utiariti to discuss issues of concern to the entire Haliti people, establishing political accords, defining the calendar and the location of festivals and rituals (especially the great festivals of Chicha and Oloniti

<sup>20</sup> After the exit from the stone, Wazare named the river, currently known as Papagaio or *Tahyãtolezã*.



Kalore), and, above all renewing the alliances that united them. In the words of leader Rony Walter Azoinayce Paresi, Utiariti was, “The location where the great Haliti wise ones and masters would meet in the past to make decisions regarding the destiny of life, with the objective of materializing the cosmology of the people.”

Some Haliti assert that the Utya-haliti were beings that lived within the Utiariti waterfall. These beings could see the future and, for this reason, visiting the location, on the one hand, helped them make difficult decisions and, on the other, contributed to the prevention of future problems that their group would have to face. In the past, it was a place of convergence for the Haliti people that brought together the great chiefs and wise ones of the Waimaré, Kaxiniti, Kozarene, Warere, and Kawali subgroups. For this reason, the Utiariti waterfall is an important ceremonial center and meeting place to this day.

For a long time, the Haliti people have followed a very important ceremonial rule. During festivals, the men dance and play musical instruments in the circular central plaza of the village. Within the communal houses, the women prepare drinks and food that will be offered during the festivities. The latter are not allowed to make visual contact with the aerophones played by the men during festivals. The woman must stay inside the houses to keep them from spying what happens outside. For their part, the men are prohibited from telling the women what happens outside the houses, and the women are not permitted to ask the men. After the end of the celebrations, the musical instruments are stored inside a ceremonial house that only men can enter. Breaking this taboo can lead to the death of the person who dared to break with the established order.

The Haliti tell the story of a time when there was a big celebration in the village of the family of Yanaloré. At that time lived a people called Māyhakanā that resided along the Catitu Creek. The Māyhakanā were a war-like and cannibalistic people. They ate Yanaloré’s uncles and, disguised in their bodies, infiltrated the Haliti village during a great Chicha Festival.

An irreverent youth, Yanaloré went into his house and, upon being questioned by his mother, gave her details about the ceremony and the musical instruments being played. Lying in her hammock inside her house, an agouti heard the conversation. Unhappy with the fact that Yanaloré had broken an essential rule of the group by giving details about the festivities to his mother, she immediately went to the central plaza of the village and told the other men about what had happened.

On the following day, Yanaloré’s father told his wife that he would have to turn over their son to the Māyhakanā, who would then devour him. If he didn’t do this, the entire village could be destroyed. Yanaloré’s mother agreed, only asking that her husband keep the armadillo tail bracelet that their son wore. Yanaloré’s father delivered a cage to the Māyhakanā and directed them to light a fire inside the ceremonial house where the wind instruments were stored. He then called on his son, telling him that he was going to pick lice off of him. Sad with the knowledge that Yanaloré was about to die and be eaten, the father cried. But he didn’t have a choice, so he brought his son to the ceremonial house and turned him over to the Māyhakanā without Yanaloré knowing anything of his fate. Complying with the request of his wife, after their son had died in the fire, the father brought her a part of his harm on which the armadillo tail bracelet was attached, which she kept on the kitchen rack of their house.

The Yakane, water spirits, learned of Yanaloré’s death. Yanaloré’s brother, the spirit Kuymatiholo, turned himself into a woman and went to the village to confirm if it was in fact true. When he arrived, he found the basket in which his brother’s arm was being kept. Kuymatiholo took the basket and brought it to Kalaytewe, chief of the water spirits, and asked his help to avenge the death of Yanaloré. On the next day, after Yanaloré’s death, all the men of the village left to go hunting at the headwaters of the Macaco River. The women and children did not join them, except for sister and brother Zarero and Kyawre. Upon arriving at their destination, the Māyhakanā set up







.....  
Residence of Kyawre.  
The shape of the plunge  
pool of the Utianiti Waterfall  
looks similar to the shape  
of a map of Brazil.  
Antonio Garcia



.....  
Residence of Zarero.  
Constructions from the Scare  
small hydro project can be  
seen in the background.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





camp and went out to hunt, while the two children stayed at the camp. There they heard a strange growling noise and became suspicious. Afraid, they decided to hide. It was then that they saw the chief of the water spirits counting the number of hammocks in the camp to find out the size of the group and prepare the attack.

When the hunters returned, the children told them what had happened, saying that a hideous man with a very long and red nose had come through the camp. But the hunters didn't believe them. Seeing how frightened his children were, Zarero and Kyawre's father decided to take them to the road, by which they could return to their village. In the meantime, Kalaytewe gathered enough water spirits for the attack on the hunters.

Upon arriving at the road, Zarero, Kyawre and their father heard the yells of the hunters. Nonetheless, the children's father didn't think the sounds were from an attack. He imagined that the shouts were cries of joy from the hunters as they ate the innards of their hunt. Skeptical, not knowing that the men had been killed, he left his children on the road and returned to the camp.

Having finished the attack, the water spirits noted

by the number of hammocks that three people were missing. Zarero and Kyawre's father was killed as soon as he returned to the camp. The chief of the water spirit caught up with the children, who were still on the road. Terrified, they ran away. The young Zarero soon tired and decided to go to the Salto Belo waterfall on the Sacre River. The Kyawre boy managed to run a little further but soon became exhausted as well, stopping at the Salto Utiariti on the Papagaio River.

The water spirits transformed into the hunters and went to the village, where they intended to kill the hunters' wives. They had prepared a vicious attack, but two of the women managed to escape. They fled in despair until they found a powerful celestial spirit, an Enore named Enoharé. They begged him to save them. When the water spirits were very close, Enoharé struck with his *borduna*, launching a blast of lightning that killed them all. The pieces of their bodies spread all over the area, transforming into hauntings.

Ever since then, Zarero and Kyawre have lived in the Salto Belo and Salto Utiariti waterfalls, respectively, and have become protectors of these places. Though they live in distinct locations, the sister and brother continue to be united, as a little downstream from these waterfalls, the two rivers join, becoming one. The confluence of the Papagaio and Sacre River is the image used to represent the reunion of the two siblings within their new mode of existence, marked by the occupation of two important geographical figures situated in a central area of the Haliti people's territory. The interfluvium of the rivers, from that moment on, came to construct a kind of united territory.

Young Adylson relates that, long ago, during a celebration taking place in a village near the Salto Utiariti waterfall, a strong, pale young man appeared, who, very enthusiastically, directed the dances and songs during the entire night, introducing to the ritual a large body of songs that were to that point unknown to the rest of the Haliti. The next morning, everyone asked about the young man that had taught them so many new songs, as he had disappeared. It had been Kyawre.

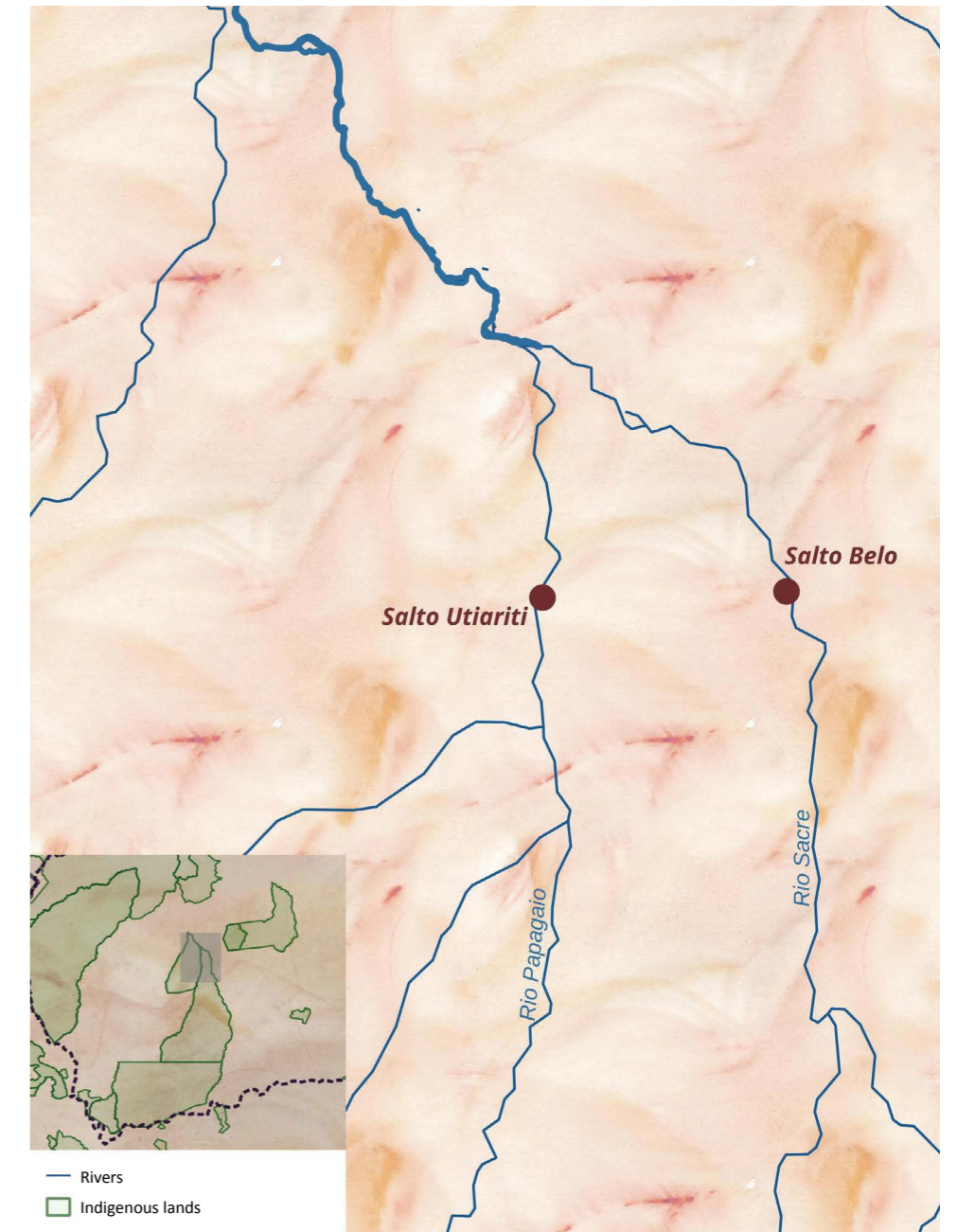
Recently, the home of Zarero was impacted by the construction of a small hydro project, the PCH Sacre II. Now, it is the home of Kyawre that is under threat. According to the shaman Zeferino Koloizome:

The woman who lives there said, "Why have you given them permission to destroy my home? If you continue to let them destroy my home, no one knows what will happen to you all." I have a great deal of knowledge about the waterfalls. What is the name of the woman that lives there? Zarero. Her brother lives in the Salto do Utiariti waterfall. This is also the site of a project. Now, I ask those of you who construct such projects to not do anything like this anymore, because you don't know what will happen. I do. We talk to these people through prayer. The door to her (Zarero's) house almost fell.

The waterfalls and the other geographic features constitute, in the perspective of the Haliti, material evidence of the dense occupation of the region, not just by humans, but also by intangible beings (spirits). Zeferino, the shaman, relates that the waterfalls are not necessarily the residence of Zarero and Kyawre, but rather the doorways (portals) to the dimension in which they live. Kyawre, according to him, currently lives more or less four hundred meters distance from the Salto Utiariti waterfall, on "dry land," in a location that can be accessed through an opening located on a plateau on the left bank, upriver.

The marks on the landscape are related to memories, but also to contemporary relationships. Even though, in current times, communication with the spirits, which was before possible for everyone, is restricted to the shamans, the rest of the Haliti continue to maintain the tradition of going to Salto Utiariti waterfall in search of answers to difficult situations, as they find support from their ancestors at this site, along with the conviction of knowing what the correct path forward will be.

UNION OF BROTHERS, AT THE CONFLUENCE OF RIVERS PAPAGAIO AND SACRE



Utuariti Waterfall, meeting place of the wise. Juliana Almeida





.....  
The crystalline waters  
of the Cravari River.  
Flávio Souza/OPAN



## Women, builders of bodies and landscapes

In the narratives of the people of the Juruena, a recurring idea is that of woman as effective builders of the landscape. The shape of the world as it is known today is also the fruit of their labor. Having the ability to generate life, women are promoters of the transformation of bodies: human bodies and bodies of the world.

On the Cravari River, a pair of waterfalls is called by the Manoki people the Waterfalls of the Women (Saltos das Mulheres). The site is considered to be the home of two sisters: Marikiyalu and Jurulu (or Yonulu). It was they who, during a revolt, guided the other women of their people after they had all killed all of the men in their village (their husbands) out of revenge for the death of one of their children. In this region, the course of the Cravari River is characterized by clear waters and a stretch with many waterfalls. The waters run swiftly through a markedly uneven bed, where the water divides into two streams, which constitute the home of Marikiyalu and Jurulu.

According to the story, a long time ago, the chief of a village had called together all the men to prepare the fields. For this job, they also called on the spirits, who the Manoki refer to as “neighbors.” After a morning of intense work, everyone was tired and thirsty. So, around midday, the chief asked his son to go to the village to get drinks for the workers and neighbors. Before the boy left, the father alerted him that he should not say anything to his mother about the work the men were doing. He was only to get the drinks and come back.

Having listened attentively to his father’s instructions, the boy headed to the village. But his father, suspicious that his son wouldn’t follow his instructions, decided to follow him. When he arrived home, the boy asked his mother for the drinks, but also ended up telling her that they would be offered to the neighbors. Outside the house, the father heard everything. Greatly angered, he entered the house, grabbed his son, and brought him back to the fields. Upon arrival, he announced to everyone that his son had committed a very grave error, as he had told his mother about the neighbors. He, therefore, had decided to turn the boy over to the spirits to be devoured.

In the same way that the Manoki did when roasting hunted animals, the neighbors prepared a big fire and made a big pitchfork to secure the boy. When he saw the fire, the boy asked what it was for, and the father responded that the men had caught several agoutis and were going to roast them. The father asked the son to sit close by him and began to clear lice from the child’s hair, the same trick used against Yanaloré in the story of the Haliti related above. When the boy came to







be well and distracted, the father pushed him into the fire and left, as he did not want to see his son die.

The neighbors ate the boy and shared what was left with everyone. The father received an arm, which he put in a basket and brought home. There, he gave the arm to his wife, who he told was part of an agouti. But the wife was soon suspicious, as her son had not returned with his father. When she took the piece of meat, she soon realized that it was her son's arm, as it had a bracelet that she had made for him attached to it.

Overwhelmed with rage, to avenge her son, the mother summoned all of the women in the village to wipe out the men, as they had all gone along with the father's decision to punish his son for not following his orders. Armed with bows and arrows, the women decimated the men, sparing only the boys who had yet to come of age.

After this, the women decided to move to another location, far from the village. Equipped with musical instruments and cooking gear, they set out, sleeping in camps and spreading across the region. When they arrived at the Cravari River, they decided to stay there for good. Marikiyalu and Jurulu build two houses on a place where the river splits into two streams, making an island in the middle. The first house was not very well constructed as its roof caved in, and as a result, that waterfall is smaller. This became the home of Jurulu. The second house was better constructed. There the waterfall is larger and is where Marikiyalu lives.

At every river where they stopped, the *guariroba* palm leaves used in the camp would transform into rapids, considered by the Manoki to be the houses of the women. The leaves of the *guariroba* palm tree are the resource par excellence for the construction of the Manoki's traditional homes. At the women's camps, the

leaves have become permanent features of the landscape; landmarks of the history of this people.

The transformative ability of the *guariroba* is an example of how the way humans have occupied the land in the past has molded the landscape. It is proof that the territory is old and that the Manoki are tied to it by a tight bond of ancestry. Protected by their sisters, the Manoki struggle for the restoration of their ancestral territory, which is also a struggle to guarantee their continuity as a people.

The memory of the women's vengeance for the death of one their sons is etched into the walls of the slabs of rock where the silvery, torrential waters of the Cravari River come crashing down. The modern presence of these women can be observed through the strands of their hair, which hang from high up the falls. For the unsuspecting, these strands might be identified as some kind of plants typical to humid areas, but for the Manoki, they belong to the bodies of Marikiyalu and Jurulu, which are now part of the landscape.

Leader Manoel Kanunxi warns that one must have a great deal of respect to be able to safely walk through this region. Snakes and bats that inhabit the waterfalls are signs of the presence of beings that, like Marikiyalu and Jurulu, protect the place. The Manoki avoid walking in this area alone. Lourenço Janaxi says that seeing a snake in the place is a bad sign. Whenever this happens, it's better to return home and "give it some time." Lucibete Jurusi, who lives in a village close to the waterfalls, relates that one can frequently hear the two women conversing. Kanunxi points out that the waterfalls fall silent when there are no people in the area: "When there's no one close, they become quiet."

The joy and carefree fun of the water games played

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Young members  
of the Manoki visit  
the sacred waterfalls.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





by children and adolescents, a favorite of which is to swim underneath the waterfalls, demonstrate that there is a need to be careful and pay attention, but also that it is essential to trust in the protection of the intangible beings. Swimming in the waters of the Cravari, they learn to recognize the signs of the spirits and trust in them, as well as to respect the spirits' desires.

The Manoki people's conceptions of the waterfalls and the Cravari River are very interesting in that they address, in addition to the relationship between humans and spirits, questions related to gender and female agency. This narrative eliminates any doubt about what might otherwise be analyzed as the control of men over women. The women's apparent passivity toward the taboo regarding the wind instruments is threatened by this occurrence, which demonstrates their collective and collaborative power. This power that comes from female solidarity, therefore, constitutes a constant threat to the men. The women and their children can always re-found their society, while men are left with war to establish new matrimonial relationships. Acting

as a group, they reaffirm the bonds of solidarity and cooperation between sisters, a system that governs daily life in matrilineal societies.

From the point of view of the indigenous peoples, control over harmful forces that threaten the group is directly related to the distribution of food. Food has a domesticating potential and therefore should be abundant and shared among all. Women are responsible for feeding the villagers and the spirits. It is with their hands that food is prepared and distributed.

It should be of note that the narrative tells of a revolt rather than a revolution. The women annihilated the men and left to live in other regions, but they did not break with the structural order that guided their people's way of life. The uninitiated boys were spared. Alongside the women, they helped to rebuild the Manoki people. The taboo concerning ceremonial wind instruments is maintained, shown as a protective measure for men, rather than concentration of power. By the rationale of the women, it is the men that act for them, rather than the contrary, as it falls to the men to carry out the most dangerous job, which is managing relations with the spirits.

However, the choice to revolt also serves as a warning: women hold power to alter the order of things, and it falls to the men to avoid evoking their wrath once again.

In addition to these two waterfalls on the Cravari River, the Manoki see all other aquatic geographic features as evidence of the women's journey during their exodus in search of a place to begin again. Today, these people are experiencing the same sense of beginning again, seeking, through the regulation of their traditional territory, a way to reconstitute their society after a recent past marked by genocide.

The threats to the waterfalls of the Cravari River establishes a direct parallel with the broader struggle of the Manoki people to retake their territory. On the left bank, where the Manoki currently reside, the riparian forest is protected by the Irantxe Indigenous Territory.



Nevertheless, on the right bank, agricultural activities are advancing on the river. The Manoki are calling for the regularization process of the land to be finished and for the removal of the current occupants, to guarantee that their sacred sites are protected and that the ancient villages and cemeteries—which are being dug up by farming equipment—are also protected.

During the nineteen-nineties, Maurício Tupxi decided to found a village on the banks of the Cravari, right next to the waterfalls. Sítio Paraíso, as he called it, was near the ancient villages located on the other bank of the Cravari River. "Today I'm here with my children, but one day I want to return to the place where my mother died. I want to die and be buried in that place," said Maurício in an interview with Father Adalberto de Holanda Pereira.

Unfortunately, Mr. Maurício Tupxi died in 2013, without being able to fulfill his dream of seeing his people's ancestral land restored to them. On the left bank of the Cravari, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren carry on the same struggle as that of Mr. Tupxi and all the Manoki people. They assert that they will not give up the fight for the regularization of their territory, which also represents the defense of the memory of their people. This includes their resistance to the construction of a small hydro project over the homes of Marikiyalu and Jururlu. Displaced from their homeland, the Manoki continue to resist and find the strength to defend these spirit women, their protectors, so that they won't also be expelled from their homes as the Manoki were.

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In the waters of the Cravari River, young members of the Manoki sing and enjoy themselves while asking the women who live in the sacred waterfalls for protection. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN

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Waterfalls of the Women (Saltos das Mulheres) on the Cravari River. Henrique Santian/OPAN





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One of the falls  
of the Ytu'u Falls.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



## Our land is where our shamans are buried

What defines “your land”? Is it where you were born? Where you live? Maybe where your grandparents lived? For the Kawaiwete (Kayabi), their land is where their shamans are buried. The fact is that, in truth, shamans never die. They remain in the place where they were buried as guardians of the territory and of the Kawaiwete people as a whole. Death is a process of transformation, generally into some kind of being that will, from that time forth, compose part of the landscape, some in the form of a snake, some in the form of a stone, others in the form of giant river otters, and so forth.

On the Apiaká-Kayabi Indigenous Land, where part of the population of the Kawaiwete people reside,<sup>21</sup> the death of a shaman conferred even more importance to a group of waterfalls located on the Dos Peixes River, also known as the Tatuý (Tatuê). Ytu’u (Big Waterfall), sacred site of the Kawaiwete people, is a spatial marker, a delimiter of indigenous territories, stage of the advance of colonialism on the region, and a location fought over by groups interested in the construction of hydroelectric power plants.

Located in the middle of the Dos Peixes River, Ytu’u wasn’t considered a location for permanent habitation, but rather an important place for seasonal occupation by the Kawaiwete. The region of this group of waterfalls was a place of wandering, where various resources were accessed. Of particular note, at the waterfall downstream, the river forms a whirlpool that flows into the Jaú Creek. It is a very special region for the Kawaiwete, where the wilderness features a piece of the Cerrado, the soil of which is made up of fine, white sand. In this region, many resources are much valued by the people: bamboo to make arrows, straw for making basketry, herbal medicines, etc.

Historically, Ytu’u constituted a societal relations barrier, especially for the other peoples of the lower Arinos and the right bank of the Juruena. For the groups that navigate the Dos Peixes River, overcoming the sequence of waterfalls was the greatest challenge to reaching the upper course of the river. Ytu’u is regionally referred to as Salto Kayabi (Kayabi Waterfall), using the same name by which the Kawaiwete are popularly known. It is the official toponym, establishing the antiquity of the occupation of this region by this people.

The Dos Peixes River is a tributary of the Arinos River, one of the most important on the right bank of the Juruena. And the upper Dos Peixes River connects to tributaries on the left bank of the Teles Pires, which is why the Kawaiwete historically established themselves between these



<sup>21</sup> In addition to the Apiaká-Kayabi Indigenous Land, part of the Kawaiwete people now resides on the Kayabi Indigenous land and the Xingu Indigenous Park, where part of the group was removed to in the nineteen-sixties. They are also demanding the demarcation of the Arrais Indigenous Land, attached to the Xingu Indigenous Land, as well the Batelão Indigenous Land, located along the upper Dos Peixes River.



two river basins. In this region there exist innumerable canals between waterways that the Kawaiwete would use to travel between the villages along the Juruena and the villages along the Teles Pires. At first glance, it's precisely because they occupied this interfluvial area that the Kawaiwete appear later in the records about the presence of indigenous peoples in this area.

The social dynamic of the Kawaiwete groups that live along the Dos Peixes River was like this: they lived along the river and had under their protection one of the mineral deposits most coveted for making axes in the regions (located in the Ytajy Creek), and eventually moved downstream to the areas of seasonal occupation. Various peoples in the region ventured there in search of this resource. However, to have access to the rocks for making axes, one had to face two distinct groups: the

Kawaiwete, who resided in the area and guarded access to the stones, and the spirits, who were the effective owners of the stones.

For the Kawaiwete, Ytu'ú is sacred. The history of Ytu'ú relates to the dynamic of the Kawaiwete people and their extensive displacement throughout their traditional territory. According to the Kawaiwete, the occupation of this waterfall by a snake shaman began in the middle of their diaspora to the middle Dos Peixes River in the nineteen-fifties. A family group led by Yupop were traveling downriver in canoes toward the waterfall. Upon arriving there, when trying to pass over one of the rapids, the canoe flipped. Everyone managed to swim to the riverbank, except the shaman, who was stuck in the rocks. There, he sang throughout the entire night, alerting the others that he wouldn't be leaving there alive, as he would transform into the protector of the region.

On the following morning, upon throwing himself into the water, the shaman sank to the bottom and never returned to the surface. The rest of the group, knowing Yupop's fate, continued onward as planned, for there was nothing more to be done. Confirmation of his presence in his new home was given through a series of weather events, such as high winds and storms.

The transformation of the shaman into a snake occurred in the midst of an emblematic moment for the Kawaiwete. In the nineteen-fifties, their territory was invaded by groups of rubber tappers and farmers. Acting on behalf of the Anchieta Mission, Father João Dornstauder tried to bring the Kawaiwete that lived along the Dos Peixes River to an aid station below Ytu'ú. It was during one of the journeys resulting from the displacement of the Kawaiwete groups that the fatal incident involving Yupop occurred.

The massacre suffered by the Kawaiwete of the Dos Peixes River has a parallel in a historical event of the region: a large earthquake that occurred in the Serra do Tombador mountain range in 1955, reaching 6.6 points on the Richter scale—the largest documented earthquake in the history of Brazil. The earth trembled, announcing the arrival of hard times for the indigenous peoples of the region. The Kawaiwete, known for valiantly resisting colonization, were being swept away little by little. Introduced to the rubber tapper barracks, various groups of Kawaiwete faced disease, violence and, in the case of the women, sexual exploitation. Little by little, the resilient groups became dispersed and fragile.

At the end of the nineteen-forties, the Roncador-Xingu expedition arrived at the region. Under the command of the Villas Bôas brothers, the expedition advanced on the Teles Pires River, establishing contact with the Kawaiwete that resided there, of which many were recruited for the expedition, whose goal was to colonize the Brazilian West. In 1951, the expedition built a runway near the Coatá River, reaching the Kawaiwete groups that resided along the upper Dos Peixes River. Arguing that these people were being decimated by disease being brought to them by the waves of colonizers, Orlando Villas Bôas organized in 1966 "Operation Caiabi," aiming to transfer the Kawaiwete population to the Xingu Indigenous Park.

But not all the indigenous people accepted this relocation. Those who had migrated to the region below the Ytu'ú waterfall decided to stay in their territory. However, with the reduced population due to disease and attacks from the colonizers, and with part of the group being forcibly removed from the region, a portion of the Kawaiwete's territory was systematically appropriated for farms under the argument that there were no longer



indigenous peoples living there.

Several kilometers below the Ytu'ú waterfall, the groups of Kawaiwete that remained in the region, striving to rebuild their lives and populating the area with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. They are currently struggling for part their ancestral territory, on the upper Peixes, to finally be recognized as Indigenous Land. Unfortunately, they no longer have the black stone of the shamans, which, according to the Kawaiwete, holds magical powers and is capable of granting requests made by members of their people.

They recall that their protector shaman kept the stone in the hollow of a tree located on the Jaú Creek below the Ytu'ú. Only the shaman could touch it. Anyone who broke this rule ran the risk of losing their hair. If anyone set themselves against it in any way, it

What remains of the tree where the sacred Pedra Preta (Black Rock) was kept. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



Katu (in front), one of the daughters of the shaman protector of the waterfall, accompanied by Mrs. Lourdes, another elder of the Kawaiwete people. Luiz Vinicius Sanches Alvarenga





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Falls of the complex of  
small and large waterfalls  
known as Ytu'u by the  
Kawaiwete people.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



would sing the whole night, expressing its displeasure. And when the stone was taken away from the waterfall, it had to be brought back by the same route.

The black stone was stored in the trunk of a tree that fell due to a fire. Part of the trunk is still there, bearing witness to the memory of this sacred object of the Kawaiwete. Amidst the diaspora of this people, the black stone was also lost, having been taken to the city by rubber tappers who died shortly after desecrating this totem. The elders Lourdes and Katu claim that the stone may one day be re-found by their people. Who knows if this will happen when, finally, the Kawaiwete are able to reoccupy the upper Dos Peixes River, where the mineral deposits of which they are guardians are located.

The territoriality of the Kawaiwete is referenced in the narratives that address the diasporas of the group. The transformation of the shaman leaves a mark on the landscape, reconstructed by history. Because of this, the Kawaiwete have no doubt that the reconquest of their territory has had the help of Yupop. Even though it preserves only a small part of their traditional territory, the demarcation of the Apiaká-Kayabi Indigenous Lands has permitted a part of this group to begin again, restoring its people, who were decimated by the epidemics and violence of colonialism. Currently, Ytu'ú is visited periodically by chiefs looking for guidance on their decisions. There at the waterfall, they enter in contact with the protector shaman of the place, who helps them chose the paths to be followed. Women who have a difficult time getting pregnant can also seek help in this place, where they ask the shaman to intercede in their favor.

Aware of the importance of the waterfall and the power of the shaman that lives there, the Kawaiwete make offerings at the site, generally arrows. They do this as a way of giving thanks for the support provided to their people and also to keep him on their side.

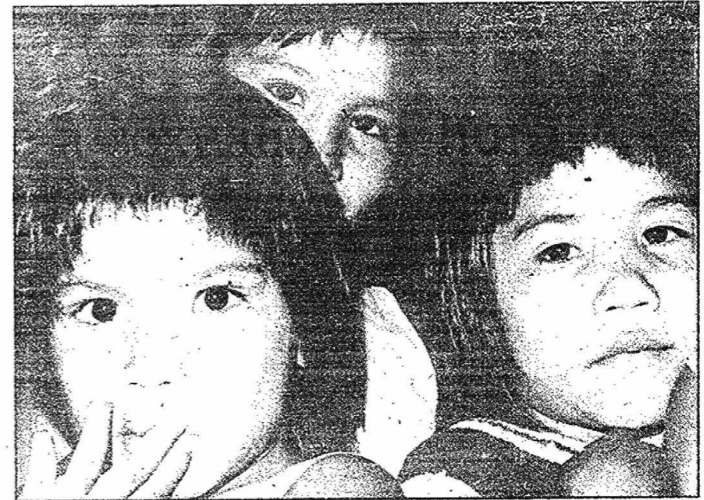
During the nineteen-eighties, the Kawaiwete fought a battle against the construction of a hydroelectric project at the Ytu'ú waterfall. "The Dos Peixes River waterfall is sacred to us. Our grandfathers left it to us," one individual said to priest and anthropologist Eugênio Wenzel. The opposition to the construction of this power plant was accompanied by the demand for an expansion of the territory of the Kawaiwete and Apiaká. After countless demonstrations, with the Kawaiwete occupying the site office of the construction, the government withdrew and gave up on building the plant. During the negotiations, the Kawaiwete managed to ensure a small expansion of their land so that the Ytu'ú could be protected and, from then on, be included as part of the protected Indigenous Lands.

The story of the Ytu'ú is no less a kind of return to the stone, such as the story of Zarero and Kyawre. As the Kawaiwete say, shamans don't die, they become protectors, shields against aggression toward their people. It's not a story of death, but an account of transformation that addresses the link between indigenous peoples and their territory. Ytu'ú has always been an important landmark of the Kawaiwete's territoriality, a boundary providing safety during their expeditions, a barrier against the enemies that occupied the lower Dos Peixes River. With Yupop's permanent residence at this waterfall, Ytu'ú has become even more of a safe and vital barrier against the dangers the Kawaiwete people face.

The fight against the construction of a power plant at the Ytu'ú waterfall was a great victory for the Kawaiwete and a reaffirmation of their territoriality. However, the recent news that the waterfall has been included in a list of works planned by the Brazilian government demonstrates that the war is far from over. Opposed to any kind of change to the waterfall, the Kawaiwete people renew their guardianship of the stones and the regional land memories.



Reportagem especial:  
Raúl Herrera



# Usina quer pôr fim à paz e alegria dos Kayabi e Apiaká



É março. Época da cheia. O rio dos Peixes transborda limpo, cercado de matas com seus macacos coatis, araras, matracas. Do canteiro de obras da Andrade & Gutierrez S/A, ocupado por representantes de 14 nações indígenas, são 40 minutos de viagem num pequeno barco com motor de popa ("voadeira") até a aldeia Tatui. Lá vivem aproximadamente 200 Kayabi. Logo no início da viagem, uma parada para pegar uma mãe Kayabi, prestes a parir, e que vai ao pequeno hospital da Missão Anchieta, na aldeia Tatui. No caminho, as dores aumentam. Nova parada, para a irmã Hilvécia Simeone, enfermeira em Tatui, atender a uma garota com malária. As águas do rio subiram demais e chegar a casa é difícil. Mas a paciente já está melhor. Seis quilômetros antes do ponto final, parada obrigatória. Descemos na aldeia Mairób (Papagaio), do lado direito do rio, onde vivem aproximadamente 50 Apiaká. O bebê ameaça nascer e é preciso apressar a viagem até Tatui. Na aldeia dos Apiaká, onde ficamos, mulheres apreensivas esperam notícias e contam que se reúnem todas as noites para rezar pela sorte dos acampados no canteiro de obras da hidrelétrica. A preocupação é grande e as ameaças de jagunços estão no ar.

Em Tatui as crianças fazem a recepção festiva a todos os que chegam. São saudáveis, alegres e gostam de inventar brincadeiras. À tarde, o aviso dado no barco é confirmado: nasce mais um guri — de parto normal, como quase todos — para aumentar a alegria na reserva. Naqueles dias, outras três mulheres estavam se preparando para dar à luz. A média, por família, é de seis filhos. Não se vê sinal de gripe e a malária, que grassava na região, está quase controlada.

**HISTÓRIA**

Na época da fundação de Cuiabá (1719), consta que os Kayabi — do tronco linguístico Tupi — habitavam a região dos rios Arinos e médio Teles Pires (ou Paranaíta). No início deste século, foram descobertos seringais próximos aos rios Verde e alto Teles Pires. Os seringueiros começaram a invadir o território dos Kayabi, que resistiram com valentia. Por isso, tornaram-se conhecidos como "índios bravios e indômitos".

A partir de 1950, a extração da borracha estendeu-se abaixo do Teles Pires, até o rio Peixoto de Azevedo. Também na mesma década, foi elaborado e decretado o projeto de colonização do estado do Mato Grosso. No fim da década de 1950, quase não havia mais Kayabi no Teles Pires. Eles foram se retirando e ficaram con-

finados numa pequena parte do território imemorial no rio dos Peixes, do salto para baixo. Parte dessa terra foi demarcada em 1975. A partir de 1978 as lideranças começaram a reivindicar a ampliação da reserva, pois o salto sagrado, lugar místico de origem dos Kayabi, e também a área de onde tiram taquara para fazer flechas haviam ficado fora dos limites definidos.

Até 1966 havia dois grupos de Kayabi na região. Naquele ano, os irmãos Villas Bôas tentaram, numa operação, transferir todos para o Parque do Xingu, tendo deixado uma grande área "desimpedida" para as fazendas que se formavam. Um grupo menor (conhecido por Tatui) resistiu, liderado pelo capitão Francisco (Yupariup). Eles habitam hoje o rio dos Peixes. O outro foi levado para o Xingu. Mas as queixas são constantes. Muitos querem voltar. Depois de quase vinte anos, ainda não se conformam de haver perdido a área onde havia tudo de que precisavam para viver segundo a sua cultura.

Quem sempre contava como era a vida dos Kayabi antigos, era o chefe Temeoni, já morto. "Antigamente a gente vivia muito longe, não houve civilizados. Antigamente havia gente (do povo deles) por todos os cantos do Arinos. A gente dizia, quando passava: Vovozinho (Apinakó). A gente vivava em canoa de casca por toda parte. Todos tinham a mesma língua". Hoje, a memória dos Kayabi está com o capitão Yupariup e outros mais velhos. É ele quem explica por que o Salto Grande (onde querem fazer a usina) é sagrado: "É a origem dos Kayabi". Yupariup conta que lá sempre aparece o grande pajé Ypopin. A canoa dele teria afundado no local e ele se transformou numa serpente. Sua morada real está na cabeceira do córrego Konomiwap — local de onde os antigos tiravam pedras para fazer machado —, afluente do rio dos Peixes. Quando os índios visitam o local, deixam presentes, principalmente penas e flechas. É para acalmá-lo e agradecer-lhe os benefícios prestados aos Kayabi.

A construção da Hidrelétrica Caiabas, próximo das reservas dos Kayabi e Apiaká, acabará com a paz ali. Além de defenderem veementemente a preservação do salto sagrado, eles temem a chegada de mais de 3.000 homens do canteiro de obras, dentro da área de ampliação reivindicada. Todos temem pelo futuro dos filhos, dos netos. Temem o que vem junto e depois da construção da hidrelétrica. Lutam para garantir a paz, a alegria contagiante das crianças, a caça, a limpeza do rio onde pescam e de onde tiram água para beber, taquaras para as flechas e onde encontram as araras que enfeitam a vida.

Report about the Kawaiwete protest against an attempt to build a hydroelectric power plant over Ytu'ú Falls in the 1980s. Porantim Journal





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Islands and rocky  
outcroppings in the lower  
course of the Juruena River.  
Adriano Gambarini/OPAN



## In the land of the *samaúmas*

**A**long the lower Juruena, there is an abundance of *samaúmeira* and chestnut trees. This is the land of tall forests, where the Amazon rainforest adorns the banks of the river. This region, where the Apiaká, Rikbaktsa, and Kawahiwa live, sticks out for its dangerous and enchanting waterfalls, which are insurmountable obstacles to those wishing to navigate the waterways. The Augusto Waterfall is one such waterfall, the first in a sequence of waterfalls that define the final border of the Juruena.

The Augusto Waterfall is established as a demarcating landmark for multi-ethnic borders and alterities. Occupied by indigenous groups that speak Macro-Jê and Tupi-Guarani languages, the depths of the waters of the Juruena in this region, for the indigenous peoples that reside there, is also home to countless intangible beings, who in the past have given them essential knowledge and, in the present, provide protection and security.

For the Apiaká, residents of the right bank of the Juruena, the Augusto Waterfall is a place of social transformation, as it is where rites of passage to adulthood took place, as well as purifying rituals conducted by warriors after battles with other indigenous groups of the region. For their part, the Rikbaktsa see the lower Juruena as the route of their diaspora during ancient times, until they settled definitively in their ancestral territory. The region was also home to groups of the Kawahiwa, whose traditional area of occupation extended from the left bank of the Juruena through the Aripaná Valley to the Madeira River. Despite being extensively mentioned in the historical documentation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Kawahiwa later disappear from official documentation, supposedly having been expelled from the region by other indigenous groups that inhabit there. Currently, there are strong indications of the presence of isolated groups in this area, who may be linked to the Apiaká, Kawahiwa, and Rikbaktsa people.

The Rikbaktsa assert that they are a people that, in remote times, migrated from distant lands to the north toward the south, in the direction of the Juruena. The Augusto Waterfall constitutes a territorial and historical landmark of this period of migration that culminated in the definitive settlement along the middle of this river (especially the tributaries on the right bank, such as the Arinos River, Do Sangue River, and Rico Creek, as well as on the left bank, such as the Santarém, Vermelho, and Juína-Mirim rivers).

The journey of the Rikbaktsa through the region marks a profound alteration in their way of life. During their diaspora, upriver, the Rikbaktsa mounted temporary encampments where they





rested after exhausting days of walking long distances. In one of these encampments, next to the Augusto Waterfall, something unexpected occurred. It was nighttime, and everyone was laying down when they began to hear the sound of various wind instruments. They noticed that the sound came from the river and, curious, they approached to see who was playing. To everyone's surprise, the musicians who were making the melodies they heard were fish. Standing in the wake of the waterfall, which kept them from continuing upstream, the fish, adorned in many colors, were conducting a ritual. Everyone was dancing, both the men and women fish.

Entranced by the beauty of the dances, the songs and the sound of the flutes, the Rikbaktsa gathered on

the bank of the river, where they stood watching the fish. Late at night, the party ended, and everyone left, except one fish, a *lambari-de-rabo-vermelho*, who stayed at the location. He taught the Rikbaktsa all of their knowledge of songs, dances, and the construction of musical instruments. Since then, the Rikbaktsa came to hold great celebrations, just as the fish taught them.

Even though the Rikbaktsa don't show a significant concern for establishing a hypothesis regarding the origins of their group or humans in general for their way of conceiving of the world, important events that bring about a rearrangement of society can be found in a countless number of their narratives. The encounter with the fish is an example of one of these founding events of a new societal model, which, from then on,



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Exponents of the Rikbaktsa people make arrows while telling stories about the lower Juruena. Rodrigo Marcelino



was molded by the mastery of musical techniques, instruments, performances, and repertoires. The ritual practices learned from this encounter (songs, flute sounds, techniques for making instruments, and choreographed dances) have the ability to intervene in the order of the cosmos.

For the Rikbaktsa, the Augusto Waterfall is, first and foremost, the home of the fish, or rather, the fish people. The flutes act as agents of communication between humans and the fish. It is precisely along the lower Juruena, on the margins of the territory of the fish, that the bamboo used for making these instruments can be found.

During the celebration of the fish, the turbulent waters of the Juruena become completely calm at the base of the Augusto Waterfall. The Rikbaktsa, who hadn't been able to cross due to the strength of the current, were finally able to get to the other side and continue along their path. The flutes emerged as

instruments with the ability to promote transformation through sound and are connected to the management of ecological cycles and the characteristics that denote certain prominent locations and elements of nature. For the Rikbaktsa, it is possible to overcome obstacles that are insurmountable for the fish, such as traveling upriver on the Juruena beyond the Augusto Waterfall.

These seem to be fundamental elements for the Rikbaktsa to be able to follow their route along the north-south axis until they are able to fully occupy what they recognize as their territory. Currently, this repertoire of songs serves as a receptacle for these memories. Their periodic performance serves as a means to recall the important memories of this people and affirm an identity constructed on the basis of a paternal connection with a particular common historical lineage. The memory of the territory is in the songs, just as the songs act on the territory.

.....  
Detail photo of the Augusto Waterfall. Adriano Gambarini/OPAN





And it's also in the songs that other memories tying the Rikbaktsa people to the Augusto Waterfall are preserved. One of them concerns the Bizitsa, a fierce people residing on the left bank of the Juruena, who stood out for their height and elongated penises, on which they wore an adornment that further emphasized the sex organ.

In the past, the Rikbaktsa, because they didn't have the *taquaruçu-do-brejo* plant growing on their land, made arrows with serrated palm tips. The Bizitsa people dominated the bamboo groves along the lower Juruena but feared being attacked by other groups interested in this resource. During that time, the Bizitsa were few, and various omens in nature indicated that they would suffer an attack from the Rikbaktsa. For this reason, they continually moved villages.

One day, the Rikbaktsa decided to go to the Bizitsa village in search of *taquaruçu-do-brejo*. The Rikbaktsa were many and therefore did not fear their enemies. The story tells of their difficulty reaching the place, recounting many frustrated attempts. On the path, they underwent a series of misfortunes, such as jaguar attacks and snake bites. These were caused by a spell cast by a Bizitsa shaman trying to prevent the attack. And, in fact, many Rikbaktsa died along the way, but because they were much more numerous, they nonetheless were able to reach the Bizitsa village.

The Rikbaktsa slowly approached, and the Bizitsa were frightened by their numbers. At the village, the Rikbaktsa announced that they had come for *taquaruçu-do-brejo* and, fearful, the Bizitsa gave them a bunch of

arrowheads. The Rikbaktsa accepted the arrowheads and left, but decided to return, as the arrowheads that the Bizitsa had given them were very small. Back at the Bizitsa village, the Rikbaktsa demanded that they show them the place where the bamboo grew. With no other choice, the Bizitsa sent a young man to accompany the Rikbaktsa along the way there. While crossing the river by canoe, the young man tried to flip the Rikbaktsa into the river but was unsuccessful. He, therefore, had to continue on to the bamboo grove, where he taught the Rikbaktsa the rules for harvesting the *taquaruçu-do-brejo*. According to him, one needed to first paint oneself with clay and use a wand to make the bamboo sway, and this had to be done without making much noise. The Rikbaktsa followed his instructions and harvested almost all of the bamboo.

In the village, the Bizitsa were fearful that the Rikbaktsa would kill them all on their return. They, therefore, planned a big celebration. When the Rikbaktsa arrived, the Bizitsa welcomed them with a party. Displeased with their presence, the Bizitsa women mixed their children's feces into the drinks offered to the guests. Attempting to pacify the Rikbaktsa, the Bizitsa spent the whole night teaching them their ceremonial songs.

The Rikbaktsa waited for the festival to end and everyone to go to sleep to carry out the attack. One of them made a concoction that would make their hosts sleep more deeply, to guarantee the success of their offensive. With their *borduma* clubs, the Rikbaktsa killed



all the Bizitsa, roasted them and ate them. Upon returning to their own village, they left only one boy behind, who stayed there and made arrowheads. Everyone believed that the Bizitsas had been exterminated, but one day a member of that people appeared in the old village located near the bamboo grove. Seeing that the young Rikbaktsa was alone, he attacked the boy with an arrowhead, piercing his penis. The sex organ of the Rikbaktsa bled profusely and shrank to the size of that of a child. Since then, the young man was unable to have sex and, for this reason, decided to abandon the village.

In the story of the encounter between the Rikbaktsa and the Bizitsa, the acquisition of the location where the bamboo is harvested and learning the songs are elements





that stand out. The Bizitsa, in contrast to the Rikbaktsa, have the land where the bamboo grows, as well as a wide repertoire of songs. In the story, permitting access to these resources and this knowledge are in question, under the risk that they will be used by the Rikbaktsa against the Bizitsa.

The issue of demographics emerges as a central condition for the Rikbaktsa to recognize their potential victory over the Bizitsa. The latter, because they were in a constant state of flight, weren't able to increase their population. The Rikbaktsa used their *bordunas* and not arrows as their weapon of attack. However, though they emerged victorious from this conflict, in the end, they were unable to occupy the Bizitsa's territory for fear that their penises would be injured and shrunk.

For the Rikbaktsa, central elements of their culture are acquired from outside the group, whether it be through war (as in the case with the Bizitsa) or cooperation (as in the case with the fish). Alterity plays a fundamental role in the constitution of their identity and in defining the social life of the group. The universe of sonorities and ceremonial practices is a privileged space for the treatment of memories, for intervention in the cosmos and for preparations for warfare. The Augusto Waterfall is a place of learning and access to two central elements of Rikbaktsa life: flutes and arrows. From their point of view, it is not a place to inhabit, but rather a place to visit sporadically during seasonal forays.

The Rikbaktsa story tells of the total extermination of the Bizitsa people, residents of the left bank of

the Juruena. Today, reports indicate the presence of isolated groups in the region, specifically in the vicinity of the Bararati River, at the interfluvium of the Aripuanã River, which was the territory of the Bizitsa. It is impossible to say whether these contemporary isolated groups are the descendants of the Bizitsas who warred with the Rikbaktsa. Nonetheless, the presence of these groups in this region represents yet another sign of resistance from the people of the Juruena, as well of their ties with their territory.

The presence of isolated groups in this region has also been a fact of everyday life for the Apiaká, residents of the right bank of the Juruena. The effective invisibility of the isolated groups that live in the lower Juruena can be seen as a parallel to the invisibility of the identity of the Apiaká, who are struggling for the recognition of their territory and for their recognition as people. For many residents of the region, they are seen as some kind of "former Indians" who were dispossessed of their identity due to widespread intermarriage with white residents of the region. However, as stated before, this dispossession is the result of the persecution the group suffered at the hands of the government during the beginning of the 20th century.

The Apiaká people believe themselves to have come from the waters. According to them, their people descend from a fish which left the river and wasn't able to return to the water. The sun transformed his body from that of a fish into that of a human. However, up to that point, he was alone on the Earth. One day an armadillo went out



to fish and caught a fish that he quickly pulled out of the water. The fish then turned into a woman and said that she would stay and live on dry land with her husband, as soon as she could find him. With the help of the armadillo, she went to the lake, where she found her husband throwing a big party to invite the other fish to come live on land like humans. This gave origin to the Apiaká.

In the past, the icy, rough waters of the Augusto Waterfall took part in transforming young Apiaká into the warriors of their people. This waterfall was one of the places where they conducted the rites of passage into adulthood. Facial tattoos were one of the marks of this change, reinforcing the bond between the individual and the group. Every line communicated something about the person whose face it adorned. The rites of passage defined new corporalities and identities and were fundamental to the formation of the personhood of members of the Apiaká. The site was also utilized for the purification rituals warriors would undergo after battles with other indigenous groups of the region.

The presence of the Apiaká along the lower Juruena is incontestable. In the historical documentation, the region is referred to as the “Kingdom of the Apiaká” or the “Apiaká Flat.” To this day, such a prominent presence is enshrined in the official toponymy of countless geographic features and locations of the region: Serra dos Apiacás, Apiacás’ Point, the Apiacás Municipality (in the state of Mato Grosso), as well as the Apiacás and Apiakazinho Rivers.

Likewise, the historical documentation presents countless references to Apiaká villages along the course of the Juruena and in the vicinity of the Augusto Waterfall. Given the friendly relations established between the waves of colonizers and the Apiaká, who were recruited as guides for river excursions, the location ended up being considered for the founding of a village that would serve as a kind of hub for travelers taking the route between Cuiabá and Santarém.

But without a doubt, the most well-known reference is from the accounts left by artist Hercules Florence, who, in the eighteen-twenties, accompanied the scientific expedition captained by the Russian baron Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff. The so-called “Langsdorff Expedition” departed from the interior of São Paulo state in the direction of Santarém, traveling on the Arinos, Juruena and Tapajós rivers. At that time, the village located at the mouth of the São João da Barra River, in the vicinity of the waterfall, no longer existed. Florence only recorded the existence of a cemetery on the right bank, where those who had succumbed to diseases contracted on the journey between the Central-West and North regions of Brazil were buried.

With the establishment of the Cuiabá-Santarém and the expansion of the rubber plantations in the region, hostilities by the colonizers toward the indigenous peoples grew. Tax collection posts were established on the border between Pará and Mato Grosso with the goal of controlling the flow of commerce between



.....  
Sumaumeiras adorn  
the banks of the  
lower Juruena.  
Juliana Almeida





these regions. They came to promote the systematic persecution of the Apiaká, who, little by little, began to leave the region. Some moved to Teles Pires—to territory occupied by the Kawaiwete—or to tributaries of the Juruena located more inland, in areas far from the main course of this river. Faced with persecution and the prospect of extermination, another strategy used by this people to guarantee their physical survival was to assimilate with non-indigenous communities in the region. The Apiaká believe that the isolated groups that live in the region could be related to those that fled the persecution of the waves of colonizers.

On the banks of the Juruena, in the vicinity of the Augusto Waterfall, numerous rocky shelters hold rock paintings within them. For the Apiaká, many elements indicate that these shelters are being visited continuously by isolated groups that live in the region, who are touching up the paintings during their visits to the location. Right

next to the Augusto Waterfall, on its right bank, an enormous archaeological site full of ceramics fragments contains clues about past occupations of the place.

In current times, there are members of the Apiaká living on three different Indigenous Lands (Apiaká-Kayabi, Kayabi, and Apiaká do Pontal e Isolados) and in municipalities located in the Northeast of Mato Grosso and Southeast of Pará. As early as the nineteen-sixties, the Apiaká began to promote a process of reaffirmation of their ethnic identity and consequently the restoration of their territories. For the Apiaká, the situation they underwent resulted in a break in the chain of much of their people's knowledge handed down from generation to generation. One of the most significant chains that were partially broken was the knowledge of their very language, which is spoken by few members today. Recently, in 2017, the Apiaká founded the Nova Matrinxã village by the São João da

Barra River, in the vicinity of the Augusto Waterfall. The founding of this village has strengthened the process of recuperating part of their ancestral territory, as well as the ethnic identity of the group.

They say that as soon as they started to clear the land of the site chosen for the new village, the spirit of a shaman that lives at the Augusto Waterfall, in the depths of the waters of the Juruena, appeared to some of the future residents. According to their evaluation, other signs that have been observed indicate that the spirit of the shaman sees the arrival of the new residents as the arrival of warriors that will come to her aid and act to defend her home.

The shaman, who is one of a group of siblings that live in the vicinity of the Augusto Waterfall, often appears to the residents in the form of a snake. Near the waterfall, it's possible for one to hear her sing. When people approach the location, she stirs the waters of the Juruena, making them even more agitated.

The information revealed by the Apiaká regarding the conceptions of their people in relation to the Augusto Waterfall and the Juruena as a whole will have to end here. Speaking about the sacred is a task that is particularly special and sensitive for the Apiaká. They avoid speaking openly about the more detailed and profound aspects of their socio-cosmology due to a series of reasons. The silence of the Apiaká represents the pain and mistrust that comes from the memory of the genocide they have faced, a situation that has

fragmented this people's inter-generational chain of knowledge related to their territoriality.

This demonstrates two equally relevant aspects about the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples: firstly, in some cases, the sacred reaches such extraordinary heights that it becomes impossible to talk about outside of the safe spaces for it. Secondly, as guardians of territoriality and knowledge, indigenous people are responsible for the control of the circulation of knowledge and are held accountable by the spirits when traveling through precarious spaces. Furthermore, the fear of losing knowledge, which is strong among white people, does not seem to afflict the indigenous peoples of the region. Aware that their most profound and relevant knowledge is preserved by the landscape and the spirits, they know that, as long as they maintain the connection between their people and their territories, the indigenous philosophies of the region will be safe.

Despite a recent history marked by persecution, violence, and disrespect from the emerging Brazilian society, the acceptance of the Apiaká's return to the places occupied by their ancestors by the shaman spirit demonstrates that the bond between these people and their territory remains strong. For the Apiaká, the spirit woman allowed for the establishment of a new village in the vicinity of the Augusto Waterfall because she knows that the residents will be the warriors who will fight at her side in defense of the Juruena, so that it may flow free, with only its rough and rocky course as an obstacle.

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Chief Leonardo, from the Nova Matrinchã village, piloting a motorboat on the São João da Barra River.  
Juliana Almeida





.....  
Ytu'u Waterfall, on the  
Rio dos Peixes River.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



## At the mouth, a fresh start

**T**he narratives of the peoples of the Juruena express conceptions regarding human genesis, marked by the change of the place of occupation of the ancestors. For the indigenous peoples, the idea of human primacy on the Earth doesn't make much sense. The Earth wasn't made exclusively for humans and coming to occupy it was an act of daring that resulted in both good and ill. For humans, it was necessary to learn the appropriate way to occupy this world or the risk having to face the wrath of the spirits with whom this space is shared.

It has been seen that, at the end of one's life cycle on Earth, death is only a transformation. After death, people continue on to the celestial plane, crossing the rainbow snake that connects the heavens and Earth. There they are welcomed by the ancestors, bath in crystalline waters, and become young again. Other people transform into protector beings on the earthly plane, transmuting into the form of animals, remaining in the region and guaranteeing that sacred places are safeguarded.

The waterfalls and rapids form zones of interposition, as well as that of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural convergence, elements fundamental to indigenous socio-cosmological systems. They are places where different agents meet: humans, fish, plants, spirits, etc., and where the lines that shape their alterity meet, permeate each other, interact, and take on new shapes.

Every local along the Juruena expresses the memory of the past occupation of countless social groups. This being the case, the indigenous peoples don't see themselves as owners of the land in any way. But they also don't see land only in terms of practical use, thinking only of sustenance or subsistence. Indigenous territories are ancestral territories, riddled with bonds that tie people to the land and the erasure of this memory has been one of the strategies for further establishing the dominance of an exploitative and degrading model in which the pursuit of profit is the only goal.

In the heart of Brazil exists the memory of indigenous nations, of straw civilizations whose recognition of their transience in the world was erroneously interpreted as social and intellectual incompetence. There is a great need to populate the world with these "other meanings." Heterogeneous discourses consolidate different modes of existence and only this diversity of ways of understanding the world can offer conceptual and analytical keys to overcoming both the environmental crisis—and the possible climatic massacre that it can bring—and



the extreme inequality brought about by the current economic model. Just as relevant as the knowledge of the genocide suffered by the indigenous populations of Brazil is the recognition of the epistemicide, that is, erasure of their ways of understanding the world, which continues to this day.

Indigenous thought can contribute significantly to a positive change in the economic model of scientific-industrial society. In contrast to the unlimited

expansion that is a characteristic of modern capitalism is the recognition of boundaries to be respected and of spaces to be preserved. Such thinking constitutes an abandonment of an ethnocentric and speciesist point of view, in favor of the recognition of the coexistence of different subjects, whether they be human or non-human. In place of the role of usurper, one should assume the role of guardian.

It's time to indigenize modernity!

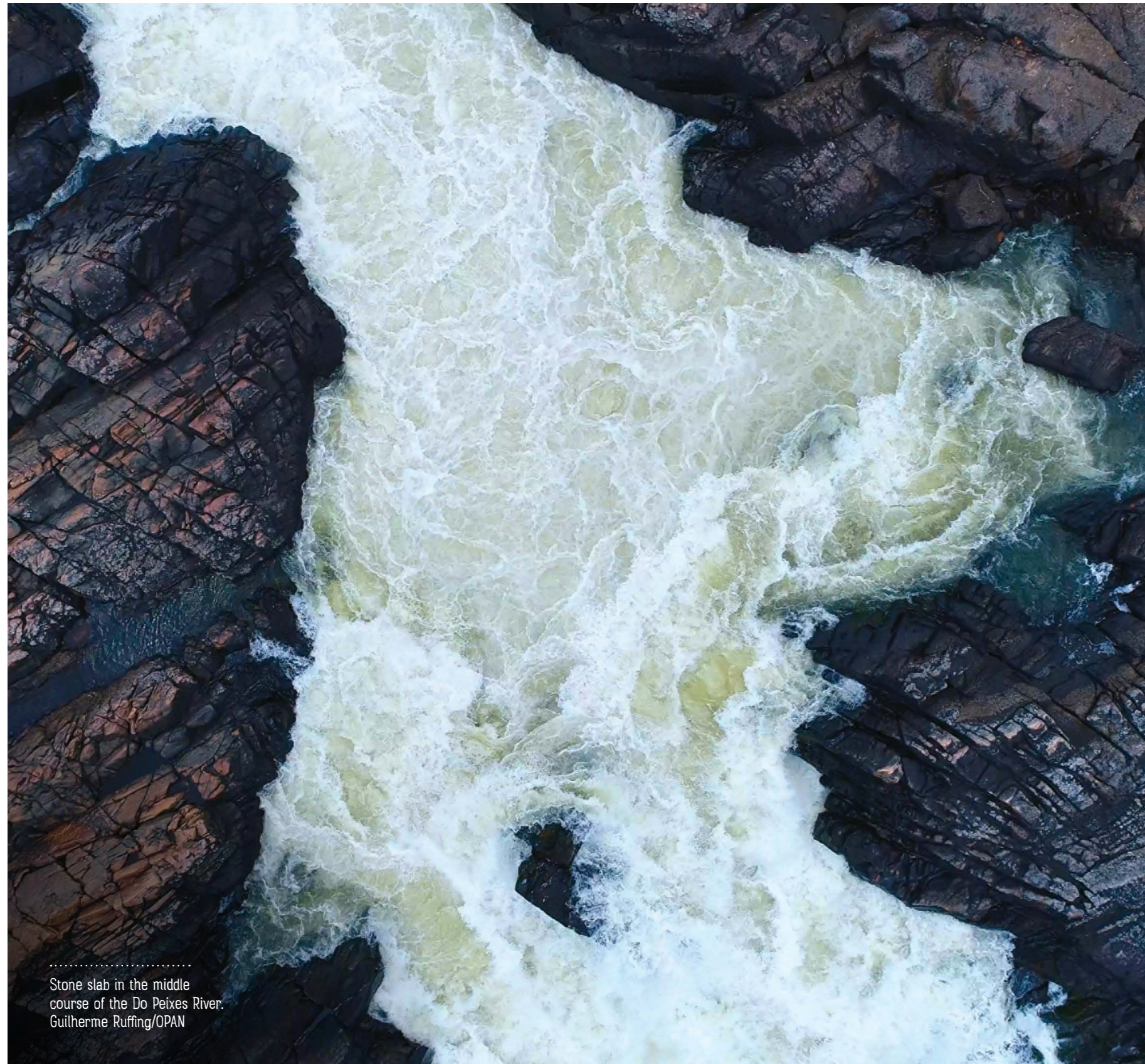
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Salto Augusto Waterfall,  
on the left bank of the  
Juruena River.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





Wake below Ytu'u Falls.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





Stone slab in the middle course of the Do Peixes River. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN

## To keep the canoe from flipping

*Seeing the land, rivers, and forests as commodities is a colossal mistake that will bury us all.*  
(AILTON KRENAK)

**T**hroughout this book, the reader has been invited to travel the stories and meanings found along the Juruena and learn about how her landscapes are simultaneously symbols of long-term relationships and witnesses to the connection between indigenous people and their territory. Many of these landscapes, which preserve part of the memory of the world and of the human experience in this region, are being threatened or have already been impacted by the advance “development.” Three cases that are representative of this situation can be cited here and follow below.

The first of them, which has already been mentioned, regards the Belo Waterfall, located on the Sacre River. There resides, Zerero, sister of Kyawre, whose home was impacted by the construction of a small hydro project, PCH Sacre II, greatly upsetting the spirit woman, as the shaman Zeferino Koloizomae alerted.

A similar case can be found among the Manoki. Chosen for the Bocaiúva small hydro project, was the Cravari River, which in the past was home to spirits and the stage for countless ceremonies performed by this people. The construction of this hydroelectric power plant causes the spirit that lived at the site to abandon the place. Leaving the Cravari River, he brought the fish with him and, ever since then, fishing has been scarce. “The place we are is called ‘Kamãypamãna ulanaheatoli,’ where the old ones dance. Where the father of Kamãypamãna danced. There was a small waterfall here, a very wild waterfall. It will never be the same as before. It will only remain in our memory,” stated Manoel Kanunxi in an interview given to OPAN.

Likewise, the home of Doliro at the Tolixiwi Waterfall, located on the main course of the Juruena, has been affected by the construction of the Telegráfica small hydro project. The Enawene-Nawe relate that, a long time ago, Doliro was a pioneer in breaking with the commands of the spirits, who had prohibited women from seeing the musical instruments that men play during rituals.<sup>22</sup>

These three examples show that other models of occupying space are being repeatedly superimposed on indigenous territoriality without any evaluation of the material and immaterial damage that arises from this.<sup>23</sup> In the permit process of such works, the flagrant disregard that is often shown toward the surveys that should be conducted to protect cultural and archaeological heritage is remarkable. These studies are rushed, often conducted with questionable methodological rigor, and produce results that serve the economic interests of

<sup>22</sup> Doliro was a mischievous and fearless young woman. Motivated by her curiosity, she glimpsed at the sacred wind instruments, but ended up being told on by a bird. Her father became exasperated, “Doliro, why have you done such a thing? Now the spirits will devour you. I can’t do anything to help you!” To placate the wrath of the spirits, Doliro grabbed a handful of achiote seeds and tried to blow them into the air. But it was all to no avail. She then decided to seek out a celestial spirit (a protector), who instructed her to bath in several waterfalls. Doliro visited the Dardanelos Waterfall on the Aripuanã River, the Utiariti Waterfall on the Papagaio River, and, finally, the Tolixiwi Waterfall on the Juruena, which ended up becoming her home. At all of the waterfalls, she bathed with a medicinal plant that produces a thick foam when rubbed against skin. Doliro was thus able to escape from her peril. The wrath of the spirits was placated and the taboo they had imposed on the women of the Enawene-Nawe against seeing the ceremonial flutes came to an end. The foam that formed in the plunge pool of these waterfalls is considered to come from Doliro’s healing baths, a memory written on the landscape whose continuity



those who contract them, often neglecting the rights and ways of life of indigenous peoples.

The Juruena is one of the various sub-basins of the Amazon (such as the Madeira, Aripuanã, and Xingu rivers) considered to be a strategic resource for expanding the supply of hydroelectric energy. A proposal to build more than a hundred projects, both large and small, currently hangs over the Juruena. And this list of projects does not include only hydroelectric projects, but every kind of energy and transportation infrastructure project there is, such as highways, railways, waterways, and transmission lines. A predatory and impactful development model is drawn to such areas with significant potential for the extraction of resources (forest resources other than

wood) and tourism (fishing, adventure, culture).

Targets of economic interests, the waterfalls and rapids of the Juruena—and those of its tributaries—constitute fundamental geographic landmarks for the peoples who have inhabited this region since time immemorial. They have been the protectors and guardians against the advance of colonialism, acting as an obstacle to the navigation and, consequently, the occupation of this area. The question remains as to how long they will continue resisting this persistent advance of colonialism.

Historically, it has been seen that the defense of indigenous territories in the face of development projects has been an important issue for the people of the Juruena. The demarcation of the Ponte de Pedra

Indigenous Land, which is home to the place of origin of the different peoples of the region, was a result of the struggle of the Haliti people that took place at the end of the nineteen-nineties against the construction of a small hydro project planned for the area. Likewise, the attempt to construct a hydroelectric plant at the Ytuú waterfall in the nineteen-eighties prompted the revision of the boundaries of the Apiaká-Kayabi Indigenous Land.

The civilized think only about making money, which they call development, and it is this that has allowed them to invade the occupied lands, at will, along the Teles Pires, Peixes, and Arinos Rivers. Now they want to violate the last bit of land that we hold. Perhaps you do not understand, but for us, it is vital that you respect the Dos Peixes River and leave the waterfall as it is. (From a letter written by the Apiaká and Kayabi peoples and published in 1983).

The alienation of the peoples of the Juruena from the land and resources that sustain their socio-cultural practices has culminated in the insecurity of natural resources and the consequent increase in economic dependence. A question remains: who will pay this bill?

One of the most well-known and emblematic cases in this region involves the Enawene-Nawe peoples, who have been affected by the construction of dozens of small hydro projects that fall under a larger project called the “Juruena Complex.” In the same year that the reservoir of the power plants was built, the Enawene-Nawe came to suffer from a scarcity of fish to catch. Despite the absence of a technical report testifying to the relation between the construction of small hydro projects and a reduction in fish populations, the concurrence of the two seemed to leave no doubt.

To a group for which fishing has been a fundamental element of their way of life, both in terms of sustenance and the development of their cultural life, scarcity of fish populations is a catastrophic event. The immediate



consequence was the monetization of the resources they require for food and ceremonies, as, from then on, the Enawene-Nawe were forced to purchase fish from hatcheries to be able to carry out their rituals. They also had to engage in complex negotiations with the spirits for them to accept, in the context of rituals, offerings of exotic fish species considered inferior.

The threats to the sacred sites of the Juruena are also due to the fact that the demarcation of the majority of Indigenous Lands has not included significant portions of the ancient territory of the peoples of the region, especially sacred sites that, from the point of view of these peoples, need to be protected. This situation is the reason for the numerous pleas to revise the boundaries of these territories to include these sites of socio-cosmological and historical importance: the historical villages of the Manoki, the genipapo grove of the Enawene-Nawe, the caverns of the Nambikwara, the tucum and chestnut groves of the Myky, the bamboo groves of the Haliti, among other places, are just several examples. The indigenous peoples seek, among other means, mechanisms of protection for significant

Chief Manuel Kanunxi observes the Bocaíuva SHP plant, built on one of the sacred sites of the Manoki people. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN

has been interrupted by the construction of a hydroelectric power plant.

<sup>23</sup> And it's not just hydroelectric plants that threaten indigenous cultural heritage. Countless reports indicate that areas are being negatively impacted by the construction of highways and agricultural activities. Kamunu, a member of the Myky people, related to anthropologist Flávia Oliveira Serpa Gonçalves that a farmer had invaded the territory of his people and tilled up part of an old village where some of their relatives had been buried. “The cattle are stepping on the heads of my grandparents,” said Maurício Tupxi, referring to the conversion of this land into pasture land in an area that had formerly been home to one of his people's villages. Other accounts relate the destruction of hills sacred to the Haliti taking place during the construction of the BR 364 highway. The destruction of sacred hills was also reported by the Enawene-Nawe, which, in this case, was due to the construction of BR 174. In an interview given to researcher Pedro Paulo Salles, Luciano Kayzokenazokai of the Haliti people reported that a farmer had once tried to clear a sacred bamboo grove, but it defended itself. Becoming thicker, the bamboo grove burned out the motor of the tractor.

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Machine house of a hydroelectric power plant built on the Cravari River, a little upriver from the sacred waterfalls of the river. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN







places or sacred sites, because when these places are not included in Indigenous Lands, they remain susceptible to indiscriminate use by economic groups that continue to be oblivious to their importance.

Not only is the uncertainty regarding the possibility of overcoming the alienation and insecurity of their territory of great concern to the elders of the peoples of the Juruena, but so is the uncertainty regarding whether they can guarantee that their youth are also able to walk the paths left by their ancestors without being misled by the attractions of the other world imposed on indigenous peoples. In the words of the Haliti, recorded by Adalberto Pereira de Holanda:

“Now, those five watermen are always saying that they will bring an end to the world again,

with a flood. The healers are those who don’t let them. Now, the person who is not letting them is I. The younger people don’t know how to talk to the water people. That’s why, when I die, the world will end in a flood. The farmers are those who are steering our youth away from our way of life for another kind of life. The souls have warned me, but there’s nothing more that can be done.”

The lament of unknown authorship, recorded in the nineteen-eighties, echoes the words of Kawali Aweresese, a great leader of the Enawene-Nawe people, who passed away in 2009: “The young no longer care about the songs. They occupy themselves with the problems of the white people. They only think of going to the city.

They don’t know that the spirits are unsatisfied and will soon come around to seek their vengeance on everyone. When I die, the songs will be buried with me.”

The threats to the land and indigenous peoples of the Juruena are not new by any means. The observation that the usurpation of Brazilian indigenous lands began with the arrival of European colonizers is also nothing new. Land has always been an issue. Different strategies have been utilized to dispossess the indigenous of their territories: genocide, slavery, expulsion, confinement, evangelization, and deterritorialization. It has been this way since 1500. Today, what is left for the indigenous peoples is to fight with the weapons of the white people. In the face of these threats to the cultural heritage of the Juruena, the development of a strategy for struggle resistance is needed. Thus, this book fits within broader efforts seeking the recognition of cultural assets as an instrument to defend indigenous territories. The goal of this publication is to show the socio-cultural importance of the Juruena and thus strengthen the processes being carried out to protect its integrity.

The recording and dissemination of information on the cultural heritage of the region have been one of the options that have been used to show these other possible worlds. Establishing this recognition is a strategy for giving birth to a plurality of ways of life and an attempt to break with the entrenched idea that capitalism and scientism are ethically and aesthetically superior to any other way of seeing and living in the world.<sup>24</sup>

The involvement of indigenous collectives in national policy-making regarding patrimony is a recent development and has been provoking some interesting debates. While these people consider their relationship with these policies to be strategic, a need has arisen to make adjustments to two distinct symbolic models: the government and the indigenous ones. The need to safeguard indigenous heritage has forced the Brazilian government to deal with a series of specificities that characterizes its practices and conceptual models, such as, for example, the idea that the preservation of sacred

waterfalls constitutes a preventative measure to avoid illness and death caused by spirits.

Brazil still has a lack of public policies for preserving cultural landscapes. The Cultural Landscapes Seal, which was established by Ordinance No. 127/2009, was revoked after five years, even before the pilot initiatives were implemented. The revocation occurred in the midst of questions regarding the jurisprudence created by this type of recognition since the participation of Iphan<sup>25</sup> in the licensing processes is a controversial and still unresolved issue. This body is designated only as an adviser. There are also a series of legislative initiatives aimed at weakening the agency’s participation in environmental licensing procedures, such as the proposed constitutional amendment PEC 65/2012 and bill PL 654/2015.

The options that remained are declarations of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the classification of archaeological sites as cultural heritage resources. In practice, the first option does not guarantee any kind of restrictions regarding development projects that can eventually negatively affect registered cultural goods. In turn, declaring archaeological sites as cultural heritage resources is a more concrete option, as it addresses the physical integrity of the landscapes that need to be preserved. One relevant example is the designation of the “Sacred Sites of the Upper Xingu Kamukuaká and Sagihengu” as such. The protected status of the Kamukuaká cavern, associated with initiation rituals (ear piercing) and with the Kuarup (a ritual paying homage to the dead) was the result of the work of Waurá and Kalapalo groups from the upper Xingu during negotiations regarding the construction of small hydro projects on the tributaries of the Xingu River.<sup>26</sup>

The cultural and archaeological heritage of the Juruena is still poorly documented, which makes it difficult to adequately size up the impacts that the construction of infrastructure has had on it. The waterfalls that have been the focus of the present investigation represent only a small portion of the sacred

<sup>24</sup> This, on the other hand, does not constitute a clean break from the colonialist perspective to which such tactics of cultural valorization is a response to, as the decisions on “what to register,” “what to designate cultural heritage,” and “what to value,” continue in the hands of a specific group, namely: the non-indigenous intellectual elite.

<sup>25</sup> TN: The National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute is a heritage register of the federal government of Brazil. It is responsible for the preservation of buildings, monuments, structures, objects and sites deemed of historic or cultural importance to the country.

<sup>26</sup> The registration of the Sacred Sites of the Upper Xingu Kamukuaká and Sagihengu in the Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Book of Cultural Resources is backed by Decree-Law no. 25 of 1937. At present, there is an understanding that the preservation of archaeological sites would be guaranteed by its registration in the National Register of Archaeological Sites CNSA / SGPA, which, in itself, would qualify them as protected sites under Law No. 3,924/1961, which regards archaeological and prehistoric monuments. This understanding is controversial, as only the designation of a cultural heritage site as a cultural heritage resource will guarantee federal resources for its preservation.

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Dam of the Buriti SHP plant.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





sites and locations related to the historical occupation of the region. For the indigenous peoples of this region, such landscapes compose an extensive network interconnected with their ways of life and, for this reason, the risk of hierarchically valuating locations of cosmological, historical, and archaeological importance should be avoided, as it could heighten the risks to areas that have not been included in the processes of recognition and protection.

This is the first step in a broader initiative to map the socio-cultural landscapes of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena with the goal of contributing to the establishment of respect for the memory spaces of the indigenous population of the region. A future systematic study of the relationship between the territoriality and cosmology, as well as the toponymy of the indigenous peoples of the region, can contribute significantly to the establishment of a new perspective on the region that goes beyond the oft-evoked and misguided cause of agricultural exportation.

Due to the evolutionist prejudices, the natural is considered separate from the social, just as the forest is deemed to be distinct from the city. True progress involves overcoming this hostility toward the environment. Any chance of a sustainable and socially just future is being destroyed in the name of development. To this day, indigenous territoriality is understood by the majority of Brazilians in terms of subsistence, rather than existence. Ethnocentrism prevents the recognition of the elements in the landscape that imbue it with meaning as a result of the actions of the first humans to occupy the region.

We must take seriously what the indigenous peoples tell us. Indigenous Lands are not only protected areas, but also centers of resistance. The indigenous struggle to defend indigenous territories constitutes a form of respect for the ancestors. In addition to environmental issues, it also relates to the right to memory. As the writer Ailton Krenak has expressed, in this historic moment, indigenous peoples should take a stance and demand to be recognized as the first and legitimate occupants of Brazil's territory and therefore the only people who hold knowledge about the deep history of the country. The territoriality of the indigenous peoples of the Juruena should be taken into consideration by the Brazilian government in its collaborative land management, as well as land planning initiatives. As descendants of the original inhabitants of this region, these peoples have the right to participate in a meaningful way in the decisions made about their future, especially when it comes to determining the way in which their ancient territory is to be occupied.

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On the Sacre River, a rainbow reflects the hope for better times for the waters of the Juruena. Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN





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The Juruena River flowing  
freely through slabs of rock  
along its lower course.  
Guilherme Ruffing/OPAN



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