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The boy from Mibaraió and the cosmology of the snake: ancestry, transculturality and decolonial knowledge in the Amazon

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Abstract: The text tells the story of a boy from the archipelago of Marajó, in Pará, who, through education, research and academic training, uncovered the cosmology of the serpent. Grounded in decolonial gnosis, the methodologies of documentary analysis, and the art of conversation with different dwellers in the region, it brings to light the point of view of the marajoara ancestral populations regarding the cosmogony of the river and the cosmology of the meanings of life. Through the graphic designs found in marajoara ceramics, writings by the naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, a novel by Dalcídio Jurandir, and narratives by Marajoaras, the work reflects the place of indigenous, afro-indigenous, and forests and riverbanks peoples' ancestral knowledge in protecting life in the Amazon and on planet Earth.
Keywords: Mibaraió; cosmology; ancestry; decoloniality; transculturation

1 The Crossings of the Boy

I did not think of enchanted kingdoms
That are in the rich boy's costly books
(when I knew the tales of Perrault)
Knew stories that Sabina, raised in our household, used to tell me.
Thought about the little *miriti* canoes floating in the waters,
The *matupiri* fish that ate the breadcrumbs
The mother of the water's green hair, the schocking *puraqué* fish,
The snoring alligator, the *sucuriju* snake that could catch us
When we were careless, bathing ourselves in the backyard of the house

(Jurandir, 2011, p. 39-40)

The year was 1974. The place: Rio Jai, a rural-forested area of Breves, a town in the heart of the world's largest fluvial-marine archipelago, Mibaraió in the indigenous Tupi language, Marajó in the colonial vernacular, in the state of Pará, Brazil. The event: a boy was born within a riverside family in Marajó. He was the seventh child. He came into the world during a time of great financial hardship and would face a great challenge: overcoming the social prejudice that congenital torticollis would impose on him. A great dream, however, revealed itself in the father's heart from the first day, as the only and last weapon of the family to face the prejudice against the youngest child's

physical condition and the economic limitations. What was that dream? To have the eldest daughter educated in order to educationally "rear" the six younger children.

The father's dream was woven along the many journeys across the Marajó waters that his eldest daughter undertook as a lay teacher, initially, and later as a certified primary teacher. Her teaching journey began in the rural villages of Breves and then reached the city of Melgaço, both within the vast Marajó archipelago. Simultaneously, the boy was "brought up" and, as he grew and fell in love with the world of letters, becoming a voracious reader, he roamed the streets of the town selling a variety of goods to help with household expenses.

Between childhood and adolescence, the boy from Mibaraió became involved with the world of dance, theater, religious and political practices, and as he turned 17 began the main career of his life: that of being a teacher. He started in literacy classes, progressed to elementary school, then high school, until he made one of the greatest journeys in search of academic training to reach postgraduate levels: the boy flew to São Paulo in pursuit of major academic degrees, namely, a master and a doctorate qualification in Social History at PUC-SP.

Leaving Marajó to better understand it aligned with his academic dream, allowing him to unravel the facets of history, memory, identity, culture, art, ways of living, celebrating, fighting, and giving meaning to the lives of his people on both parts of Marajó: in the Marajó of the Forests and in the Marajó of the Fields[1]. By immersing himself in the writings of chroniclers, naturalists, travelers, literary figures, and the research of historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists to map signs of the serpent cosmology in the narratives of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and Dalcídio Jurandir, archaeologic artifacts, and embroidery designs originating from ancestral Marajoara graphic art, as well as listening to Marajoara people in territories of rivers, dry lands and floodplains, towns and villages, he valued the experiences of elders, adults, young people, adolescents, and children, following the methodological perspective of Walter Mignolo (2003) on the *art of conversation*. The practice of conversation abandons the formal style of the interview, broadening its meaning by understanding that the

[1] The Marajó archipelago currently consists of 18 municipalities with both similar and different geocultural and socio-historical realities and formations. The municipalities of Afuá, Gurupá, Anajás, Breves, Melgaço, Portel, Oeiras, Bagre, Curralinho, São Sebastião da Boa Vista, and Limoeiro do Ajuru are part of the Marajó of Forest. The Marajó of Fileds consists of the municipalities of Chaves, Soure, Salvaterra, Cachoeira do Arari, Santa Cruz do Arari, Muaná, and Ponta de Pedras (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2025).

researcher's quest to develop an understanding of a subject is shaped by continuous dialogue with theoretical, methodological, and historiographical texts, written sources, and by the need of listening to anyone in order to connect voices, meanings, and uncover other ways of explaining life, often in opposition to the colonial matrix of power that structures the conception of school and the academic curriculum (Quijano, 2005).

In this article, Walter Mignolo becomes a guiding compass in defining the theoretical and methodological path taken by the central character in this story: *decolonial gnosis* and the *art of conversation*. Upon concluding his study on the darker side of the Renaissance (Mignolo, 1992), the semiotician began research in 1994 on coloniality and globalization between the 16th and 20th centuries, innovating in the way he combined theoretical and empirical knowledge to write "Local Histories, Global Projects" (Mignolo, 2003). In this way, it analytically aligned discoveries and reflections about the research subjects, based on the field of *decolonial gnosis*, which is formed by an analytical repertoire that unites *doxa* (knowledge downplayed by Western scientific grammar) with *episteme* (scientific knowledge hegemonized in the context of the first globalization and European imperialism from the 16th century onwards) to account for the complexity of distinct worldviews that are found in asymmetrical relationships in the territories of colonial difference.

In this text, the Marajoara boy discovered that the *decolonial gnosis* materializes its sense of being in stories, knowledge, practices, and rituals orally transmitted and historically undermined, confronting forms of imperialist domination in zones of interstice. Attentive to the angle of underground local histories, this interpretive perspective seeks to revere the protagonism and agency of the traditional Marajoara populations, critically reflecting on how a certain foreign knowledge was established as unique and hegemonic on the margins of Western modernity, and how it silenced the diversity of other histories that fueled the colonialities of knowledge, power, and being which were rejected and disqualified by them.

It is no coincidence that the boy in this story, while dialoging with the historian Ronald Raminelli about European scientific expeditions to the African, Asian, and American continents in the 18th century, learned that “[...] without the material evidence of the journey – narratives, correspondence, drawings, and specimens collected from nature – the expedition was forgotten, becoming irrelevant to the advances of Natural History” (Raminelli, 1998, p. 2). The so-called informants of the men of science were

rowers, indigenous river pilots, slaves, and inhabitants of the villages through which expeditions and philosophical journeys passed. The range of knowledge acquired in conversations and interactions with the masters of the rivers and forests, when transferred to paper, lost its authorship, and the voices of the so-called informants become silent.

From a methodological standpoint, the boy followed paths opened by Mignolo (2003), who adopted the *art of conversation* with various types of people from the academic world of Latin America and the United States, as well as from non-academic environments such as "taxi drivers, domestic workers, and executives of small companies." The author experienced this art in informal settings and through attentive reading of rare works and academic papers by great intellectuals. "These are documents that cannot be transcribed, knowledge that comes and goes, but remains in the mind and alters a given argument" (Mignolo, 2003, p. 12).

Inspired by the paths traced by the Argentinian intellectual, the boy- researcher caught up with the historiographical dialogue, the reading of written sources, and the knowledge picked up from different Marajoara people as stages of the conversational method. Thus, his great displacement was not merely physical; it represented a kind of a journey of rediscovery of the time of his Marajoara childhood and ancestral roots, according to the Dalcidian poetics that opens this article. Sabina, mother of the wisdom of the waters and forests, taught him during childhood the origin and meaning of the constituent elements of Mother Earth, our common home (Krenak, 2022). However, upon entering the school and religious spheres and interacting with information from the media, he absorbed a new pattern of reading the world.

In this context, the Marajoara sensibilities for interpreting existence lay dormant. The Eurocentric vision prevailed over the knowledge of Sabina, a synthetic representation of the encounters between indigenous and African repertoires since the late 17th century in the territory of Mibaraió. The journey to the largest capital of Abya Yala, São Paulo, on the other hand, allowed the boy in our story to rediscover himself, to look at himself in the mirror of the waters and to revisit the cultural foundation of his upbringing, his values, feelings, and Marajoara ways of life.

The boy turned into teacher, researcher, and writer that then unraveled the indigenous, Afro-indigenous, quilombola, Northeastern, Jewish, foreign, and migrant facets of his native land, understanding that if Marajó in the indigenous language

means Mibaraió, barrier to the sea, it was from the Marajoara ceramics present in the works of the Italian priest, Geovanni Gallo (1997; 2005) and the archaeologist from Rio Grande do Sul, Denise Schaan (2007), and the wisdom of a Sacaca that the colonial narrative, recorded by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, that he recognized Marajó as the serpent. Thus, the great Marajoara symbol, the giant snake, emerges not only as protection, but especially as ancestral wisdom, fertility, and the connection between worlds, life, which gave rise to places and human groups. Without Marajó, one cannot narrate the social history of the Amazon in its historical and cultural complexity and diversity.

Without the protective serpent, the Amazon submerges in the water, and it truly becomes an enchanted land. As Dalcídio Jurandir (1994) warns, it is necessary to protect and defend traditional knowledge so that the Marajoara people, the fauna, the flora, and the rivers may live, otherwise the serpent, mother of physical and spiritual existence, may depart for the great waters. Now it is time to follow the discoveries made by the boy from Mibaraió after his reunion with his childhood, a time of ancestral wisdom, transculturally guided through journeys, academic training, readings, learning, experiences, and discoveries along the way. In other words, through the theoretical and methodological paths of *decolonial gnosis* and the *art of conversation*, the boy creates a kind of self-portrait to narrate his personal and scholarly journey, as well as the discoveries made about the cosmology of the serpent, through conversations with Marajoara people, written and visual historical sources, objects of material culture, and specialists in indigenous studies, the African diaspora, and ancestral arts and aesthetics.

2 The Boy and the writing of History

> The classes, denied by the dominant upper-classes, or only recognized as culturalist adornments in a hegemonic model of modern society, come to surface vividly when represented in their own terms (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2015, p. 88)

The academic world began for the boy in 1995 with his degree in History at the Universidade Federal Pará, on the Campus of Breves, Marajó. There he began to realize that the writing of Amazonian history was being woven together in dialogue with different material, immaterial, written, visual, oral, and digital memories. In this field, he came to understand that the ways of inquiring documents/monuments (Le Goff, 1996)

in order to understand how historical, economic, sociocultural, political, cosmogonic, cosmological, and other processes were varied, revealing specific meanings of departures and arrivals through the reading of themes, problems, and research objectives. In the academic boy's understanding, the concept of cosmogony refers to the way by which the ancestral Marajoara populations explain the origin of territories, ecosystems, fauna, flora, rituals, and events. The concept of cosmology is the way in which the senses and meanings of the cycles of life, the forces of physical, political, and spiritual powers, and human and non-human relationships are expressed (Lévi-Strauss, 1956).

In this formative journey between oral and written culture, the character in our text discovered that after the so-called documentary revolution in historiography in its Western and European trend, carried out by French intellectuals with the Annales journal in 1929, historians and researchers in the humanities around the world have been encouraged to develop documentary criticism in whatever format the source be presented (Burke, 1997; Reis, 2000).

Before reaching the final stretch of his history graduation, the boy also discovered that in the late 1950s, a group of British intellectuals had already been questioning the place of ordinary people in the writing of history. Among them, E. P. Thompson (1987), in dialogue with the anthropology of Clifford Geertz (2012), questioned the elitist concept of culture and brought it into the field of experiences and intricate webs of symbolic and social relations. The movement of research and writing of a History from Below, unveiled by Thompson (2001), allowed English researchers to turn their study interests to the most varied human groups, especially peasants and factory workers.

Upon beginning his master and doctoral post graduate studies in Social History at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo in 2002, the boy-researcher encountered the work of European and non-European intellectuals who brought to light other worlds with their cosmogonies, cosmologies, imaginaries, and regimes of historicity engendered in ancestral premises. He learned, in classes taught by one of his great mentors, Paulo Watrin, the historical concept of social imaginary. The imaginary is shaped by collective cognitive repertoires that guide personal, political, economic, cultural, and social worldviews in historically determined times and spaces.

Represented in private and public symbols, it generates affections, power relations, disputes, forms of domination, and resistance.

Regarding the Marajoara universe, the boy understood, translating Baczko (1985) into the historical narratives lived in the region, that two imaginaries have met and confronted each other since the colonial period, transforming the territory of Mibaraió into an arena of estrangement, negotiation, and conflict, almost always asymmetrical. The struggle in defense of the ancestral imaginary, despite losses and changes, is perennial and reveals itself in a kind of board game, where strategic positions are conquered or lost in face of the contemporary ways of life (Hall, 2003).

Thus, while the French documentary revolution and the English turn contributed to broadening the territories of the historian's profession, these theoretical and methodological perspectives focused their concerns solely on the European world. Walter Mignolo, in dialogue with D'Alembert's philosophical reflection, was decisive in helping the restless boy understand that if the Enlightenment "shed new light on some subjects," it also cast into the shadows the histories, knowledge, and memories of native peoples and cultures and the diaspora. It is similar to the "flow of the tides" which, upon reaching the shore, reveals treasures but hides others (Mignolo, 2003, p. 96).

In this exercise, for the construction of inclusive and democratic narratives capable of valuing marginal and alternative histories in Africa, the Americas, and Asia, rested one of the greatest challenges that the decolonial perspective presented to the boy. It was how to teach him to bring back to the shore memories carried away by the waves of the coloniality of power, in a way to discover in the dominant writing the voices in continuous struggle against submission and invisibility (Ginzburg, 1998; Mignolo, 2003; Spivak, 2010; Hall, 2016).

In his journey of knowledge, the boy, a hunter of his people's stories, realized that the exercise required theoretical and methodological reading, attention, skill, and academic know-how; otherwise, the reproduction of official discourses, visions, and patterns would guide the hermeneutics of the evidence and clues from the past. In line with this debate, Rivera Cusicanqui, a sociologist, anthropologist, and historian of Aymara descent from Bolivia, showed the boy from the Amazon that “The first methodological anchor of the idea of alternative histories is that its mere enunciation

refers to the plurality of meanings that history can have, depending on who are the subjects that 'make' it, narrate it or 'suffer' it […]" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2015, p. 71).

Faced with the power of colonizing writing and its forms of construction, production of meanings, and recording of the other, it became clear to the boy from Mibaraió that the matrix of constitution of the indigenous, African, Afro-indigenous populations, or even of poor whites, born or pushed into the Amazon region from 1616 onwards, has always been oral tradition. The Amazonian territories, since their formation with human presence, are places *par excellence* where a powerful civilization of the word has developed. These are peoples of oral traditions that transcend the elementary forms of narration to reach a specific way of constructing physical, sentimental, material, spiritual, visible, and sensory existence (Hampatê Bâ, 2010).

The boy observed that the ways by which the human groups who inhabited this area or who traveled here were represented in written and visual documents such as codices, travelogues, maps, paintings, and photographs, were under the influence of the coloniality of knowledge. In other words, in line with Rivera Cusicanqui (2010), such documentary representations expose powerful marks of internal colonialism in its creation and dissemination in the Amazon.

Interested in understanding how the diverse places of the vast, complex, and interconnected North of Brazil were formed, the inquisitive boy challenged himself to problematize which philosophical conceptions guided men and women of letters in the elaboration of representations about rivers, flora, fauna, places, people, and cultural practices existing in the Amazon valley between the 18th and 19th centuries. While guiding Lucas Monteiro de Araújo's (2017) important master's thesis in a seminal study on European and North American travelers who left their countries towards South America in the 19th century, the boy history doctor encouraged the young anthropologist to think of men and women of science as scientists in formative process, because they were not ready to arrive anywhere and competently record its material and immaterial patrimonial wealth. The knowledge they used to record scientific names of specimens was insufficient. Therefore, men and women of letters from around the world relied on the knowledge of the lords and ladies of the rivers and forests.

Within the framework of *decolonial gnosis* (Mignolo, 2003), identifying traces of the wisdom of local populations in these travel writings constitutes a central objective

of the saga of the boy from Marajó. Domingues (2008, p. 136), in defending the thesis that “[...] the training, information and interests of travelers determined what they saw and what interested them, also conditioning the way they described or represented this knowledge [...]”, did not fail to value the influences of local culture in the (re)construction of the scientist's perspective.

To accomplish this goal, in this part of the article, the boy will follow and analyze the journey made to the “Ilha Grande de Joanes” by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1756-1815) in the second half of the 18th century. The historian Magda Ricci (2021), the boy's teacher of Ancient History during his undergraduate studies, recovered from José Pereira Silva (2005), specialist on the work and documents produced by Rodrigues Ferreira, the origin of the first name of the Marajó region.

> Its named *Ilha de Joanes* because, since being populated by several Indian nations as the *Aroans, Mucoans, Ingaíbas, Mariapans* and *Cariponás*, amongst these it was also peopled by the nation *Iuioanas*. Here the name that afterwards, by the passing of time, was reduced to *Joanes*, as if we said Island of the *Iuioanas* (Silva, 2005, p. 50)

In dialogue with Mary Louise Pratt (1999), Ronaldo Raminelli (1998), and Ermelinda Pataca (2005), it became clear to the inquiring boy that the scientific voyages of the 18th century were symbolic constructions of projects to dominate natural, human, and cultural resources on a planetary scale, and that the scientific principle was not always the driving force behind the expeditions. Such a project cannot silence, as Ângela Domingues points out, observations of the Brazilian coast made in that same historical context “by sailors and traffickers, privateers and pirates” who, despite the unequal conditions in which they lived, documented important knowledge and practices about the Brazilian territory in “itineraries, travel diaries, maps” so that it could be better known by the “European élites” (Domingues, 2008, p. 135).

In an effort to consider local and global connections, their specificities and interrelations (Mignolo, 2003; Gruzinski, 2014), the boy aimed to understand the naturalist's relationship with local populations, the representation of the region and its inhabitants in the travel narrative. As an attentive reader of Stuart Hall, he highlighted and considered the concept of representation in accordance with the Marajoara reality. In the systematization of the Caribbean intellectual, representation emerges as a language to give meaning to the world.

> [...] is an essential part of the process by which meanings are produced and shared among members of a culture. Representation involves the use of language, signs, and images that signify or represent objects. To represent something is to describe or portray it, to bring it to mind through description, model, or imagination; to produce a likeness of something from our mind or in our senses; [...] it means to symbolize something, to put oneself in its place or to be a sample or substitute for it (Hall, 2016, pp. 31-32).

In these terms, the reading of this account by the central character of the research was guided by the following questions: How does the travel narrative of the naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira constructed representations of the indigenous populations of Marajó? What is the place of the indigenous person in this construction? Is it possible to discover transcultural dimensions in this zone of contact?

The concept of transculturation, coined in the 1940s by Fernando Ortiz, taught the boy to question the terms "acculturation and deculturation," which, besides valuing the metropolis's point of view, failed to consider that even in asymmetrical relationships, indigenous people, Africans, African-indigenous people, and poor whites, for example, influenced, taught, and resisted the ambitions of the colonial élites (Souza Júnior, 2024). Therefore, transculturality brings to the forefront the way "[...] in which subordinate or marginal groups select and invent, from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture" (Pratt, 1999, p. 30), objects and rituals, re-signifying them in terms of their culture. In these contexts, transcultural relations are, in Pratt's (1999) words, an event of the "contact zone," allowing us to discover in the analysis of Rodrigues Ferreira's writings on "The Great Island of Joanes" an autoethnographic experience lived between the naturalist and a Sacaca indigenous man in colonial times. Before Ferreira's philosophical journey, Felipe Guama Poma de Ayala, an Andean Amerindian, possibly from Cuzco, a native speaker of Quechua and Spanish, wrote in 1613, a manuscript of 1,200 pages, 800 of written text and 400 of pen drawings, addressed to King Felipe III of Spain, suggesting a new worldview that would break the silence of the indigenous populations of Abya Yala. Indigenous writing required the monarch to value ancestral knowledge in order to promote the agricultural development of the region through collaboration between natives and Spanish administrative élites (Pratt, 1999, pp. 25-38).

The boy in our story stumbled upon Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's report in the rare books collection of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Fundamental to the *art of conversation* established to weave the methodological path of the text, the document

was produced at a time of great transformations and changes in the interests of the Portuguese colonial power over the Amazon, when the Treaty of Madrid was formalized and the new limits of the Lusitanian empire were defined. In this plot and power relations, religious orders were expelled from the region, the Pombaline Directory Law was drafted and implemented, aiming to establish new control over the life and work of indigenous populations. Then the Company of Commerce of Grão-Pará and Maranhão was created, whose purpose was to formalize the entry of African labor into this northern part of Brazil (Azevedo, 1990; Domingues, 2008; Coelho, 2010).

3 The Boy, Rodrigues Ferreira and the great discovery

> In various academic scholarly courses, the Eurocentric perspective still holds on as an intellectual reflex both natural and unconscious, and the intellectual authority and educational resources go on being spread through colonial branches (Pratt, 1999, p. 16)

In this investigative journey, to deepen his understanding of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's trip to the indigenous territory of Mibaraió, the boy mapped academic works that dealt with the records of this crossing from Lisbon to Brazil and the Amazon. Among them, he came across the master's thesis of Mauro Coelho (1999), published in 2010 with the title "Epistemology of a Journey" (Coelho, 2010). Interested in mapping the epistemological knowledge produced about "the other" by the naturalist Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, in the period from 1783 to 1792, in the captaincies of Grão-Pará, Rio Negro, Mato Grosso and Cuiabá, Coelho (2010) revealed to the protagonist of the investigation the large documentary collection produced by the expedition.

> It is more than five dozen of memories about the nature and the population of the visited regions; various notes of astronomic observations, diaries, descriptive texts about rivers, caves, mines and settlements; several reports and inventories about thorps, villages, and commercial enterprises […] (Coelho, 2010, p. 18).

Following the historiographical path, the boy engaged in dialogue with the work of Pataca (2005), highlighting that the first major philosophical journey financed by the Portuguese Crown in the Amazon Valley, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, led by Rodrigues Ferreira, had the mission “[...] to collect and prepare all the products of the three kingdoms of nature that they found and send them to the Royal Museum

of Lisbon, as well as to produce particular philosophical and political observations about all the objects of the journey [...]" (Pataca, 2005, p. 150).

The journey of the boy who is the protagonist of this narrative went in the opposite direction to the one of the scientists of the 18th and, especially, 19th centuries. They collected ancestral knowledge transmitted by the masters of the rivers and forests but discredited and rendered them invisible in the scientific records. In dialogue with Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2018), a Maori indigenous intellectual from New Zealand, the boy of Afro-Indigenous and Jewish descent problematized the pattern of colonializing language used by academic and pedagogical texts to narrate the ways of life of the populations in the region, reinforcing the denunciation made by Smith (2018) about the process of plundering the traditional Amerindian knowledge which turned to be the basis of the scientific knowledge in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although denied, it was used to reaffirm waves of coloniality over time.

Image 1 – Depiction of a Mibaraió boy[2]

Source: Leandro Queiroz, Belém 2024.

In this narrative, aware of the colonial context of the naturalist's writing, the native boy from Marajó read that Rodrigues Ferreira (1756-1815), in the preamble to the largest Portuguese scientific expedition of the 18th century in Brazil, traveled along

[2] That by the trail of academic training and of dialogue with the *decolonial gnosis* reunited himself with the cultural codes of his African-indigenous ancestry, becoming teacher, researcher and writer of his people's stories, memories and knowledge.

the Amazon, Negro, Branco, Madeira, Guaporé, Mamoré, and Paraguay rivers from September 1st, 1783 to January 1793, and departed on November 7th 1783, for the so-called "Ilha Grande de Joanes," remaining there until December 10th of that year. Through contacts established with local populations characterized by the oral tradition, the naturalist was not insensitive to the exchange with the Marajoara people, guardians and keepers of the wealth of knowledge about the regime of the waters and winds, the secrets of the flora and fauna, as well as the vast universe of human and non-human beings that the archipelago sustains and protects.

In another direction regarding local knowledge, the boy-researcher, in dialogue with Pratt, emphasized that it is necessary not to forget that

> Studies in natural sciences aimed at describing the globe were symbolic forms of planetary appropriation that took place through large scientific expeditions, natural history museums, botanical gardens, natural history collections, and European systems and taxonomies (Pratt, 1999, p. 154).

Thus, despite the fact that in the past the Marajoara people were seen and classified, from the perspective of foreign travelers, as "an integral part of an exotic world" (Diegues, 1997, p. 4), it was in dealing with the movements of flood and ebb tides that they recognized the boy and his people linked to the waters and forests as authentic builders and guardians of material and immaterial heritage necessary for sustainability, the richness of biodiversity, and the balance of the region. In their bewilderment and amazement at the imposing nature, the force of the winds, ocean currents, and the movement of the waterways, foreigners of yesterday and today, traveling through the aquatic avenues of the region, named it the "Labyrinth of Crete" (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2024), because it is not an island, but an archipelago formed and crisscrossed by thousands of islands and natural channels, adorned with infinite colors and fantasies in its fauna and flora, leaving clues for the boy to enter the cosmology of the serpent.

If the beautiful vegetation of Marajó provides shade and entertainment, leaving the observer mesmerized as they contemplate the rarities and varieties of its countless plant and animal species, the experienced rower, familiar with the entities of the rivers and forests, always narrated and taught, despite not being heard by the imperial grammar, that foreigners were in face of the realm of enchantments that, at any moment, could take them to the deep waters (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2024). In this Mibaraió cosmology, local populations, always sensitive and attuned to the mysteries of the

Amazonian rainforest, produced intelligible ways of life and work, festivities and celebrations, which, since ancient times, have allowed them to dialogue with and respect the temporalities of the inseparable kingdoms: human, plant, animal, and mineral, guaranteeing the sustenance of their daily lives.

The boy realized that European and North American naturalists and travelers, ignorant of tidal patterns, needed to learn the complex dynamics involved in the river calendar. Therefore, at certain times, they needed to be under the control of pilots, rowers, indigenous and African-indigenous sailors, among other workers of the water kingdom (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2024). In this kingdom, the great mother of life is the serpent, notes Denise Schaan (2007, p. 56, our emphasis):

> The constant presence of **snakes** in Amazonian iconography cannot be interpreted solely as a materialization of myths and cosmologies but must also be understood in terms of the **political role** that such representations held within the context of the uses of the objects produced. In this sense, the relationship between snakes, fish, and water can be understood through the **preponderant role that aquatic resources** played in the social development of Amazonian societies, especially in the development of regional marajoara societies – or "chiefdoms" –.

The nest of the serpent, however, has received different names since the colonial period. Ilha Grande de Joanes. Ilha de Marajó. Arquipélago de Marajó. Marajó dos Campos. Marajó das Florestas. Amazônia Marajoara. The Heart of the Amazon. What do these names reveal and what do they conceal? When do they emerge in the historical, social, political, and academic landscape? What is the best way to identify the largest marine-riverine territory in the world, inhabited by more than 640,000 children of indigenous and Afro-indigenous ethnic backgrounds? (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2025). In the boy's problematizations, one certitude answers all these questions. The point of view of these constructions is exogenous to the way in which the indigenous populations that inhabited this vast territory, from west to east, from north to south, interpreted their geo-cultural space.

In the Tupi perspective, Marajó is Mibaraió or Marinatambalo, a meaning that holds great power and significance from the past to the present day. Why? Because the climate crisis, the great floods, the destruction of the forest, the death of the fish, the disappearance of prey for hunting, the killing of the rivers, have forced the planet to bring back to the scientific, political, communicational, and social world knowledge

that was buried by patterns of thought of the Cartesian method, the mindset of Enlightenment, and the Eurocentric worldview.

Under the guidance of indigenous wisdom, the boy teaches that the region is the great barrier to the sea. The protection. The wall. The blockade to the sea. The Italian priest Gallo (1997), founder of the Marajó Museum, a re-born and intercultural Marajoara, also presented an understanding of the archipelago, based on the Tupi description, as land taken from the sea. In this line of thought, Batista Caetano, cited in an unlocated secondary source, from another angle, points out Mibaraió as "she who gathers the waters," as the lady who collects different waters. Her power, writes the Augustinian Recollect priest Teodoro Madri, is to capture the clear waters of the Atlantic Ocean and pump them into all the rivers, revitalizing and renewing the muddy waters of the Amazon River. The waters are the blood, and the rivers are the arteries. The heart of the Amazon, in this understanding, pulsates on its banks, recreating human, animal, plant, and mineral life in profound connections and balances throughout the region (Madrid, 1979, p. 29). In this narrative, the inquisitive boy unravels the indigenous voice in colonial writing and announces the cosmology of the serpent.

> The island, in its beginning, he says, did not have these rivers. But it had, inland, countless snakes. These, forced by droughts, ran from the center to the coast in search of water. In the path they made, crawling across the land, they left, with the weight and size of their bodies, their figures imprinted on it, tortuous and twisted as they are. The rainwater fell upon this trail they found, and, in its beginning, opened streams. Later the streams expanded and turned into a great river, what had been in the beginning nothing more than a stream the size of a great snake. (Ferreira, 1964, p. 147).

Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, one of the greatest Luso-Brazilian naturalists, sailed the waters of the Pará River, Marajó Bay, to reach the so-called "Ilha Grande de Joanes" in November 1783 (Pataca, 2005). There, he learned from an indigenous wiseman of the Sacaca nation the theory of the origin of the Amazonian rivers (Ferreira, 1964). A curious fact about this native who appears as Sacaca is revealed by the boy in Ricci's thesis (2021). The historian reports that, according to Alexandre Rodrigues, his name was Severino dos Santos, he was about 70 years old, a principal and sergeant-major of the town of Monforte, belonged to the Iuioana ethnic group, enemies of the Aroan, spoke Portuguese, and could read and write. The historian explains that

the origin of the Iuioana ethnic name for Sacaca was narrated by Severino himself to Ferreira Rodrigues.

> The nickname Sacaca 'caught on' because, in ancient times, when several indigenous people were recruited to work on the Barra fortress in the city of Belém, an indigenous man from the Iuioana ethnic group was chosen to be the overseer of the others. To encourage his peers to work, he would pronounce the word 'sacacon' in his own slang, which meant 'to get the work done'. After that, other nations who heard the expression, 'without realizing it, because it was slang meant to be understood by the Iuioanas, started to call them Sacacas'. And so the Iuioanas in Marajó became the 'Sacacas' (Ricci, 2021, p. 399).

From this perspective, in the cosmogonic narrative told by the indigenous man Severino da Silva, the rivers are the dwellings of the serpent. Impressed by the ancestral wisdom, the naturalist meticulously recorded the indigenous vision of the very birth of Marajó. Amidst the scientific record, the region becomes a place where colonial difference occurs (Mignolo, 2023). In this territory, the Argentinian intellectual points out that "[...] conditions arise for dialogical situations in which, from a subaltern point of view, a fractured enunciation is staged, as a reaction to the hegemonic discourse and perspective" (Mignolo, 2003, p. 11). This "fractured enunciation," the indigenous narrative of how the Marajoara and Amazonian rivers were born, "in dialogical situations towards the territorial and hegemonic cosmology" (Mignolo, 2003, p. 11), the Christian thought and the Enlightenment ideas of Rodrigues Ferreira, from the perspective of *decolonial gnosis*, was monitored by protocols of Western imperialist knowledge so that the cosmology of the serpent would not be popularized and the decolonization of knowledge would not materialize itself.

The Marajoara novelist Dalcídio Jurandir (1909-1979), 175 years after Rodrigues Ferreira's journey to the heart of the Amazon, would create a detailed narrative of the departure of the snake that would leave the river dead (Fares, 2001). Local archaeological and oral tradition perceives the region as a territory of fertility, wisdom, and life. A detailed look at the map of Pará reveals that the shape of Marajó resembles the head of a large serpent, in a position of vigilance, protection, and guidance, but also ready to depart towards the "great waters" (Jurandir, 1994).

The boy from Mibaraió wonders once again: What would cause the serpent's departure? Could it be an indigenous prophecy about the end of time? The annual rise in sea level worries the people of Marajó. Will our cities flood? Some ask. Will we live on makeshift platforms? Others inquire. In times of environmental catastrophes in

southern Brazil and, at the same time, in preparation for the 30th Conference on Climate Change (COP 30) to be held in November 2025 in Belém, the capital of the Brazilian Amazon, what can Amerindian cosmology teach us? From an ancestral perspective, Marajó is the Head of the Serpent, the one that sees all, protects, destroys, reveals itself, enchants, and makes itself omnipresent in all aquatic and terrestrial environments.

Denise Schaan (2007), in teaching the boy about the place of Marajó concerning the history and archaeology of the Amazon, recovers an explanatory imagery about the hierarchical formation of Marajoara society in its complexities. The archaeologist points out at the heart of the *art of conversation* that "the style and iconography of Marajoara ceramics inform about social organization and help to understand the relationship between the modes of subsistence and ceremonial life of the populations that lived on Marajó Island between the 5th and 14th centuries AD" (Schaan, 2007, p. 51).

Ceramics, oral tradition, and written documents from chroniclers, naturalists, travelers, and writers are historical sources that allow us to trace the long-term presence of the serpent as a powerful symbol of the ancestral meaning of the region for local populations, the balance between the human and non-human world, and the continuous dialogue with socio-biodiversity (Diegues, 2003).

In the Marajoara funerary urns, Schaan shows the boy from Mibaraió the abundant and recurring presence of snakes, represented in various forms. Most are visible in a “naturalistic or stylized structure; with triangular heads (like that of the jararaca - *Bothrops atrox*) or simply by the representation of their skin drawn with triangles and rhombuses; they also appear as two-headed animals or as opposing spirals” (Schaan, 2007, p. 53). In dialogue with Reichel-Dolmatoff (1997) and Chernela (1971), Schaan (2007) suggests that the snake may have been for the complex societies of Marajó “the progenitor of fish or master of animals, as in Tukano cosmology; or perhaps the great canoe snake that brought them into the world and arranged them hierarchically along the riverbanks”.

4 The boy, Mibaraió and the transcultural outcome of the serpent

In the head of the serpent, 18 municipalities that currently make up the Marajó integration region are transculturally produced. Among them, Breves, the land where

the boy who was educationally brought up by his older sister was born, is today the most populous municipality, considered by government agencies to be one of the major regional development hubs in Pará. Before receiving its Portuguese name, in homage to the beneficiaries of the 18th-century land grants, the Breves family[3], the traditional territory belonged to the Mapuá, Anajá, Aruã, Camboca, Guianá, Mamaianá, and Piixi-Pixi peoples (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2023).

Today, Breves is a municipality with 106,968 inhabitants (IBGE/2022), whose city was formed on the banks of the Pararauaú River, the so-called black or dark river. In a continuous relationship of negotiation, silence, and vibrant expression between local knowledge and global urban projects, the city emerged as an area of attraction for the municipalities of Anajás, Curralinho, São Sebastião, Bagre, Melgaço, and Portel, in addition to being a mandatory port stop for ships traveling from Manaus or Macapá to Belém and vice versa. Despite possessing a network of public and private urban infrastructure, such as shops, schools, universities, banks, and state and federal agencies, Breves has not ceased to be the land where the serpent also makes its home. Popular narratives claim that the serpent's head is under the Church of Sant'Ana. If it leaves this place, it takes the city down.

The richness of Breves' ancestral, material, and immaterial heritage continues to be revealed. Lucas Monteiro de Araújo, former undergraduate and post-graduate student supervised by the boy-professor, in his doctoral research (2021), on travelers' accounts, uncovers in the mid-19th century indigenous women making another type of pottery. According to the researcher, "it is a composite ceramic. They are indigenous modeling techniques, but with graphic elements from the European world: vessels, bowls, jugs, doves, roosters, Catholic rosaries, heart-shaped objects, among others" (Araújo, 2021). This experience reveals the indigenous protagonism in the contact zones.

The ancestral and oral traditions of the Marajoara people, within the cosmology of the serpent, have become interculturally interwoven with colonial, modern,

[3] The tribute was paid to the Portuguese brothers Manoel Maria Fernandes Breves and Ângelo Fernandes Breves, the first to lead the process of colonialization of the place, with the power to establish the Marajoara identity in the name of the Portuguese metropolis. The place became known as Sesmaria “Missão dos Bocas”, granted by Captain-General João de Abreu Castelo Branco on November 19th, 1738, and ratified by the King of Portugal on March 30th, 1740. To effectively take possession, the Breves, certainly relying on a powerful indigenous workforce, erected sugar mills and plantations (Braga, 1919).

European, and North American perspectives, revealing to the adventurous boy the autonomy of his people, ancestral tactics for circumventing regimes of surveillance and punishment, which uphold order and progress in the official view of public administration (Foucault, 2002). Thus, the urban and rural inhabitants of the serpent's head, even while participating in religious festivals, June festivals, dances, civic events, walking on dirt roads, solid ground, bridges, sawdust, asphalt, or being enchanted by the novelties that arrived in the daily life of the urban environment, never ceased to feel the cultural difference and, often, social exclusion (Hoggart, 1973). The boy recalled memories of his mother when she warned him: - My son, we are different from them. The rich look at us with a stink eye.

The cosmology of the serpent was created by the cultures of the voice. It is a heritage of the great world of Amerindian, Afro-Indigenous, Quilombola, and riverine people oral tradition. The serpent belongs to all kingdoms. It is everywhere. It nourishes beliefs and guides paths. It is man and woman. Entity and divinity. Life and death. Construction and destruction. Tavares (2022), in studying texts by Aby Warburg (1866-1929) about the serpent as a metaphor for understanding the field of literature and art, explains that the Desana and Tukano peoples narrate that in the beginning of time, their ancestors arrived in the territory that became their home in canoes shaped like immense snakes. By the same token, in the Huni Kuin (Kaxinawá) cosmogony, the *jiboia* snake is the main shaman, because it taught the first human how to manipulate ayahuasca, a drink that allows wisdom and clarity about the visible and invisible world.

In the folklore of the Amazon and Northeast of Brazil, stories of giant snakes and their powers abound. In Marajó, for example, the boy heard from his father, Pedro Pacheco, the story of the Norato snake in different versions. One of them is about a party that this serpent attended. Arriving there in human form, he got a crush on a beautiful young woman, with whom he danced the entire party. Before midnight, however, he asked to leave for his bedroom and told the young woman not to disturb him. Curious, the girl went to look and saw through the cracks in the wall the enormous snake. Horrified, she screamed, alerting everyone to her vision. Before anyone could do anything, Norato enchanted the territory, taking the party and its people to the bottom of the river. The place became known as Canta Galo and has a huge cove. Those who pass by there at night can still hear the noise of the party.

The boy from Mibaraió met Jerônimo Silva and established a strong partnership with him concerning academic supervision, study groups, publications, and friendship. In one of his articles, the historian and anthropologist explains that the “presence of the snake in the lives of the Amazonian populations” manifests itself as a cosmological expression of enchanted beings and entities of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous beliefs” (Silva, 2020, p. 1). By listening to stories and experiences narrated by blessing women from the Northeast of Pará, the researcher shows how “the accounts evoke visions, ecstasies, possessions, and various omens that denote experiences of these women's beliefs and their contacts with the ‘enchanted snake,’ exposing cultural singularities of this area of the Brazilian Amazon” (Silva, 2020, p. 1).

Figueiredo, a friend of the boy in this story, also inspired by the work of Aby Warburg, defends the critical stance by which the historian needs to "understand and analyze the artistic manifestations of such diverse social groups from the perspective of their own cultural values" (Figueiredo, 2021, p. 23). According to the author,

> The first representations of the Amazon River made by Diego Gutierrez and engraved in Antwerp in the mid-16th century bear similarities to “the ancestral source of Wayana weavings, the labyrinthine images of the cosmos, with an equal presence of the giant snake, which circulates between the European map and the straw of the fan and the *tipiti* of the indigenous people of the northern border of Brazil” (Figueiredo, 2021, p. 23).

The discovery made by the boy, detective of the serpent's cosmology, reveals the tactical force by which populations that migrated from rural spaces, from other states or surrounding territories, still selectively translate a kind of intended city project within Marajoara territories (Williams, 1979). The Afro-Colombian anthropologist, painter, researcher, and activist, Albán Achinte, teaches the diligent boy that this entire repertoire of oral histories are expressions of the lines of force of ancestral re-existences. In Achinte's words, re-existences are

> Devices that communities create and develop to invent life on a daily basis and thus confront the reality established by the hegemonic project that, from the colonial period to the present day, has downplayed, silenced, and rendered invisible the existence of Afro-descendant communities. Re-existence aims to decenter established logics in order to seek in the depths of cultures— in this case, indigenous and Afro-descendant — the keys to organizational, productive, food-related, ritual, and aesthetic forms that allow life to be dignified and reinvented so that it continues to transform. Re-existence points to what the community, cooperative, and union leader Héctor Daniel Useche Berón “Pájaro,” assassinated in 1986 in the municipality of Bugalagrande, in the center of Valle del Cauca, Colombia, once stated: “What are we going to invent today for us to keep living?” (Achinte, 2013, p. 455).

Re-existences are diverse, multifaceted, visible, and sometimes imperceptible. But why? From the perspective of *decolonial gnosis*, a first answer reveals that coloniality, as the darkest and most perverse face of Western modernity (Mignolo, 2018), watched over and punished (Foucault, 1975) the human body and its sensibilities under the discourse of a universal civilizing order. Empires of laws, norms, and governmental apparatuses were erected, supported by official documents and monuments — instruments of punishment to suppress the body, language, senses, and human sensibilities, and their connections with the non-human related to the traditional populations.

Image 2 - Marajoara ceremonial funerary urn[4]

Source: Archives of the Museu Nacional

From archaeological pottery to ethnographic ceramics (Araújo, 2021), Marajoara Amerindian populations employed different instruments of their material culture to inscribe cosmologies and wisdom, as ways of being, thinking, believing, and living sociocultural relations, since the most distant times. In a pre-Columbian Marajoara funerary urn, the Marajoara graphic art presents zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures with heads, eyes, noses, tongues, and ears in the shape of long snakes, supported by hands and feet that resemble tools for plowing the land (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2012).

[4] Featuring "geometric motifs and representations of hybrid beings that blend anthropomorphic and zoomorphic characteristics" (81 centimeters, 400 to 1.400 A.D.).

The boy from Mibaraió interprets the animal as a chameleon or a monkey, due to its long arms and ears. The lower part of the graphic resembles a frog, referring to land and water environments, as well as skills and abilities inherent in the experiences of Marajoara populations supporters of oral traditions. Another possible interpretation of this visual representation is to liken it to a female animal in the practice of giving birth.

The relationship between women and men and animals, culture and nature, land and water, visible in rock paintings or ceramic designs, exposes conceptions of balance and respect between men and women and the environment—teachings left by the first human communities that lived in the Amazon before contact with the European world. These practices are now in tension, given the exclusionary expansion of livestock farming, river pollution, the invasion of territories from indigenous, quilombola (Afro-Brazilian), and riverside peoples, and the suicidal projects of industrialization, modernization, and globalization callously implemented in the region.

Because they are heirs to a way of life based on oral tradition, these guardians of the forests and rivers recreated and revealed, in objects of domestic and, especially, ceremonial use, how their cultures were grounded in a sensitivity and spirituality of the senses, translated into touch, hearing, sight, taste (speaking), and smell. Hence, the great importance attributed to these organs, which allowed them to transmit, socialize, and preserve oral testimonies, habits, and customs among themselves and with other human groups with whom they came into contact.

In his childhood, the boy learned through the lens of Western Christian imagination that the snake represents sin and the condemnation of man, even though its primary role was to guard the tree of knowledge. Upon encountering archaeological artifacts from centuries prior to the presence of foremen of Iberian overseas empires in the region and oral histories from the indigenous universe, he decolonized his initial view and discovered that this animal is synonymous with fertility and life. It is no coincidence that inscriptions on ceramic objects frequently depict maternal wombs sheltering snakes.

Image 3 - Ornamental motifs from Marajoara pottery embroidered onto fabric[5]

Source: Galo (2005)

Intertwined in the cosmology of the serpent, Amerindian and Afro-Indigenous peoples reaffirmed their cultures, identities, knowledge, and beliefs in the bodies of amphibious animals, highlighting feet and, especially, hands as guardians of memory and support for the body. In doing so, the boy-teacher explains, they made visible the oral tradition, one of the revealing channels of the immortality of the soul and the continuation of history, as well as an instrument against oblivion, loss, and destruction of the ancestral knowledge as a *unique* way of life, battled by the uncertain, indeterminate, and the new times of the conquest of the Amazon in its Marajó landscapes and forests.

Within this understanding, inscriptions and drawings on pieces and shards of Marajoara pottery have therefore become a living support for Amerindian material culture. With this set of fragments from the "anti-colonial" past, present in the colony and in contemporary resonances, the historian, the boy explains, has in his hands strong evidence to interpret an entire way of life and strive, particularly to these original populations who, despite the extinction of most of their members by the voracious greed of colonial powers, bequeathed to posterity other memories and affective repertoires.

The multiversal world of the serpent's cosmology translated itself for the boy as a "key repository of cultural values and meanings" (Hall, 2016, p. 17), in a continuous process of production, circulation, and sharing of thoughts and feelings, weaving movements and meanings of the struggles for the defense of other ways of life and

[5] The drawings recover iconographic representations found on funerary urns and highlight the universe of circularity and infinity of the human and non-human existence in the Amerindian Marajoara cosmology. Likewise, it is evident the strong presence of the serpent, the canoe-snake of ancestral imagination as the mother of life.

sociability in the territories of the Marajoara Amazon. In this creeping and traveling cosmology, the centrality of the boy-narrator's body guides stories, trajectories, awakens sensitive, affective memories, and battles for re-existence. This body can assume different names, ages, locations, ethnicities, sexualities, and religions. It can be Maira, Krenak, Raoni, Maricota, Tomani, Kazadi, Anaya, Pedro, Piedade, Jacó, Agenor, Jurema, Iracema, Miguel. It is necessary to remember that men and women of the civilization based on the word had in their bodies, in religious and artistic practice, the last stronghold for the defense of life.

These are experiences whose rationality is based on other epistemologies that, because they became incomprehensible to Cartesian and Enlightenment logics, since they do not separate the human from nature and cosmic dimensions, were disqualified as primitive and irrational (Antonacci, 2009). Such discourse justified forms of domestication of their bodies, minds, arts, and religions, resulting in the *epistemic obliteration* of these ancestral Amazonian populations along the colonial context. However, the boy dressed in the Sherlock Holmes's cape discovered that material supports, such as objects of domestic and ceremonial use, as well as a set comprising speech, practices, dances, and songs, tore through the times of colonization, whether by the mouths of those who resisted or as a result of the dominant voice itself, contaminated by contact with those memories.

5 The boy, the arrival, and the revealed identity

> There are hundreds of narratives from living populations that reveal stories, sing, travel, chat and teach us more than what we learn from this humanity. We are not the only interesting people in the world; we are part of a whole. This may move away a bit of vanity of the humanity we long to be, besides diminishing our everlasting lack of reverence to other comrades with whom we are taking this cosmic trip (Krenak, 2019, p. 30-31).

This article sought to follow the saga of the boy from Mibaraió through different journeys, formative processes, readings, reflections, discoveries, and narratives to tell his personal and academic story, and especially his encounter with the cosmology of the serpent. The boy's rediscovery of his childhood and of the Marajoara wisdom, dormant due to the coloniality of the Eurocentric and urban-centric school curriculum during the former primary school years, began in his secondary education in 1991, when he developed interest in the critical work of Paulo Freire. Amidst teachings, studies, colonial and decolonial stances, the boy's identity experienced cultural clashes

and took a stand as an existential project related to the vital terrain of ancestral knowledge and the heritage of his ancestors and the traditional populations of the region. He therefore chose to join other native and adopted children of the great archipelago who, in the contradictory terrain of the school and academic space, made their writings a weapon in the fight against forgetfulness and disregard for Marajoara traditions.

In this path, the boy from Mibaraió has emerged in the last two decades through research, teaching, and university extension activities, whether through the publication of books, book chapters, and articles, or through undergraduate and post-graduate courses in Belém and different municipalities of Pará, or even in interviews displayed in print and on TV channels, and prolonged education courses developed for teachers in Marajó. These academic and pedagogical actions have advocated for the awakening of critical awareness of the ways in which Amazonian populations have been subjugated by Eurocentric epistemologies which have crossed the Atlantic since the 16th century. The choice to catalog, record, analyze, and write academic or supplementary educational works has transcended the school and academic field and surprisingly reached the carnival parades in Pará. In 2024, the Mocidade Unida do Benguí samba school brought to the streets the theme: “The Boy from Marajó in the Serpent's Head,” telling the story of a poor boy who reached his goals through education. It also highlighted the strong presence and protagonism of indigenous, African, Northeastern Brazilian, and Jewish populations in the constitution of the Marajó identity and culture. Therefore, the primary inspiration for writing this article came from the artistic expressions as drawing, singing, dancing, and celebration.

In the symbolism of the serpent as path, life, and connection between humanity and spiritualities that inhabit visible and perceptible ecosystems, the narrator, returning to his childhood in a kind of autoethnography, revisits signs of the indigenous ancestry that promoted his Marajoara identity and that of his people. In this cognitive and affective cartography, he wove his textual architecture and defined two central guiding principles that became intertwined in the theoretical-methodological framework of the academic text: *decolonial gnosis* and the *art of conversation*, both inspired by Walter Mignolo (2003).

Thus, the boy, in his alter ego as a cultural translator of the stories, cosmogonies, cosmologies, and ancestral knowledge of the Marajoara populations of

the fields and forests — learned through conversations with chroniclers, naturalists, travelers, writers, family members, local storytellers, experiences and lessons from native elders in the region, as well as precious conversations held during the reading of academic works written by foreign intellectuals, especially from the Latin American *Decolonial gnosis* — tried to make visible two major arguments:

a) Despite their attempts to silence the voices and wisdom of the ancestral histories and memories of the Mibaraió territories, dominant Western writings left openings for researchers to explore subaltern narratives against the current (Benjamin, 1996). A central example is the exercise of reading the report of the travel to the so-called Ilha Grande de Joanes, written by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira in the 18th century, and the transcription of the Amerindian narrative of the cosmogony of the rivers. Similarly, such writings made it possible to uncover powerful repertoires of traditional knowledge that resisted the oppression and imposition of various forms of coloniality as the ones related to the universal diffusion of modern ways of being and living in cities, towns, villages, and dwellings along rivers and roads.
b) Currently, it is no longer acceptable to construct academic works that disregard the point of view, agency, and worldviews of the traditional and peripheral populations of Marajó. In the last decade, the boy from Mibarayó has witnessed and continues to witness the transposition of the histories from the margins and their protagonists to the scholarly world. Linda Smith (2018) reinforced the chorus of the indigenous, quilombola, riverside, terreiro communities, LGBTQIAPN+ people, and artistic groups from the peripheries who have been reaching undergraduate and post-graduate degrees to tell their stories and put on paper the history of their people, their knowledge, struggles, and diverse cultural expressions.

The *art of conversation* practiced by the boy-researcher, drawing on academic works, written sources, and especially the living archives of the Marajoara peoples' oral tradition, did not fail to mention that the tradition of struggle for the access to territory and natural resources, and to the exertion of polytheistic beliefs, task-based works, festivals, and celebrations in the region brings with it the centrality and legacy of the Afro-Indigenous contact zones (Sarraf-Pacheco, 2016). The cosmology of the serpent united the Marajoara worlds with the sons of the diaspora from the African continent

and has sustained this exchange since 1644, when Bantu and Sudanese black people began to interact, resist, negotiate, and socialize, on Mibaraió soil, with indigenous people, poor whites, ecclesiastical powers, and colonial political agents, teaching extractive, fishing, and agricultural indigenous groups the arts of handling cattle, horses, and, centuries later, buffalo.

The boy's writings, therefore, sought to map the accumulated knowledge repertoires of half a century of life in the Marajoara Amazon region, valuing the protagonist role and perspective of the "children of the serpent." The strength of the knowledge produced and democratized by the boy of this story and author of this article lies in the ancestry, cosmologies, and intercultural practices of Amerindian and Afro-Indigenous populations with oral traditions that sustained rivers, forests, villages, and cities, and contributed to the recognition of the Amazonian socio-biodiversity by those owning the planetary power, who remain illiterate in dealing with the cycles of life, ecosystems, and vital energies that guarantee the reproduction of humankind in the territories of Mother Earth.

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