

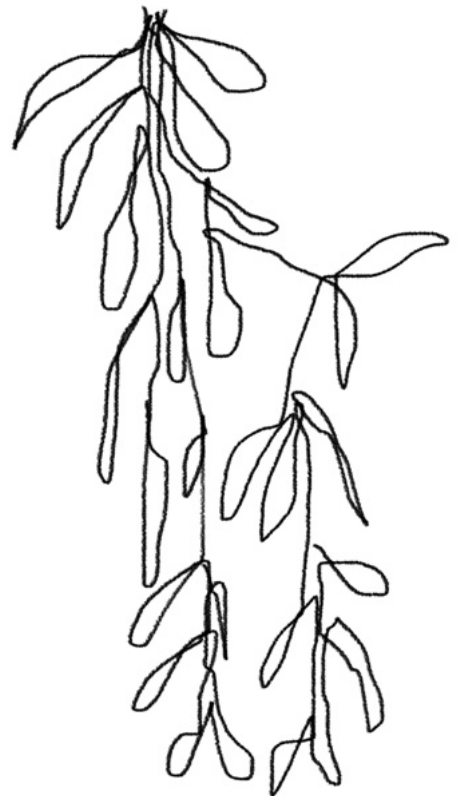
GUAROT-DETI
GUIDAI

LATAU IS MY
UNIVERSE

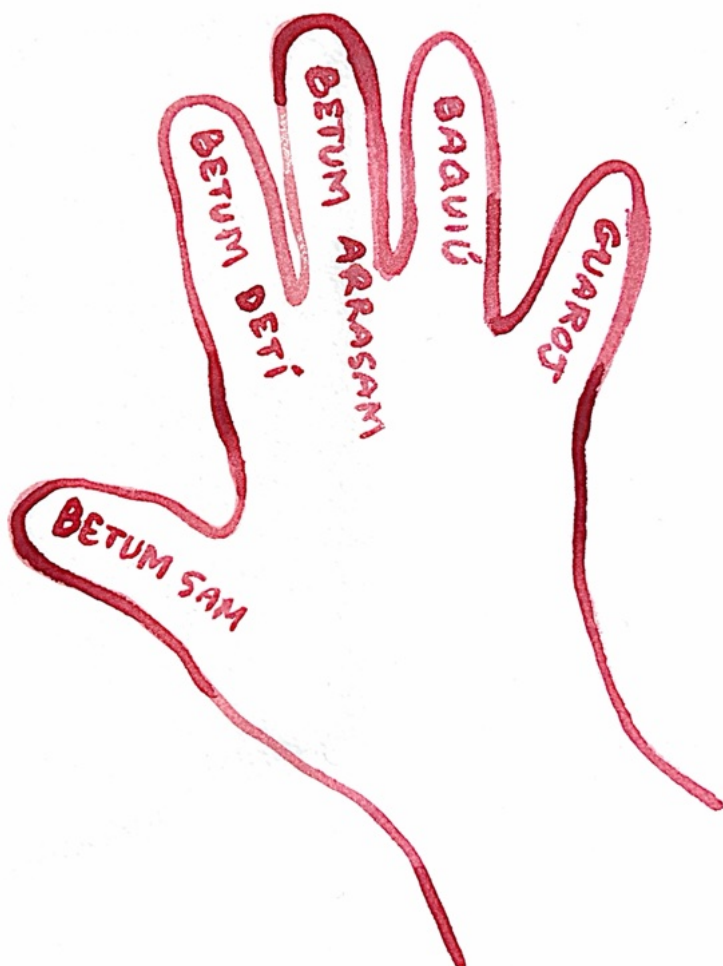
PAULA DO PRADO

Guaroj-Detí Guidaí (13 Moons)

Lajau is my Universe



The roots of beada-o-lajau, my Charrúa grandmother tree, are fed and held by the lands of the Gadigal people of the Sydney basin. I look to beada-o-lajau to re-member my Charrúa roots and for guidance on how to be in right relationship with these lands and people whose sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. I pay my respects to the elders, past, present and emerging. I give thanks to the spirits of the lands who facilitate my re-membling. I extend this respect to all First Nations people including the Charrúa Nation, mar mar onkaiujmar. May we find wisdom in acknowledging both our differences and our in-common stories continue to surface to strengthen our joint resistance.



Lajau is my Universe

This digital project originally began in October 2018 as a diary to document my visits to Beada-o-Lajau. Lajau, most commonly known as the Ombú tree (*Phytolacca Dioca*) is an emblematic tree appreciated for the shade cover its dense canopy offers in its sparse native grasslands across Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. A rare find on the Australian continent, there are only two Ombú trees documented in NSW, including one located in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. As part of my PhD thesis, "Remembering my Charrúa roots on uncaded land: weaving new narratives" I contextualise my relationship with Lajau in terms of Professor Kerry Arabena's concept of Universe-referent citizenship outlined in her book *"Becoming Indigenous to the Universe"*. Lajau is my Universe - my real and symbolic connection to my Charrúa ancestry as well as a place on Gadigal Ngurra where I as a settler, reflect on my relationship to sovereign Aboriginal Land.

Guaroj-Detí Guidai translates to 13 Moons, a reference to the 13 Clan Mothers as documented in the book *"The 13 Original Clan Mothers: Your Sacred Path to Discovering the Gifts, Talents and Abilities of the Feminine Through the Ancient Teachings of the Sisterhood"* by Jamie Sams published in 1994. Drawing on her Seneca Teachings, Sams outlines the Twelve Cycles of Truth, each corresponding to a specific month of the year with the addition of a 13th cycle or moon. This document outlines my personal 13 Moons journey between July 2023 and August 2024. The process was instigated as a result of a prescription received in a Kontomblé divination session with Aislinn Kerchart of Sings with Trees in April 2023. The prescription called for moon time offerings to be made to Lajau over a 13 month period, to deepen my relationship with Lajau as elder, ancestor and guide. In the spirit of the tree of life, Lajau is an anchor facilitating movement between the physical and spiritual planes. Using Sam's thirteen cycles structure as a starting point I have retained the original theme of each cycle but have given each a title in Charrúa, providing both English and Spanish translations.

Similarly to the cosmogram utilised by various different cultures to articulate understandings of the nature of the cosmos, I have drawn on the concept of the 13 moons as a way to organise, document and share my journey. My intention in sharing this process is to contribute to efforts within the Charrúa community to reclaim, reconstruct and re-establish Charrúa spiritual practice. As my process has been undertaken almost entirely outside of Uruguay, away from my ancestral lands, it is also my hope it might inspire others with Charrúa ancestry or in the process of re-connecting with their heritage to explore their own spirituality, connections with the moon and the elements from wherever they might be physically located.

The text in this document is written in English, Spanish, Charrúa (including Chaná and Güenoa) and includes words from The Sydney Language. The text is interspersed with my own drawings and selected photographs taken both in Uruguay on the lands of the Charrúa Nation, and on the lands of the Gadigal People of the Sydney basin, sovereignty never ceded.

Lajau es mi universo

Este proyecto digital comenzó originalmente en octubre de 2018 como un diario para documentar mis visitas a Beada-o-Lajau. Lajau, más conocido como el árbol Ombú (*Phytolacca Dioca*), es un árbol emblemático apreciado por la sombra que su denso dosel ofrece en sus escasos pastizales nativos en Uruguay, Argentina y Brasil. Un hallazgo poco común en el continente australiano, solo hay dos árboles Ombú documentados en Nueva Gales del Sur, incluido uno ubicado en el Real Jardín Botánico de Sídney. Como parte de mi tesis doctoral, "Recordando mis raíces charrúas en tierras no cedidas: tejiendo nuevas narrativas", contextualizo mi relación con Lajau en términos del concepto de ciudadanía referente al Universo de la profesora Kerry Arabena delineado en su libro "Becoming Indigenous to the Universe". Lajau es mi Universo: mi conexión real y simbólica con mi ascendencia charrúa, así como con las tierras Gadigal donde, como colono, puedo reflexionar mi relación con la tierra aborígen soberana.

Guaroj-Detí Guidai se traduce como 13 Lunas, una referencia a las 13 Madres del Clan como se documenta en el libro "Las 13 Madres del Clan Originales: Tu Camino Sagrado para Descubrir los Dones, Talentos y Habilidades de lo Femenino a través de las Antiguas Enseñanzas de la Hermandad" de Jamie Sams publicado en 1994. Basándose en sus Enseñanzas de Séneca, Sams describe los Doce Ciclos de la Verdad, cada uno correspondiente a un mes específico del año con la adición de un 13° ciclo o luna. Este documento describe mi viaje personal de 13 Lunas entre julio de 2023 y agosto de 2024. El proceso fue instigado como resultado de una prescripción recibida en una sesión de adivinación Kontomblé con Aislinn Kerchart de Sings with Trees en abril de 2023. La prescripción exigía que se hicieran ofrendas en tiempo de luna a Lajau durante un período de 13 meses, para profundizar mi relación con Lajau como anciana, antepasada y guía. En el espíritu del árbol de la vida, Lajau es el ancla que facilita el movimiento entre los planos físico y espiritual. Utilizando la estructura de trece ciclos de Sam como punto de partida, he conservado el tema original de cada ciclo, pero le he dado a cada uno un título en charrúa, proporcionando traducciones tanto en inglés como en español.

De manera similar al cosmograma utilizado por diferentes culturas para articular entendimientos de la naturaleza del cosmos, he recurrido al concepto de las 13 lunas como una forma de organizar, documentar y compartir mi viaje. Mi intención al compartir este proceso es contribuir a los esfuerzos dentro de la comunidad Charrúa para recuperar, reconstruir y restablecer la práctica espiritual Charrúa. Como mi proceso se ha llevado a cabo casi en su totalidad fuera de Uruguay, lejos de mis tierras ancestrales, también tengo la esperanza de que pueda inspirar a otros con ascendencia Charrúa o en el proceso de reconectarse con su herencia para explorar su propia espiritualidad, conexiones con la luna y los elementos desde donde sea que puedan estar ubicados físicamente. El texto de este documento está escrito en inglés, español, Charrúa (incluyendo Chaná y Güenoa) e incluye palabras de The Sydney Language. El texto está intercalado con mis propios dibujos y fotografías seleccionadas tomadas tanto en Uruguay en las tierras de la Nación Charrúa como en las tierras del Pueblo Gadigal de la cuenca de Sydney, soberanía nunca cedida.



Tijui-o-Lajau, Ombú tree located in the succulent garden, Royal Botanic

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1.Yú - July

Bilú mar bilú onkaiujmar - Ama a todas las cosas - Loves all things

July/Julio 2023 - Winter/Invierno - Burrugin

Bilú mar bilú abuela Ombú Lajau

From the back seat Tomas shouts Ombuuuuuuu as we drive past. He likes the paperbarks best but Ombú is easy to climb.

*Bring the child, bring the child
I am the little children's tree*

I read all I can about anything Charrúa. I look at all sources, even the dodgy ones. I think that if the information were untrue, my body would somehow know. The ancestors in my bones would send some kind of sign or message. Mostly there are no such warnings. Mostly there are humblings and redirections.

Itijou Yaguarete says that I must stand near Lajau, close my eyes, focus only on her and listen. I ask Lajau if she has a message I can share with the people in the Charrúa WhatsApp chat. This is the phrase I share:

De mis pies nacen raíces

Oral history says that the Charrúa present newborn babies to the moon. I was not presented to the moon in this way and nor did I know about the ritual when my son was born. From the moment I began to practice relationship with Lajau, there was an overwhelming sense that my son needed to be included in this process of re-connection. Every year just before or after his birthday I take my son to Lajau. For a few years he was small enough to climb up onto her trunk and perch on some of her stronger branches. He has grown taller and stronger, Lajau no longer able to bear his weight on her branches that are mostly hollow and dry. The birthday and other scattered visits continue except he now places his hand on her gnarled trunk as greeting.

Oipik oyendau (Niño que recuerda/Child who holds memory)

A practice of renewing invisible bonds. Venerating. Caring. Loving.



Yú - bilú mar bilú onkaiujmar oipik oyendau (July /Julio 2023)

2.Sam - August

Beada-o-Lajau - Curadora - She who heals

August/Agosto 2023 - Winter/Invierno - Wiritjiribin

Spiritual wash/Lavado espiritual

Lavender essential oil

Valerian root

Lajau leaves

Mugwort

Tulsi

Cascarilla

Grind dried plant ingredients to fine powder. Place ingredients in a jar/jug with a mix of coconut, cow and goats milk, use in bath or shower (add a dash of alcohol to the mix to keep in fridge if using over a few days, 3 days recommend). Or make into soap bars using a melt and pour soap base (goats milk, palm oil free, SLS free)

Incense/Sahumeiro

Eucalyptus leaves*

Lajau leaves

Banksia leaves*

Grind dried plant ingredients to fine powder. Burn on bamboo charcoal. Can be mixed with Frankincense and/or Myrrh.

Steam/Limpieza a vapor

Eucalyptus leaves and/or gum nuts*

Water

Boil on stove in a enamel jug, allow steam to spread through space. Use oven glove or similar and walk around the house fanning the steam through the space.

Libation/Libación

Rum or whisky

Milk

Dried sahumeiro leaf powder mix

Honey

Ash from sahumeiro

Tabacco

Eucalyptus liquor (the water or liquor left over from steaming)

*collected from the cut flowers we buy at the Saturday markets



Author and her son's hands pressed on Ombú/Lajau, October 2023



Sam - beada-o-lajau (August/Agosto 2023)

3.Detí - September

Ukai Dioi - Mujer Sol - Setting sun woman

September/Setiembre 2023 - Spring/Primavera - Ngoonugi

Mi sombra tiene nombre/My shadow has a name

I recall as a young child often asking my parents, if you hadn't chosen Paula what name would you have given me? They said, your name would have been Iracema. It pleased me to hear that. I liked the name Iracema. I liked how the sounds formed in my mouth. But I thought how ugly the English language made our names. Australian English would have mangled Iracema. I would have been forced to go by a shortened version, Ira maybe or just Ema. I thought how already my full name did not fit here in this British colonial administration. Forced to drop the maternal surname from my name, down to a single surname because their bureaucratic forms don't have enough space. Right from the get go I must become less, smaller, easier for the gringos to deal with. No, I decide it's definitely better they went with Paula, although it's become Paw-lah and sometimes it's even Paay-oh-lah. But I remain connected to Iracema. I like 'her'. She's not imaginary or the result of a split in self or dissociation, instead she is an expanded self. A slippery shapeshifter. A mirror image of sorts refracting off nearby surfaces. A silhouette. My shadow has a name and it is Iracema.

I have been, at different times more aware of her than at others. I have known her since childhood, even before I knew her name or could say it. She was there with me on the rooftop of the apartment where we lived in Pocitos a suburb of Montevideo. An urban concrete city landscape, the footpaths paved in pretty terracotta or grey coloured tiles but the tiles were always cracked or broken, badly maintained. There were no suburban backyards like you have here. No hills hoist. There were very few trees and shrubs. Trees tended to line main streets, long avenidas with exotic palms or the singular ornamental tree in a plaza in the middle of a busy road. After 500 years plus of settler colonial presence, whatever grew in the lands of what is now Montevideo city was cut down, blasted out of the ground and repeatedly paved and built over. What we had for outdoor spaces were rooftops or playing on the vereda/the street. The rooftops were where we would hang up the washing to dry on lines strung between two poles. I remember many hours spent on the roof top with Mamá and her sister, my Tia who we lived with. Looking back, I wonder if we stayed up on the rooftop to keep an eye on the washing whilst it dried to make sure no one stole it. Maybe I just remember spending long stretches of time there because it was nice to be up there when it was sunny. In this memory I must have been three or four years old. Iracema and I convened with the moss that grew in crevices and joins on the flat concrete roof. I can remember leaning over the mossy areas thinking they looked like entire miniature forests and I was a giant.

My shadow, Iracema must have given the moss a brief respite from the glaring sun. The moss consisted of not just one type of green but so many shades of moss, from almost

black to a forest green, brighter greens and almost neon like green. I remember being fascinated by it. I would rub my finger along it, poke at it and watch green juicy water squish out of from some of the moss.

This is one of the earliest memories I have of interacting with plants. My Mamá says as a toddler I used to try and sometimes did successfully eat soil from the indoor pot plants in the apartment we shared with Tia, but I don't have a memory of that. I do remember Mamá and Tia looking after the indoor plants, the watering, the dusting of the leaves, checking for bugs, the repotting, the repositioning in the apartment, and the pruning. That always seemed like a lot of work to me. I have always much preferred to interact with plants and trees that are outside. I don't mind going out in wet weather or a blustery cold day but my preference is for a sunny day. On a sunny day, Iracema casts herself on the ground, follows beside me and behind me sometimes stretching and skewing into physically impossible lengths and shapes. It is as if she mirrors me giant, reminding me of that same feeling I had as a child interacting with moss.

As I have been cultivating relationship with Beada-o-Lajau, documenting my visits with my phone camera, my shadow, Iracema, has emerged as a central figure in our interactions.



deti - ukai dioi (September/Setiembre 2023)



October - Ukai Quillapi - Tejedora - Weaves the Web

I spend time with the Ombúes at Prado Park in Montevideo
They are bigger, seemingly much older than Beada-o-Lajau.
They remember. I remember. We remember.

I visit a couple of times during the 2 weeks I am there, each time with a Charrúa friend.
The first visit I bring a packet of air dry clay and my friend and talk and take impressions of Ombu/Lajau's trunk with the clay. I tell my friend this is one way I can document the visit and take a little bit of Ombu back with me to Australia. We each take pieces home with us. I am afraid the air dry clay may get damaged in my luggage on the trip back. I make drawings of the impressions in my journal. They are subtle, not very discernible...made strange by the translation into the clay. I see universes, galaxies, land forms, the macro and the micro in the impressions.

The second visit is the day before I need to depart back to Sydney. I spend the day with an Inchalá I am meeting in person for the first time. Thanks to our knowing each other for over a year interacting in various Charrúa groups online we immediately begin chatting as if we've met before. We drink maté, we spend time at the botanic gardens and then move to the Prado nearby. We buy churros from a street vendor cart set up in the park. We eat and chat for a while in front of the Charrúa monument. Before I leave I want to say goodbye to the Ombu. And from one I receive the gift of an owl feather. And the other I collect a piece of clay my other friend and I had somehow missed collecting on the previous visit.

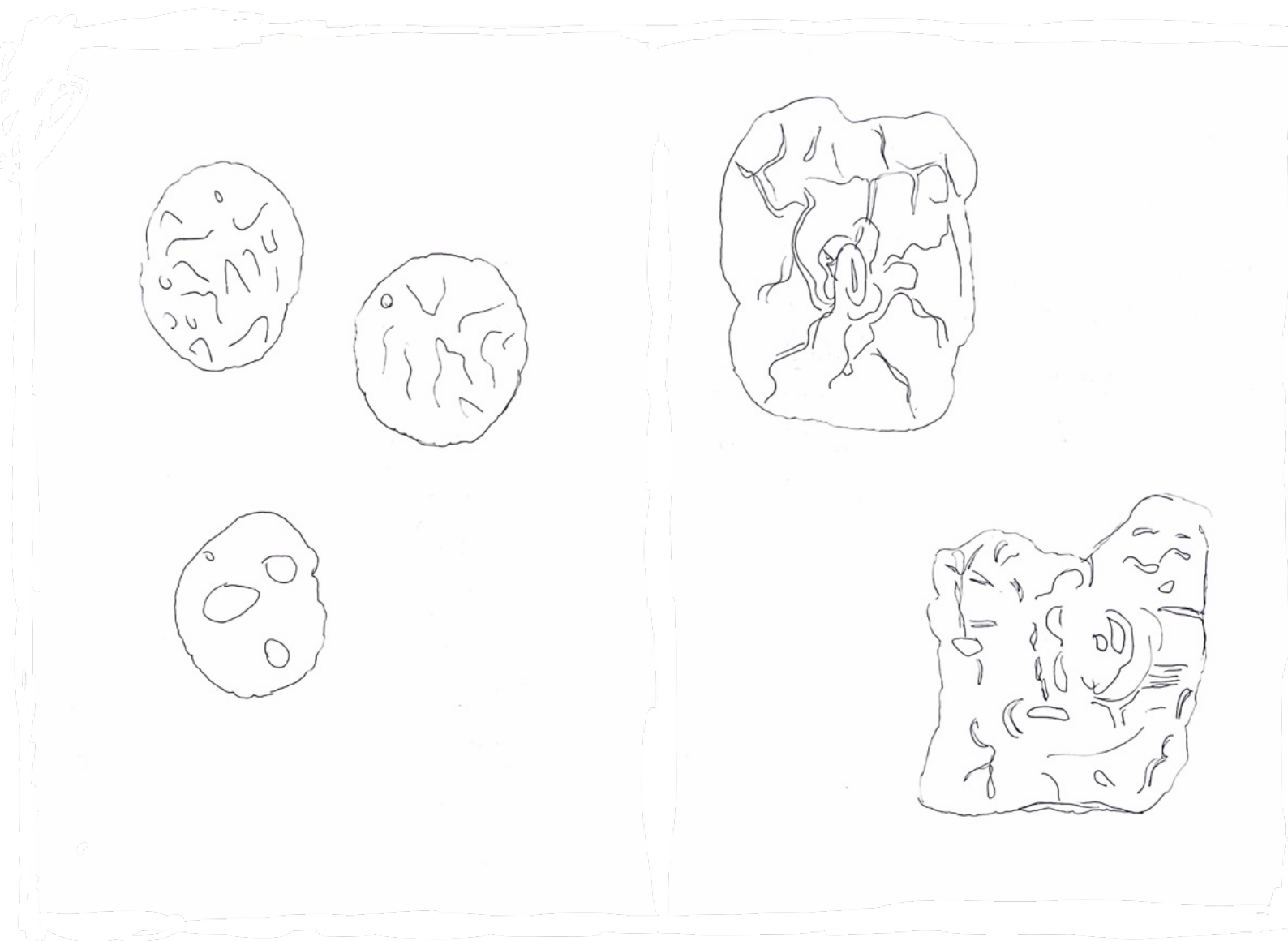


ukai quillapi - Montevideo, Uruguay. Top image by Guidai Vargas (October/Octubre 2023)



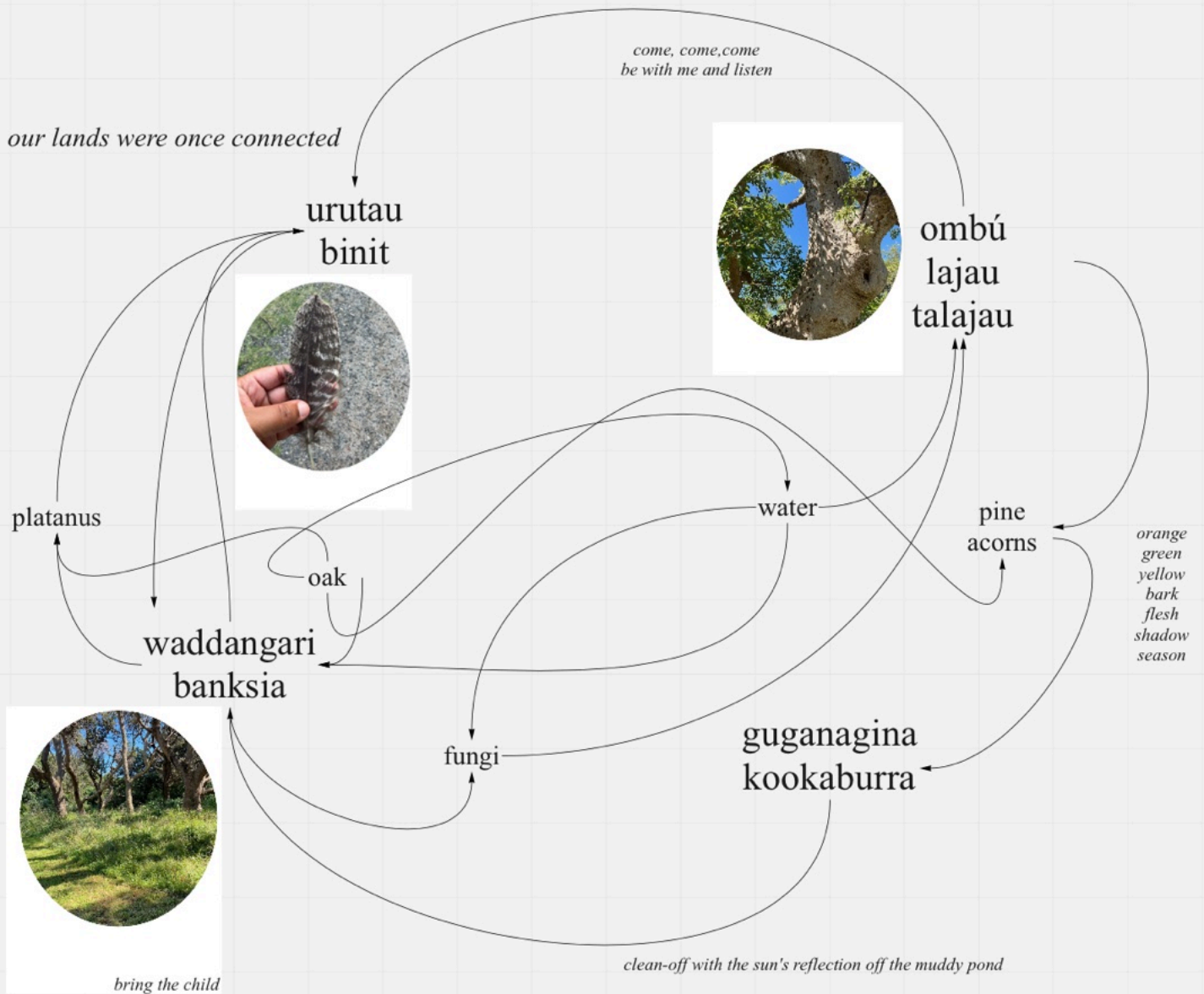
LAJAU





*Basquadé ukai, bilú bajina - Mujer bien parada -
Walks Tall Woman**

November/Noviembre 2023 - Spring/Primavera/Parra'dowee



Binit, in the Sydney Language - Tawny Frogmouth - *Podargus strigoides*

Urutau, from the Guaraní Guyra Tau or Ghost Bird, referred to as the Potoo (Nyctibiidae), related to the nightjars and frogmouths

*also/tambien: Lavantate mujer, tu caminar es hermoso (walks tall woman)





5. *Betum-yú - December*

Jalaná Ukai, Jalaná - Mujer que alaba - Gives Praise

December/Diciembre 2023 - Summer/Verano/Parra'dowee

I make a grief bundle
To acknowledge our ancient pact with the horses
The violence we made them complicit in
The ongoing enslavement of the horse
And the blood farms

The horses are gathering, anticipating this process
To begin an ancestral reconciliation
Dances with horses is there
Wild boar and his twin

Blue linen square
Strands of horse hair
Sharks teeth
Blue feather from the dry river
White cotton thread stitched dikenga

For four consecutive days, beginning on the day before the new moon
Offerings of water
I sit by the roots of Beada-o-Lajau
As the only child, as the only daughter
Jalaná! Jalaná!
I come forward to take responsibility





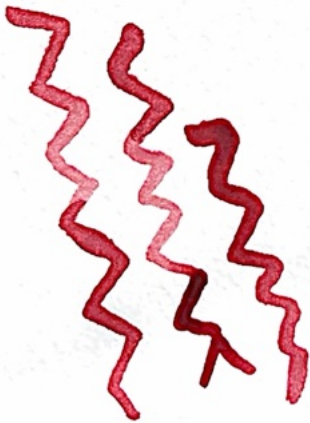




GUIDAI



DIOI



TINÚ



AFIA

6. *Betum-sam - January*

Ukai itanu - Habla con toda la creación - Talks with relations

January/Enero 2024 - Summer/Verano/Burran

Rabbits teeth
Lock of hair
River stones
Yerba dyed cotton

Donde esta tu ombligo?

Offerings of gratitude
Bury them deep in the soil
To reach the roots
And into the underground rivers

—

Ukai = woman

Itanu = the heartbeat of stone

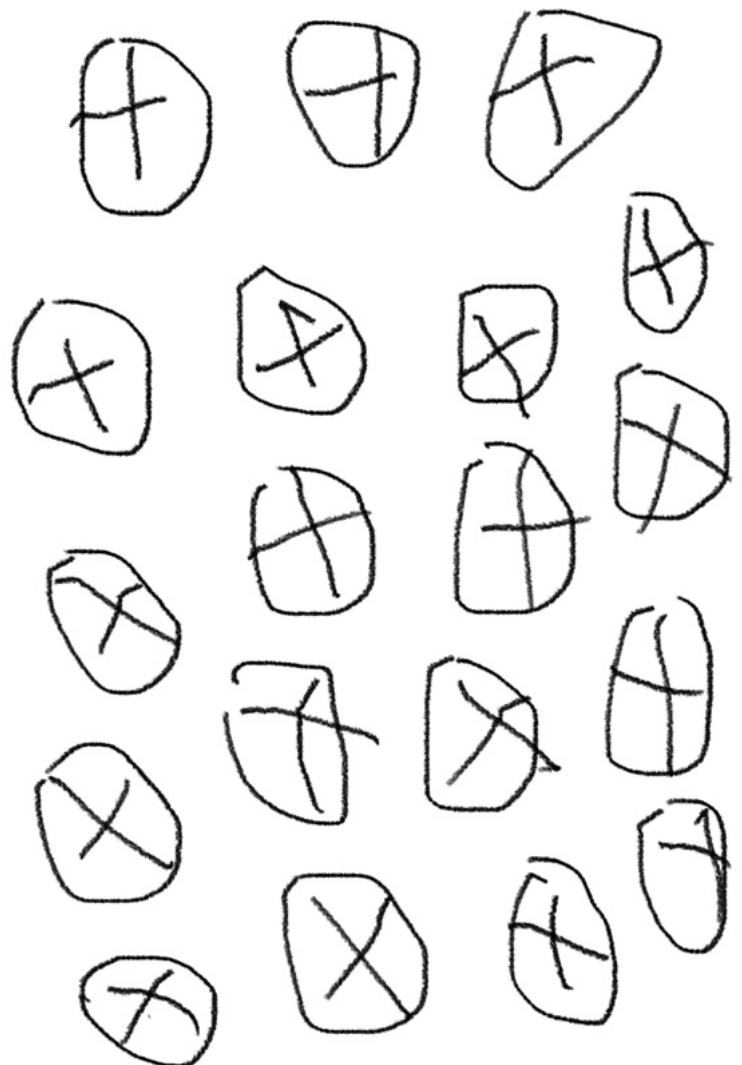
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Guidai = moon

Dioi = sun

Tinú = knife

Afia = arrow





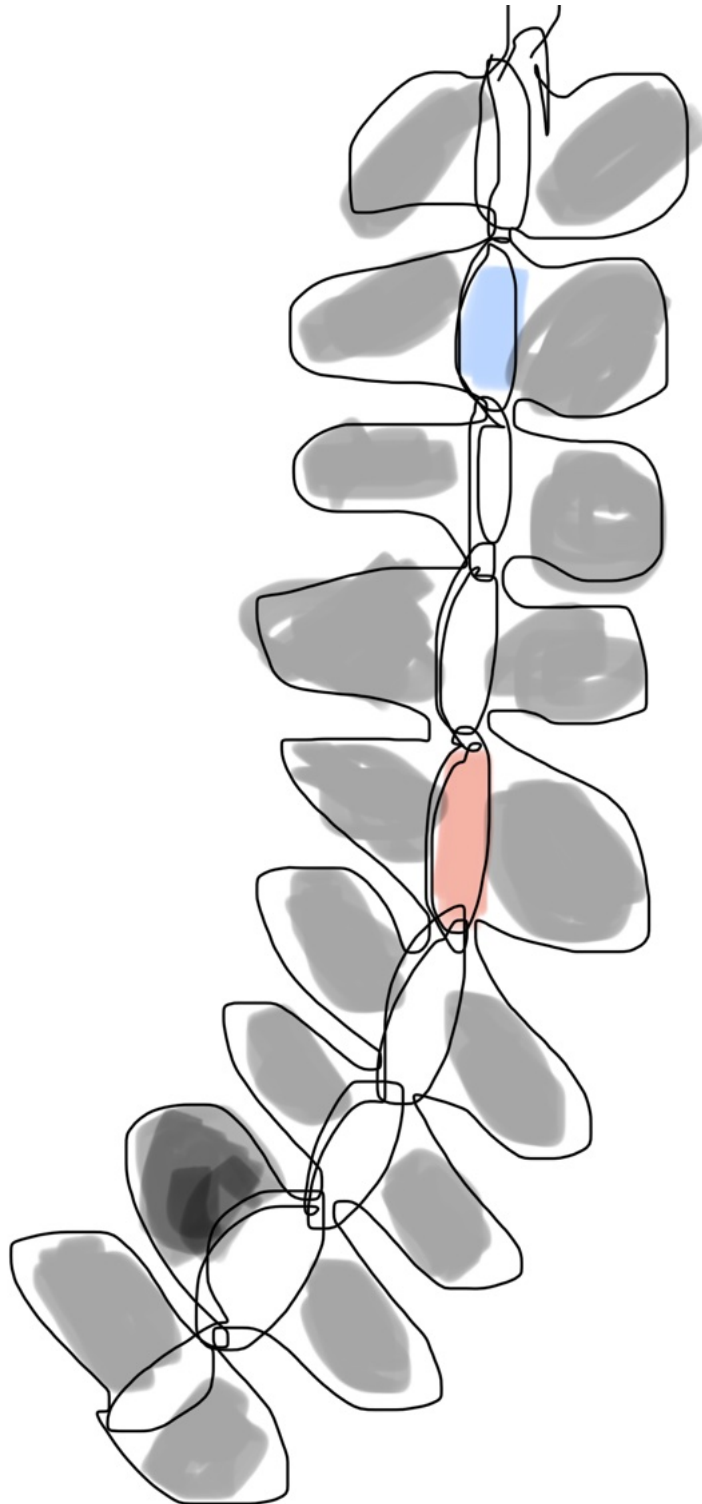
7. *Betum-detí* -February

Ukai oyendau sepé - *Guardiana de la sabiduría* - *Wisdom Keeper*

February/Febrero 2024 - Summer/Verano/Burran

*What's in your
bag?*

pebbles
twigs
leaves
crochet hooks
tapestry needle
small scissors
string
balls of yarn
spools of thread
old jam jar
grains of sand
crumbs







8. Arrasam - March

Ukai tida etriek - Mujer que busca la verdad - Weighs the Truth

March/Marzo 2024 - Autumn/Otoño/Burran

Sumergirse al pozo
Deslizarme desde el filo
Sin cortarme
Suavemente acariciar oscuridad
Tanteando una búsqueda
Ya conocida
Que repito
Por el simple placer
De querer conocerme bien
Un ciclo entre ciclos
Un hacerse agua
Disolver
Descomponer
Para resurgir
Hecha mierda
Y otra vez más, ya perdí la cuenta
Retejer mi ser

—

Diving headfirst into the well
Sliding in on sharp edge
Without a cut
Gently caressing a darkness
Feeling my way round
a familiar search
That I like to re-trace
For the simple pleasure
Of wanting to know myself better
A cycle within cycles
To become like water
Dissolve
Break down
to resurface
A wreck
To once again, I've lost count
Reweave my being

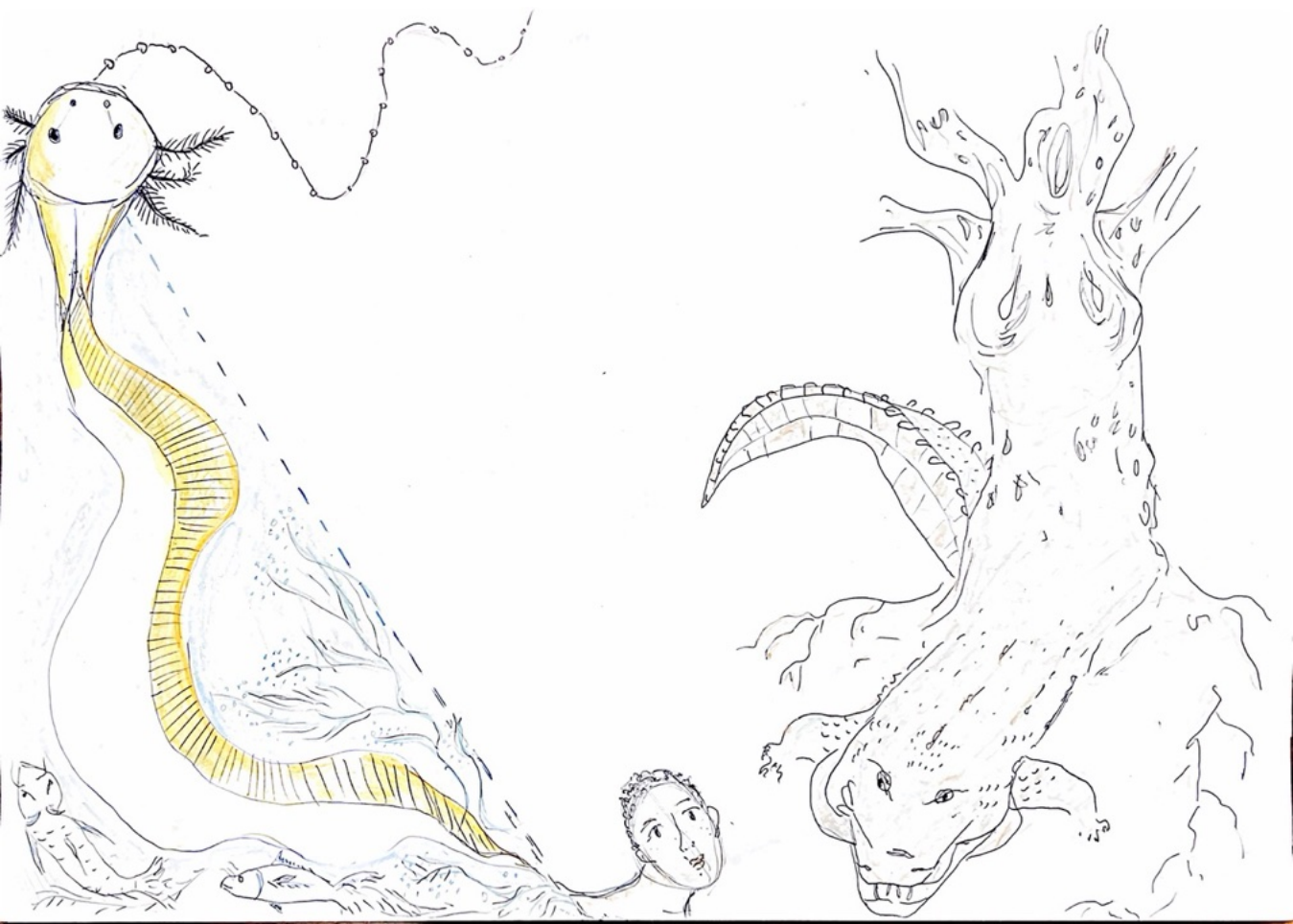


9. Baquíu - April

Ukai ilabun - Mujer que sueña - Looks Far Woman

April/Abril 2024 - Autumn/Otoño - Marrai'gang

I dream awake I am nose to snout with a very large crocodile. I feel nothing but fierce love and protection from this grandfather crocodile. I dream awake as if I am looking at myself from outside my own body. Grandfather crocodile and I, are at the base of grandmother Ombú/Lajau. Crocodile and tree are physically merged, the front half of the crocodile body comes out her trunk. It is impossible to tell where crocodile scales end and the gnarled and textured bark of Lajau begins. His tail comes out on the other side. I am buried in the ground at Lajau's base, only my head is above ground. My face remains in constant contact with grandfather crocodile. Along with Lajau, he is my anchor on the ground. From the neck down I am underground, but it does not feel restrictive as if I were buried in compacted soil...or perhaps I have been in the soil so long the feeling of being buried has given way to something else. The boundary between my body and the soil has become blurred. I can see my body is no longer limbs and a torso but multiple limbs like tree roots, like mycelial webs, like strands of a jelly fish floating in water. At the tips of some of my 'body' strands/roots are Bagre – the fish of my ancestral river. Underground, amongst the roots, I have a muscular golden tail of a salamander which at the end has the head of an axolotl. The axolotl burps and tiny pearls/beads/eggs pop out, white and shiny, like a long string of bubbles. Burp! Burp! Burp! A string that is infinite, unbroken.







BERÁ



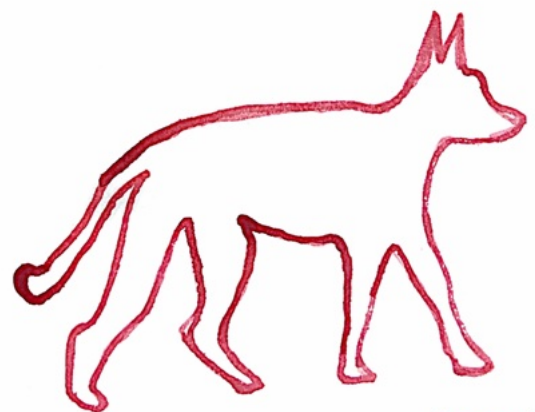
JUAL



MAUTIBLA



CHIBI



LOJAN

10. Guaroj - May

Ukai mar ít sepé - Listening Woman - Mujer que escucha

May/Mayo 2024 - Autumn/Otoño - Marrai'gang

What is listening?

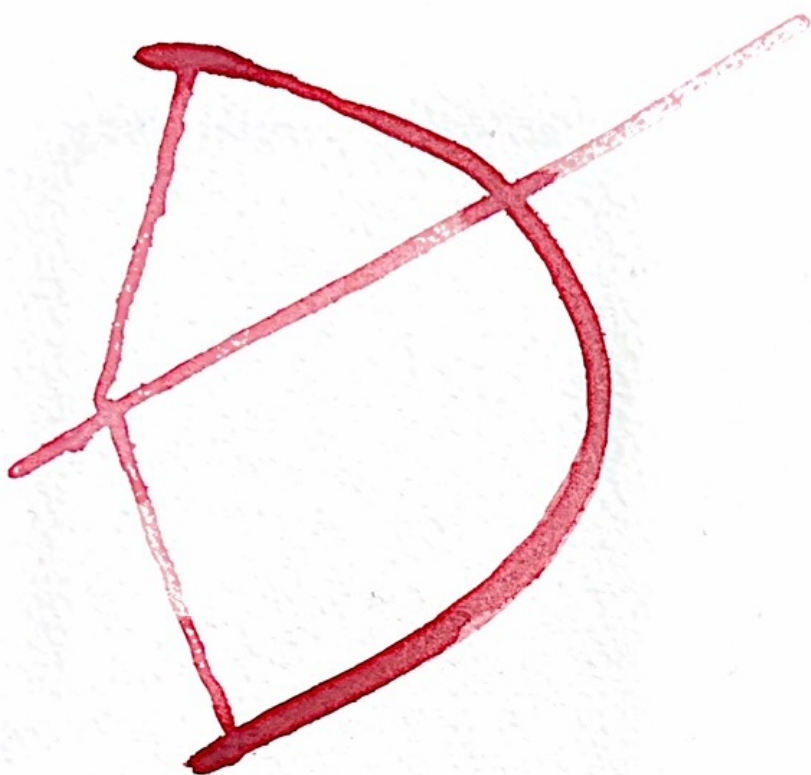
Attending
Attuning
Observing
Noticing
Feeling
Receiving
Processing
Integrating

Y en Charrúa como se escucha?

Ir al monte
Consultar la piedra
Cosechar zapallo
Refrescarse en el arroyo
Caricias del viento
Silbar como los pájaros
A la sombra de Lajau

listening from wherever you are/escuchar desde donde estes





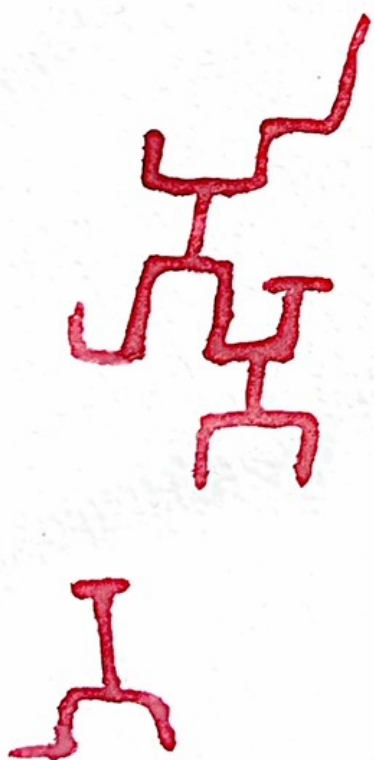
AFIA



ÍT



UPI



HUÉ

11. *Guaroj-yú - June*

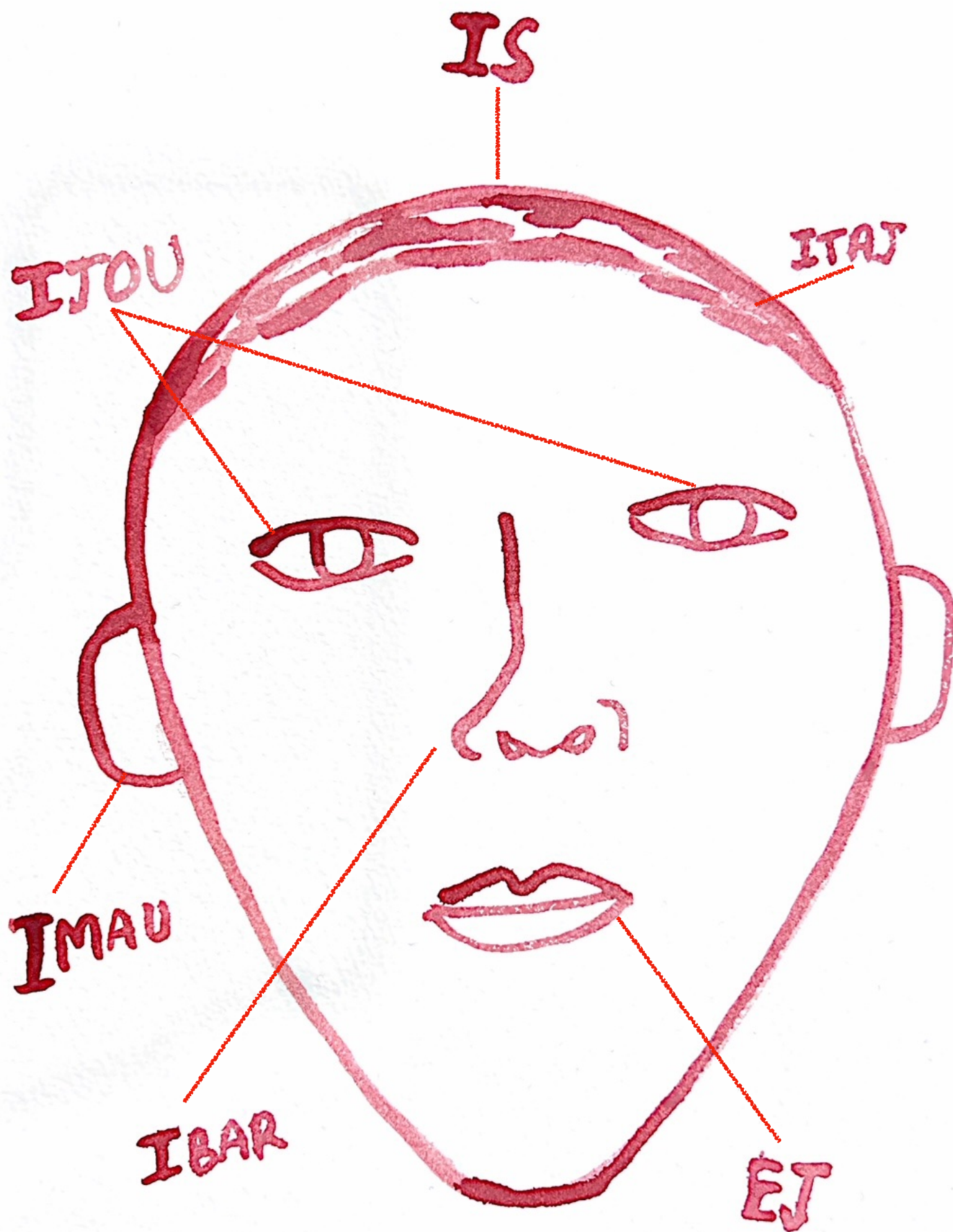
Ukai geppian udimar - Mujer narradora - Storyteller

June/Junio 2024 - Winter/Invierno - Burrugin

I have relied for many years on my father's stories, until it was time for me to go to the river and learn directly there. I have also listened intently to my mother's stories, and those of her siblings. I had not appreciated, until now, how interconnected the paternal and maternal stories were. Two sides of the same coin. My family's stories came direct from the soils, rivers and cities where they grew. But I left at age 7, and grew up in what is a very different place that is now more familiar to me than any other. When I began to dream of my son and ever since his arrival I have been re-membering. He came into this world knowing and taught me to grow. And so as I continue to deepen my re-membering he has slowly and inevitably begun his forgetting. Like my father did for me, I will keep the stories alive for him until he too has passed through the cycle of forgetting and once again re-members. But these stories in our bones are never still. There are a myriad of corrections, revisions, addendums, incomplete and new chapters. Most importantly these stories are not just mine, or my son's or my families. Just as we are part of the whole, so the stories belong to all. And so it is that story-telling and story-caretaking comes with great responsibility.



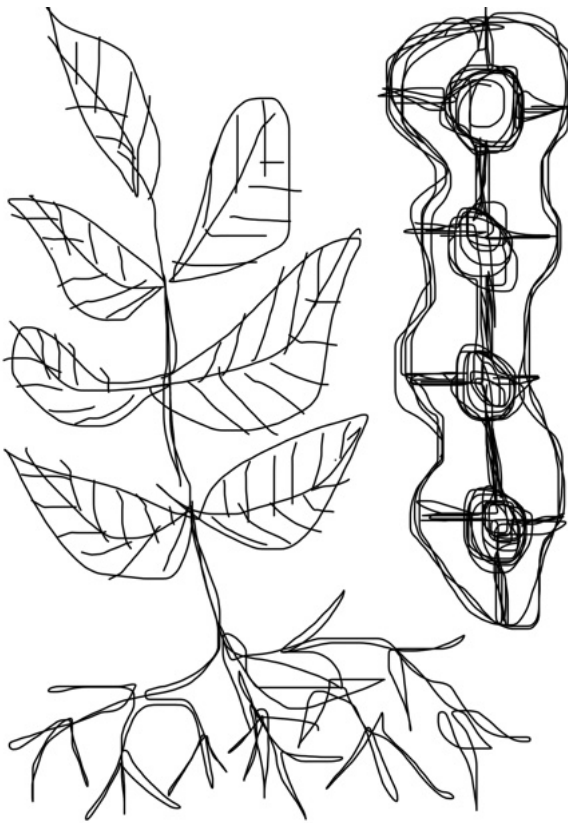




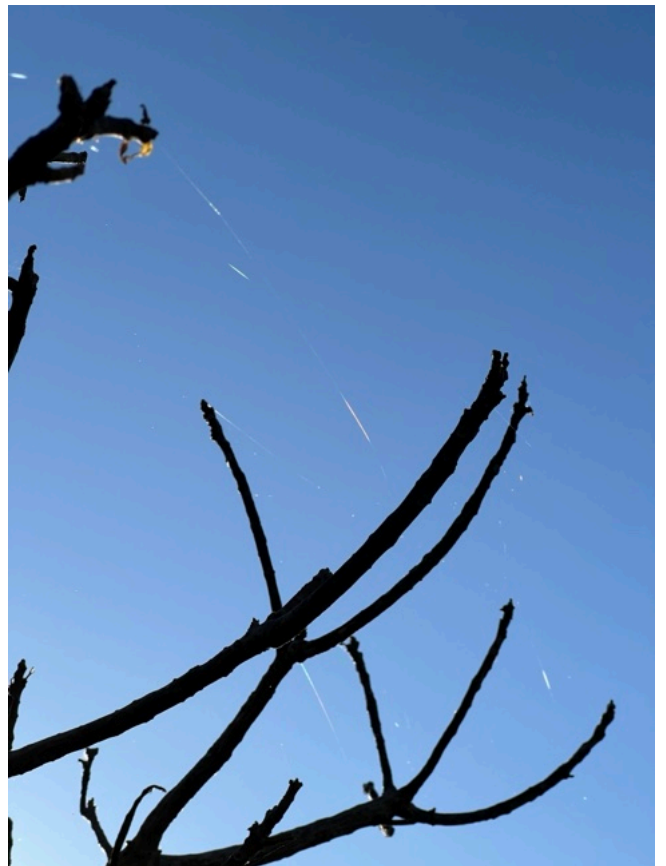
12. *Guaroj-sam - July*

Bilú mar bilú - Ama a todas las cosas - Loves all things

July/Julio 2024 - Winter/Invierno - Wiritjiribin



Bead-a-o-Lajau has lost all her leaves. Every ragged broken branch, every hollow is exposed. There is no hiding. The dry branches look held together solely by spiderwebs. Her transformation so stark that it could be mistaken for illness, a gradual decline of the strange tree near the gates. All the insects and the lizards burrow deeper, lest they become easy pickings for the birds. I visit her in the rain, in the cold, in the wind and on chilly but sunny afternoons. She teaches me there is beauty to be found in honesty and vulnerability, if you can summon the courage.







Photograph of Ombú/Lajau flower by Tomas Marinangeli , October 2023. Used with permission.

13. Guaroj-detí - (August - Blue Moon Super Moon)

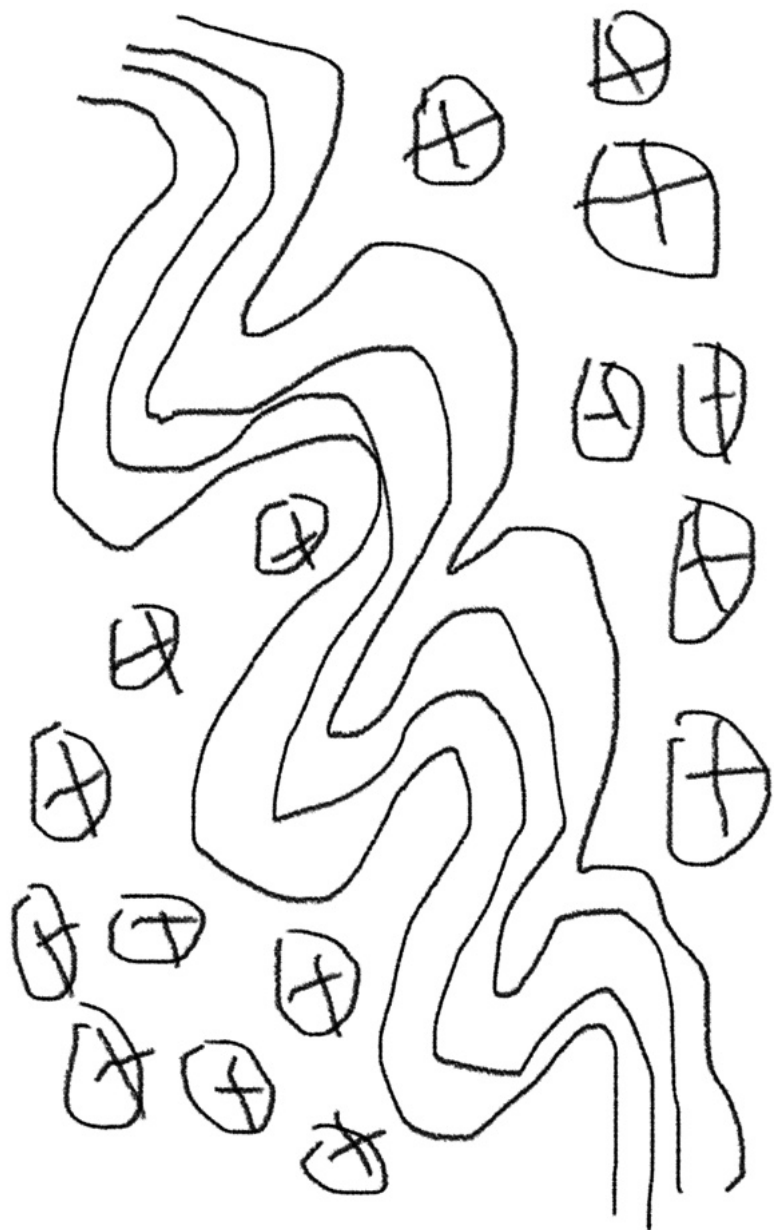
Ukai Guidai húe sepé - Se convierte en su vision - Becomes her vision

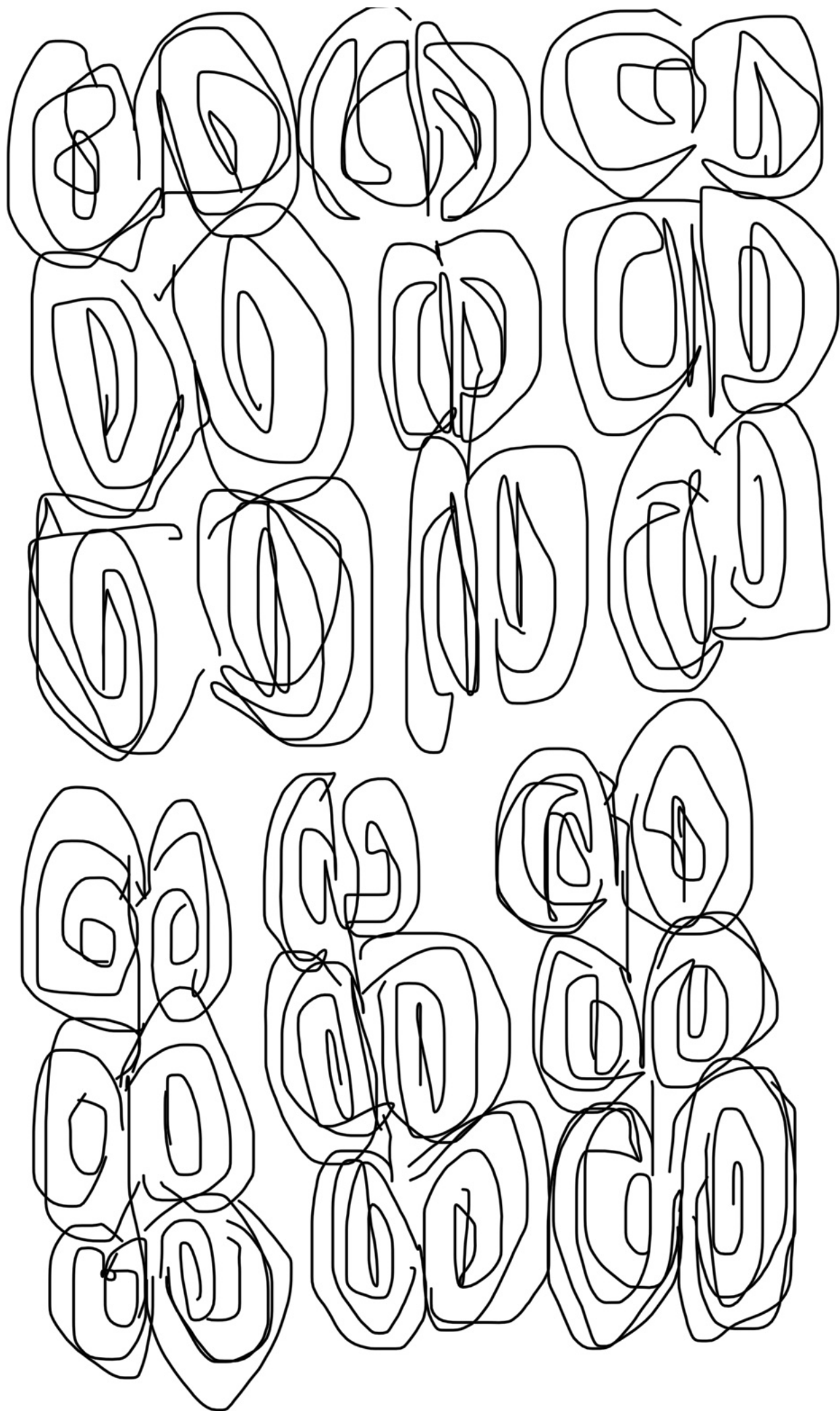
August/Agosto 2024 - Winter/Invierno - Wiritjiribin

Hmm huama hmm
Hmm inchalá
Beadá-o-Lajau
Bilú mar bilú
Guidaí sepé
Mar mar onkaiujmar
Tida etriek, geppian oyendau
Ateiten húe
Ateiten udimar

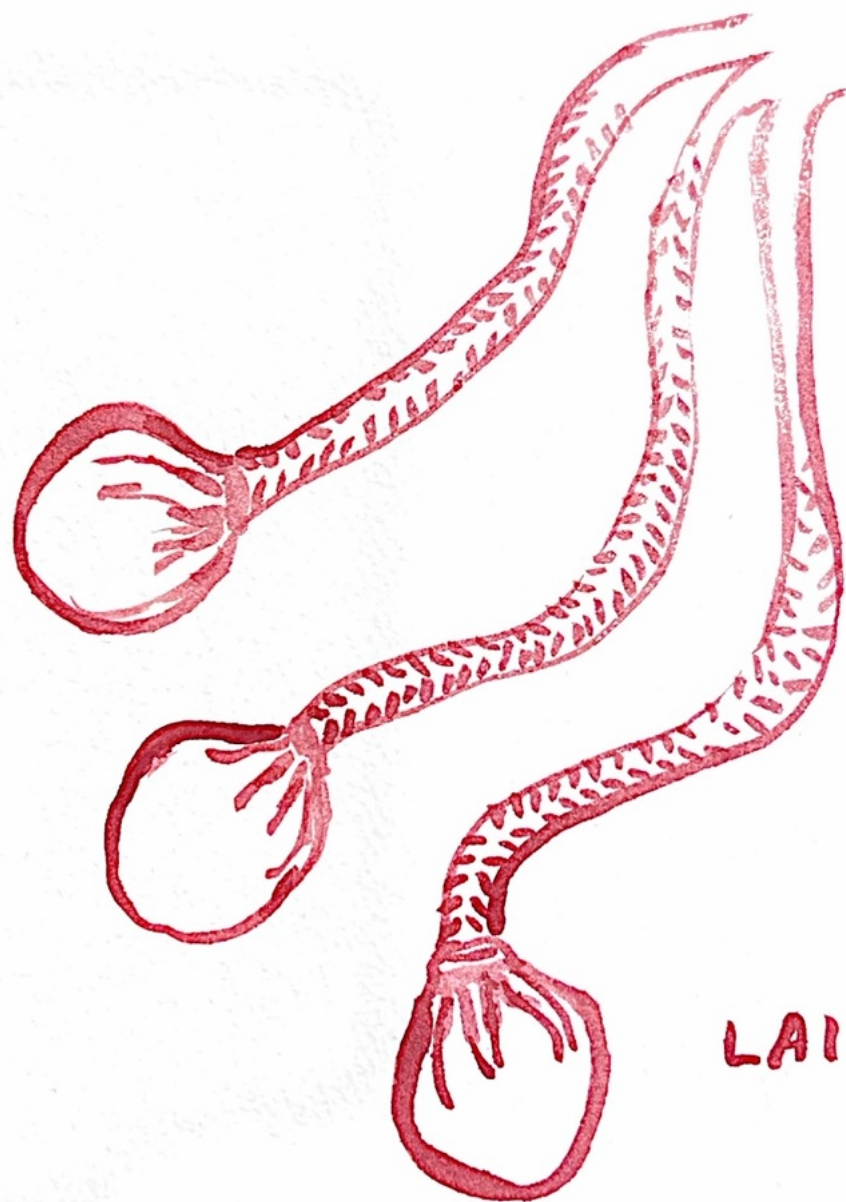
—

Oh my friend
Oh my sibling
Grandmother Lajau
So very beautiful
The wise moon
[shines on] the great Charrúa Nation
searching for our truth we sow
memory
we are water
we are free









LAI DETI'



Reading list

D'harawal seasons <http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/calendars/dharawal.shtml>

The Sydney Language by Dr Jakelin Troy, (2019), Aboriginal Studies Press

Códice Vilardebó: <https://pueblosoriginarios.com/lenguas/charrua.html>

Charrúa word references/community sourced <https://chancharrua.wordpress.com/2009/11/22/lista-de-palabras-charruas-conocidas-y-su-significado/>

The 13 Original Clan Mothers, by Jamie Sams (1994), Harper Collins

Pre-Columbian Mounds Harbor Distinctive Forest Communities in the Southern Campos of American Pampas, del Puerto, L., Inda, H., Gianotti, C. et al. *Hum Ecol* 51, 1–20 (2023). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10745-023-00389-x>

The Deep Roots Of Astronomy In Latin America by Santiago Flórez, May 22, 2024, <https://www.sciencefriday.com/articles/deep-roots-of-astronomy-in-latin-america/>



