

Reading Colombian Myths

(Misak and other Cauca tribes and their cosmology)

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Lesson plan:

1. Introduction: Cauca tribes- geography and general information, landscape, language, community.

Creation myths: How from One many were born, Four houses of the existence, the story of Tay (the Sun), the story of Water and Earth, the role of a shaman.

2. The Principles of existence: The arrow of time and the way it's reflected in Namtrik language, life cycle, the Dualistic forces of nature (hot and cold, left and right), pieces of traditional clothing and their place in Misak cosmology.

3. Children of water: Water cycle, creatures of water, rainbow myth (the story of the rainbow serpent), venturing into páramos and the dangers of "contamination".

4. Birth: Myths and beliefs connected to the event of birth, the importance of placenta, myths of the arrival of prodigies and chieftains, contamination forces and malevolent spirits (connected to birth).

5. Adulthood: The organization of household, the way Misaks tell time, principles and symbolism of agriculture, mixed crop philosophy, community work events.
6. Death: The myths, beliefs and customs connected to death, departure for the other world, the ceremony of offerings and cleansing rituals.
7. The water cycle, water myths and how it corresponds with the cycle of human life. Contemporary ecological treats to paramos.
8. Misak language (Namtrik): examples of syntax and morphology.
9. Nasa language, connections between native languages and nature, how human body and territory corresponds.
10. Kogi- introduction and comparison with the studied tribes. Kogi mythology and people as the keepers of the universe.
11. The twisted language of metaphors in selected Peruvian tribes. The role of shaman and animal metamorphoses.

Subject requirements:

Approximately 60% attendance

Preparation for lessons

A short contribution- cca 20 minutes on an agreed topic

Colombia

Capital: Bogotá

Population: nearly 50 million

Languages: Spanish and at least 68 other recognized ethnic languages



Departamento: Cauca
Capital: Popayán

High percentage of indigenous population (about 20%)





MISAK (GUAMBIANOS)

Population: 21.000 (2005 est)
 In depart. Cauca cca 19.000



Typical countryside



...its animals and plants





Páramos:

Alpine tundra ecosystems. Altitudes vary from 3000–4800 m. Areas of marshes, high-mountain plains and lakes. High rainfall and big temperature differences.

Local tribes connect the area of *páramos* with *Kansrø*, the realm of the dead.





... and verdant lowlands...

Tribes in North East Cauca (“Mother of forests”):

Misak (Guambianos)- language namuy wam (“our language”) or namtrik, population about 20 000 people. They call themselves **piurek** “children of water”.

Nasa (Paeces)- language nasa yuwe- isolated language, population about 180 000 people.

Coconuco – about 6000 people living in the National Natural Park Puracé .

The languages are of so called Barbacoan family spoken in Colombia and Ecuador.

Probably distantly related to Chibcha languages.



People of the Misak tribe



Misak call themselves
Pi Urek “children of
water”



Misaks economy is based on agriculture, farming, cattle raising, and trout farms. They mostly produce coffee, maize, cassava, physalis, potatoes, olluco (ullucus), beans, onion and cabbage .











Traditional house should have a round shape.



tsatsè



mish



srel



tsim



sre



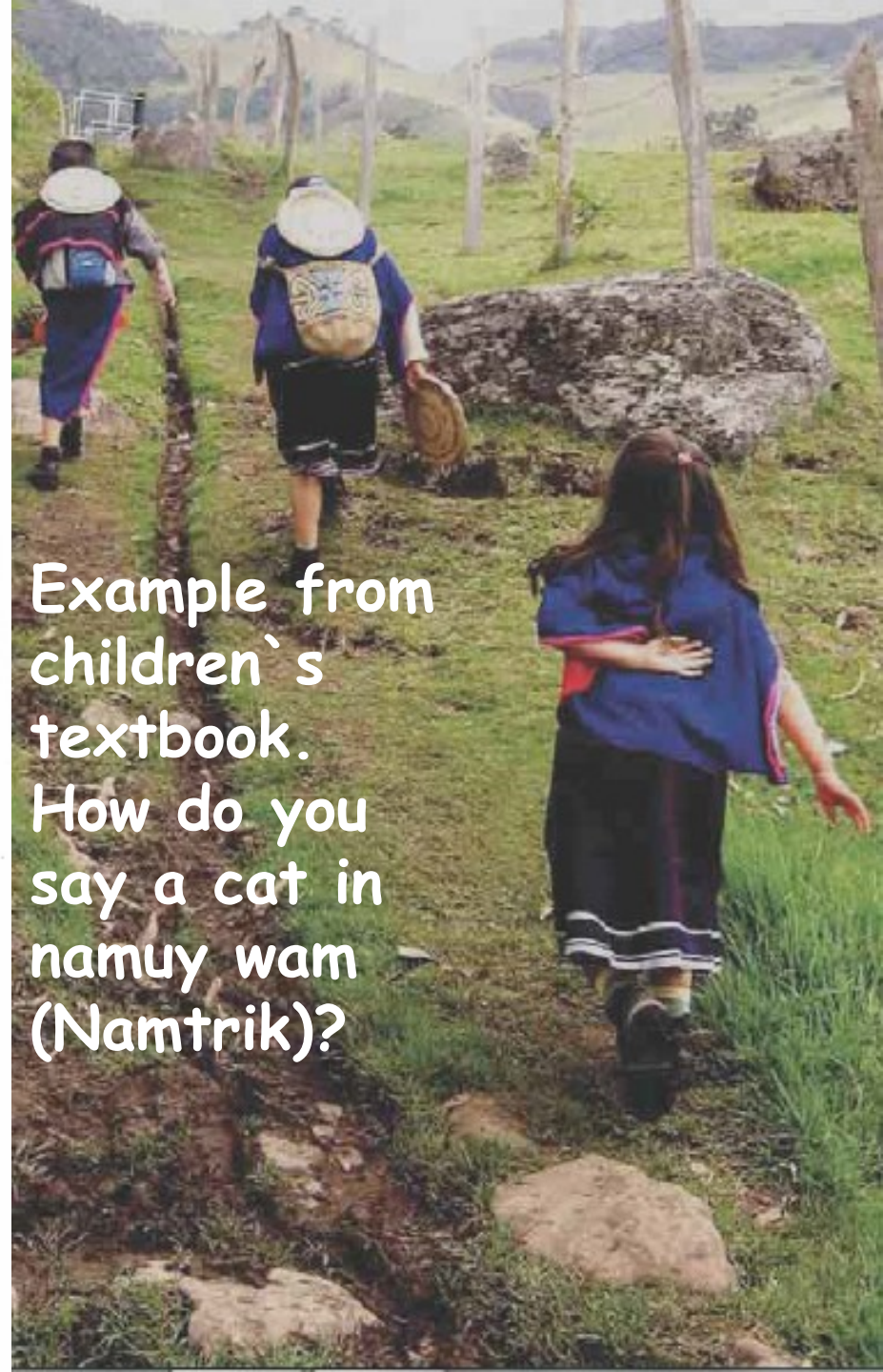
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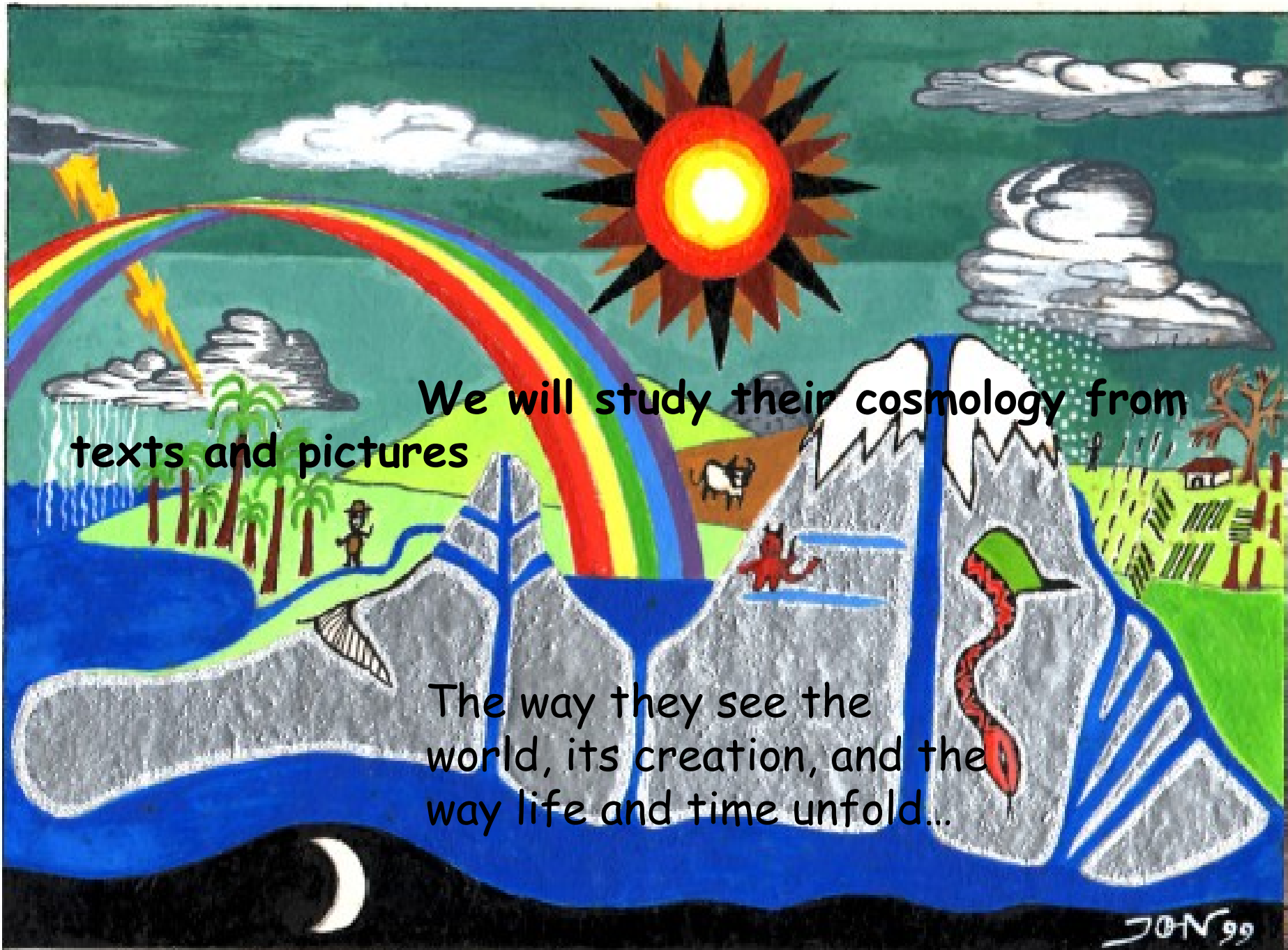
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mishatsig



Example from children`s textbook. How do you say a cat in namuy wam (Namtrik)?



We will study their cosmology from
texts and pictures

The way they see the
world, its creation, and the
way life and time unfold...

Picture by taita
Juan Bautista
Ussa Ulluné



Let`s start our journey into their spiritual world...

Materials:

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Judy Branks and Juan Bautista Sánchez, *The Drama of Life* (A Study of Life Cycle Customs Among the Guambiano Colombia, South America), 1978, 2011, SIL International, USA.

Walter Krickeberg, *Mitos y Leyendas de los Aztecas, Incas, Mayas y Muiscas*, 1971, México.

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David Lorente Fernández, *El «frío» y el «calor» en el sistema médico nahua de la Sierra de Texcoco*. Una aproximación. *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*. 2012, vol. 42, núm. 1, 243-266.

Víctor Bascopé Caero, *El Sentido de la Muerte en la Cosmovisión Andina: El Caso de los Valles Andinos de Cochabamba*, 2000, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

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In case you want more...