

Kambô: Scientific Research and Healing Treatments

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(Article translated from Spanish and edited from the original)

'Kambô', 'campu', 'sapo', 'vacino da floresta.' These are all names for the waxy secretion of a tree frog living in the northwestern part of the Amazon rainforest (in Colombia and on the border between Peru and Brazil). The scientific name for this frog is 'Phyllomedusa bicolor' or 'Giant Monkey frog'. In this article, I will use the name 'Kambô.' Originally, 53 tribes used this secretion but now only 13 small tribes still use it. It is used to get rid of 'panema', the name they give to bad luck, as well as for 'hunting magic' and as a powerful medicine against snake bites, malaria, yellow fever and other epidemic diseases.

Scientific research on kambô: nine powerful bio-active peptides

Scientific research on the secretion of this frog started in the 1980's. Nominated for the Nobel prize, Italian scientist Vittorio Erspamer of the University of Rome wrote that this secretion contains a 'fantastic chemical cocktail with potential medical applications, unequaled by any other amphibian' (1). 'Among the several dozen peptides found in kambô, up to 7% are bio-active.'(1) They bind with receptor sites situated in the brain, triggering chemical reactions in the human body. So far, researchers have found nine bio-active peptides that have a potent effect on the gastrointestinal muscles, gastric and pancreatic secretions, blood circulation, and on the stimulation of the adrenal cortex and pituitary gland.

'Phyllomedusin strongly affects intestines, bowels and contributes to deep purging. *Phyllokinin and phyllomedusin* are potent vessel dilators, increasing the permeability of the blood-brain barrier. This facilitates access to the brain of these two, as well as the other active peptides. *Caerulein and sauvagine* cause a fall in blood pressure accompanied by tachycardia. They stimulate the adrenal cortex and the pituitary gland, contributing to heightened sensory perception and increased stamina. Both of these peptides have a strong analgesic effect, enhance endurance, increase physical strength and in general, enhance the capacity to face pain and stressful situations. They possess medical potential as digestive aids, and have demonstrated analgesic effects for those with renal colic, pain due to peripheral vascular insufficiency and cancer pain. *Dermorphin and deltorphin* are potent opioid peptides 4000 times stronger than morphine and 40 times stronger than endogenic b-endorphins. (1).

In the 1990's, a new peptide, *adenoregulin*, was discovered by John Daly's team at the National Institute of Health in the USA. *Adenoregulin* works in the human body through the adenosine receptors, a fundamental component in all human cell fuel. These receptors can offer a target for treating depression, stroke seizures and cognitive loss ailments such as Alzheimer's disease. Scientific research on the peptides of kambô are opening up new perspectives on how the human brain works. The properties of kambô peptides cover a wide range of potential medical uses: treatment of brain diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, depression, migraines, blood circulation problems, vascular insufficiency, organ diseases, skin and eyes issues, fertility problems in women and men, AID's, hepatitis, cancer, etc.

Other interesting medicinal properties of this secretion are its anti-inflammatory effects, its capacity to destroy microbes and viruses and heal infections. (1) Due to the presence of these nine peptides, kambô is one of the strongest natural antibiotics and anesthetics found in the world and one of the strongest, natural ways to empower our immune system. The kambô treatments have short and long term effects. 'Short term, the effects are a state of alertness, good mood, enhanced resistance to tiredness, hunger and thirst' (1), the capacity to easily concentrate and focus, and a still mind which can last for several days or weeks. Long term, kambô empowers the immune system, overcomes fatigue and improves one's state of health.

With kambô, we have the opportunity to wake up the body to its full natural potential. The people who regularly receive this 'vaccine' do not get sick and have plenty of energy. Restoring a natural balance, it prevents the onset of complaints induced by viruses. Even cancer does not have a chance to grow, in some cases. For the best results, it is advisable to receive kambô regularly. In the case of heavy diseases,

addictions or accumulated toxins from pharmaceutical medicines, it may be helpful to double the treatments for awhile. In this way, the cleansing effects of the kambô treatments will build on one another and will last longer.

During a treatment, kambô immediately scans a person's energy field and starts to work exactly where it is needed. The process is different for everyone and the course of treatment should be planned accordingly. I have witnessed some people getting healed in one treatment, especially those with eye or ear problems. For people with addictions, results can also happen fast. Complicated cases may take longer. We may call this frog secretion a medicine, but it doesn't actually work as a typical medicine nor as a drug. It simply wakes up the body's organs, endocrine system and defense systems to their natural functions.

How the indigenous tribes of the Amazon do it

'Although difficult, the frogs can be found on the trees when they are singing, announcing the rain. The tribe members traditionally harvest the frog at dawn, also singing.'⁽²⁾ In some traditions only the shaman crops the frog. The frogs are extremely poisonous and don't react when captured because they don't have any natural predators in the forest. They are actually hard to swallow, and if a snake tries, it desperately spits them out.

To harvest the secretion from the frog's skin, the frog is stretched by strings tied to its limbs into the shape of an X. As uncomfortable as it may look, the frog is not harmed during this process, and is released afterwards in perfect health. The secretion is crystallized onto wooden sticks and can later be prepared for use by mixing the dried secretion with a few drops of water.

The 'medicine' is applied by burning tiny holes in the skin with the tip of a glowing stick. The effect is immediate, as it runs in the body through the lymphatic system. The body becomes warm and the heart beats faster than normal until the person vomits the water they had been drinking in advance. All this lasts about 15-20 minutes.

Kambô, as well as other native medicines, is based on the principle of the transmission of energy from the shaman to the person who receives the treatment. The indigenous people know different ways to give this vaccine and every tribe has developed different rituals. The Katukina and the Matses tribes take kambô burns several times a night before hunting. The number of burns, the frequency of the treatments and the intention varies in each tribe. The main reason to take kambô is to remove 'panema', which is translated as bad luck, depression, laziness, sadness, or a condition attracting difficulties and disease. When nothing is going right then it is the right moment to take kambô, according to the tribes. In some tribes, kambô is also used as a tool for the young, to teach them discipline.

According to the indigenous people, kambô is first and foremost a Spirit of the forest who is to be treated with respect. Harming the frog could offend the animal and result in severe misfortune. The Matses combine kambô with nu-nu, a snuff which informs the hunter through visions of when and where prey will offer itself. The tribal members say that shamans see the frog in their visions and dialogue with it.

Many changes have happened in the Amazon during the last century from when city people moved to the rainforest to work in the rubber factories. For some years now, kambô has been used outside of the Amazon rainforest and is no longer the exclusive realm of the native tribes. New uses for kambô have come about as people who were taught by the natives started using it outside of the native tribal culture.

One of the pioneers who brought kambô to the cities was Francisco Gomes (or Shibana), who lived with the Katukina. Francisco Gomes was a caboclo, someone of mixed descent, part white and part native. His son, Genildo Gomes, founded an association centered around kambô in the Jurua region of Brazil in 2002, called AJUREMA. There are different philosophies among those who administer kambô, particularly between the Katukina and the caboclos. The caboclos set more rules and restrictions in order to make

kambô treatments safe for people who are less strong than the native people and might take this medicine for other reasons than for hunting or healing malaria. Some of the restrictions include not giving this medicine to people with heavy heart problems, to pregnant women in their first trimester and to children under ten years old.

For the caboclos, the basic treatment is three doses, given at intervals of time which depend on the capacity of the person to take kambô. According to this method, the interval between two treatments should be a maximum of 28 days, or one moon. Longer than that, then the kambô will have to do all its work all over again.

During this three month treatment the treated person gets an increasing amount of points (5-7-9). The Katukinas ingest from three to five liters of a corn soup during the night before the treatment, while the caboclos drink about two liters of water a few minutes before the application. Both the Katukina and the caboclos require that one avoids solid food and salt at least 12 hours before the treatment.

Spiritual aspects

In his article, "Kambô, the Spirit of the Shaman," Marcelo Gomes writes that kambô 'establishes a chakra realignment, a mark for organic and psychological reorganization, from which the person changes their patterns of health'(6). Kambô is a fire medicine. When combined with the water that is drunk before the treatment, an alchemical transformation happens and old toxins are released through vomiting or urgent defecation. This cleansing process works not only on a physical level but also on a spiritual one. The frog, connecting us with our natural wisdom, mirrors our negative habits, showing us what we should avoid and what we could do in order to improve our condition.

During the kambô treatments, we receive insights. The messages given by the kambô can be very simple. Once I received a message about how poisonous the decaffeinated coffee was which I had drunk just before my kambô treatment. A friend of mine recognized a pattern in himself that he never saw clearly before. Whenever he faced an uncomfortable emotion, he would become restless and cover his unpleasant feelings with activity. After getting a few kambô treatments, he recognized this behavioral pattern and now, is better able to embrace his feelings and calm down.

Kambô unfolds the changes we need to make, in an effortless, natural way. Many of us think, 'I want to be better', 'I want to stop smoking,' etc. When we try to reach a certain result with our willpower, we are actually fighting. We've done so for many generations. With kambô, a natural wisdom is taking over our healing process. We know without thinking what we have to do or not to do in a certain situation. We become able to drop unhealthy habits and fixed ideas. In my experience, ideas are often the main obstacle, blocking us from our healing. Kambô affords us the energy we usually don't have but that we need for our spiritual path. Removing the cloud of 'panema' around our energy field, we become more open to receive from Spirit.

Kambô also works very well in combination with sacred plants like Ayahuasca or Iboga. A friend of mine recently came to me who had cancer spreading all over her body. The situation was quite urgent so I started with an intensive protocol of double treatments twice a week. She had strong trust and an according will power. After a few months, she looked much better. Everybody, including her doctor, was surprised. Indeed, she felt fit, strong and healthy. The results of her blood tests were quite encouraging, and the cancer's growth slowed down.

I noticed, often during her treatments, another personality coming out to the surface. This personality showed herself as a hungry spirit, poor and alone, someone unable to help herself. When this second personality appeared, my patient showed a lot of resistances, complaints and would even get angry with me. On the other hand, she has a very strong personality and fortunately she did not give up on the treatments. Once we explored this 'second personality' together. It came out that it was related to her grandmother whose death was a traumatic experience for her and her family. I told her that whenever

that spirit would come back, she might choose to send this spirit away. She then had the awareness to keep calm and breathe when this spirit was tempting her to complain about how poor she was. This experience was a turning point in her healing process with kambô. She had finally chosen to be in her power.

After this, something changed during the treatments. Her process during the kambô treatments became fastened. She lost her resistances and the kambô medicine worked more effective than ever before. In the meantime, her cancer was still growing some, and still threatening her life. After a few months of additional chemo therapy, all traces of the cancer have left and she is fit. This healing process happened in about six months.

Bio-piracy and rights of the Indigenous Tribes

Studies on the indigenous tribes using kambô started in the 1930's. After the 1950's, western scientists became interested in investigating this secretion. In the 1980's, during his visits to the Matses in Peru, anthropologist Peter Gorman documented his experience of the kambô treatment he received. Most of the scientific information you read in this article comes from his article, 'Making Magic.' He sent samples of *Phyllomedusa bicolor* to western universities. In that same time period, pharmaceutical companies registered the first patents of kambô peptides. Not surprisingly, the global pharmaceutical industry showed a keen interest in the medicinal properties of the frog's secretion as they did in other medicines coming from the Amazon (Notably, the blood pressure medication Captopril was developed in the 1970's from the venom of a Brazilian pit viper). Although some of the peptides found in the frog's secretion have been successfully reproduced in laboratories and patented, it has not led to any new pharmaceuticals being marketed.

In 2003, the Katukinas, guided by chief Fernando, denounced the misuse of kambô and accused the pharmaceutical companies who had patented kambô peptides of bio-piracy. They claimed the rights of the medicine belonged to the Katukinas and other Amazonian tribes. In 2004, an alliance between the Katukinas and the Brazilian government formed, aimed to ensure that profits generated from the development of the kambô's secretion would benefit Brazil. Since then, the Brazilian government has banned the use of kambô in Brazil and any publicity of its properties.

Recently, a new association, M.A.T.S.E.S, has been created in Peru, where kambô is still legal, by Dr. Dan Pantone. The aim of this philanthropic association is to support the native tribes who live in the Amazon and to protect them from speculations made by outsiders. As Dr. Pantone writes, 'protecting the native people of the Amazon means to protect the rainforest' because in this way the rainforest will be not manipulated by the interests of outsiders who don't care about it. The whole area where the Matses live has recently been sold to an international oil company. In the 70's the Matses themselves were bombed by helicopters after they attacked workers who were building a highway on their territory. The cultural changes faced by the indigenous Amazonian tribes are developing at such a fast pace that there is not much time to protect the very developed knowledge their culture has produced. It is good to remind ourselves that an international law to protect these indigenous people, their traditions and the Amazon forest is urgently needed. The knowledge of the indigenous people is a precious gift to mankind, which has already helped many of us. I think we should do everything in our power to protect it.

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