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Ethnic identity among the Ticuna in the Tres Fronteras region of the Amazonian rainforest

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Abstract

This dissertation maps the changes and continuities in the ethnic identity among the Ticuna people in the tri-border region of the Amazon River. Ticuna people have undergone critical transformations in their living conditions over the last century. The national borders divided the territory they traditionally inhabited. The Ticuna population ended up occupying territories governed by different nation-states, experiencing distinct administrative orders and indigenist policies. As a result of these nationalisation processes, Ticuna settlements changed from non-permanent dispersed dwellings of extended-family groups to the conformation of permanent multi-familiar nucleated villages. These new conditions led to a reconfiguration in their notions of what it means to be a Ticuna and what can be considered a good life.

I conducted a multi-sited investigation that analysed the transnational social, economic and cultural connections of three Ticuna villages in the borderland: Arara in Colombia, Yahuma-Callaru in Peru, and Lauro Sodré in Brazil. The research shows the persistence of a transnational ethnic identification. It explains how the Ticuna people have constructed a cross-border network structured along the lines of kinship and common mythical origin, continuously revitalised by mutual visits to celebrate anniversaries, ritual celebrations and football matches. This thesis contributes to regional Amazonian studies addressing ethnic identity from a transnational point of view.

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All translations, pictures, maps, and diagrams contained in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise specified.

To Quica and Ana

To Adriana López Monjardín

In memory of David Graeber

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Introduction. The Pulse of the River

The setting: a cross-border region

"Nobody knows exactly the point where the borderlines meet. How could we? There is no mark on the junction. It is supposed to be in the middle of the Amazon River, but the stream shifts frequently. You will understand when you spend more time in the region. The flux of the river is constantly changing, depending on the month of the year, whether it is the dry or wet season, not to mention the more patent changes in the watercourse as the years pass. The river is alive. It palpitates." said Máximo while we navigated in a boat over the muddy waters of the Amazon River, crossing the international border that delimits Colombia, Brazil and Peru.

It was October 2017, at the beginning of my fieldwork in the Amazonian tri-border area, in the only region where the Amazon River constitutes an international frontier. During the first two months of my research, I stayed in the cities adjacent to the border: the Colombian city of Leticia, the Brazilian city of Tabatinga — both located right next to each other on the left bank of the Amazon River — and the Peruvian city of Santa Rosa, situated on an island just in front of its counterparts. The constant traffic of people from one city to another portrays everyday life on the Amazonas/Solimões tri-border[1]. None of the region's cities are connected to their respective national road systems due to their remoteness and the difficult rainforest environment. The only way to reach the region is by navigating through the Amazon River or by aeroplane. I spent most of the initial weeks of my fieldwork wandering the docks, markets, venues of political organisations, universities and any place where I could find and talk with the Ticuna people who visited the cities from the many adjacent communities.

The Ticuna people are the largest indigenous population in the region. Most do not live in dense urban areas but in small villages scattered over territories of the three countries. To better explore the region's dynamics, I hopped in every boat I could to speak to people crossing the borders. That particular day, I was travelling in a communal canoe from Arara, a Ticuna village up the river that I had just started visiting to explore the viability of carrying out a period of fieldwork there. The people on board had spent the

[1] The Amazon River is called by a different name depending on the country: it is called Amazonas in Peru and Colombia. The moment it enters in Brazilian territory, it becomes the Solimões River. In Brazil, it only becomes the Amazonas when it meets the Rio Negro, 1700 kilometres downstream from the tri-border, where the city of Manaus is located.

morning selling fruit at the marketplace in Leticia, Colombia, and buying supplies from several stores in Tabatinga, Brazil. We were heading to Santa Rosa, Peru, to buy gasoline and then return to the village in Colombian territory. These multiple national border crossings were part of the everyday life of the tri-border region of the Amazon River that I was to explore over the coming months.

The long journeys from one side of the border to another are perfect for small talk and chatting. Aboard the boat, I accompanied two dozen adults, many children and a litter of puppies someone had just received as a gift in the city. The boat moved slowly. Cramped under the beating sun and sharing an umbrella, I started talking about the borderline with Máximo and his family. Antonila, his wife, intervened, "I remember my father telling me when I was a child that the Peruvian island on which Santa Rosa was built did not even exist. Back in those years, that part of the river was considered Colombian. That island appeared in the seventies and changed the main channel of the Amazon River. Even now, there is controversy about what country should control the island. Not many years ago, some Colombian surveyors were measuring the island as part of their jobs, and the Peruvian police intervened, expelling them. Not exactly the sharp-cut kind of borderlines that you imagine."

Máximo's and Antonila's voices had a tone of amusement. My concern about the borderline, a marker or a line that abruptly divided the river, seemed silly to them. For everyday purposes, the exact delimitation of each country's territories makes no real difference as the border-crossing is not problematic. Mobility is not limited or controlled. There are no migration checkpoints or customs. "Yes, I understand that around here things are different", I justified to myself, "but where I come from, crossing the border is a big deal. Not everyone is allowed to do it". Around us, a swarm of boats of all sizes travelled in all directions in total disarray, crossing from one shore to another. "That is why I need advice that helps me navigate the region, the same way you have to learn how to cross the river from one side to the other. You do not do it in a straight line; you have to read the flux of the water. It is difficult for me to know where to speak Spanish or Portuguese, where to use *pesos*, *soles* or *reais*. Or if I should stamp my passport every time I move across the border". Both laughed out loud, and Máximo advised me, "It always depends! As you said, I cannot explain one fixed way to cross the watercourse as it is always changing. In order to navigate a river, you need to observe the current and its fluctuations. You need to understand the pulse of the river. I guess it is the same with the border. You will get used to it".

During the following months, Máximo and Antonila better understood the nature of my curiosity. With lots of time to kill during our frequent river crossings in the boat, we had plenty of time to talk. My anxiety about clear delimitation was based on my experience of the Mexican-American border where I grew up.

Most of our conversations were a two-way exchange; they were amazed by my stories as much as I was by theirs. The idea of a wall, a fence or a barrier that divided two countries was as foreign to them as my surprise at the unmarked Amazonian tri-border limit. The social and economic inequalities and the marked cultural contrast between the USA and Mexico also represented for my interlocutors a very different reality to that of the relatively smooth transition in this region. Even the ecological differences in which the borders are situated were subject of interest, the barren North American desert is very different to the lush South American rainforest. The interest was mutual and these exchanges went on for hours.

I had chosen this area to conduct my research based on the idea that the confluence of three well-delimited national territories would help me to understand transnational indigenous identity. I was assuming the existence of a discernable starting point. I expected clear limits from where territory and practices were organised. Yet, instead of a precise line that seams different orders, the tri-border region is connected and divided around an immense, capricious body of water with moving margins.

I later understood that focusing on the border as a living and always-changing body of water many kilometres long and wide offered me a more interesting understanding of the region, at least from a heuristic point of view. It is not a fixed line that sets the limits of different realities, but the rhythms of the water that erode or sediment specific configurations. Just as the Amazon River floods, droughts, changes its course, and profoundly influences the lives of the people in the region, the Amazonian borderland seems to acquire some of its fluid properties. Like the river, people are constantly moving, adapting their lives according to seasons and life projects, evading the attempts of the state and its nationalist ideologies to fix people within its confines. The crossings depend on the government's varying policies, making the limits easy or difficult to cross. Just like the river, to navigate the border, people learn to identify its pulse. Over the coming months, for example, borders were closed on election days or world-cup football matches.

It is best to characterise my research setting as a cross-border region where people move or travel across different types of limits. These crossings reinforce, erode and shape different realities. The Amazonian tri-border region is not just the confluence of three national entities, but a region with its own dynamics and characteristics where local, national, and international factors intertwine to create distinctive regional dynamics. The determinant elements of these dynamics revolve around the delimitation of differentiated social orders that Ticuna people know and operate through and around. The crossings of these realities are marked by limits of a diverse nature: political borderlines, an economic frontier and sociocultural boundaries.

A spatial delimitation of the region comprehends roughly 200 km of the Amazon River around the triple border. One segment of a hundred kilometres can be traced upstream of the cities of Puerto Nariño, Colombia and Caballococha, Peru. Another segment of one hundred kilometres can be traced down the river until São Paulo de Olivença, Brazil. This first delineation corresponds to the stretch of the Amazon River closer to the border and the area you can travel to without presenting your passport to the authorities. In this area, where I conducted my research, mobility and integration depend largely on border crossings, and people have a sense of belonging that identifies them with the borderland.

I focused my research on the life of Ticuna fluvial villages situated in the cross-border region. These communities maintain a strong ethnic identity and sense of unity despite the fact that the international border divides the population that now lives scattered in three different countries. The riverine Ticuna of this region live in nucleated settlements composed mainly of Ticuna population. In the last fifty years, they have struggled and conquered collective rights over their territories, granting them access to land, forests, lakes and rivers for their subsistence. They have traditional economies based on horticulture, fishing and hunting for self-consumption, but also maintain links to the main cities as petty commodity producers and occasionally migrate outside their communities to work as temporary wage workers. The proximity to the Amazon River allows them to maintain transnational links with other Ticuna communities across the national borders[2].

In this chapter, I will introduce an overview of the region characterised by overlapping territorialities between State-nations and the Ticuna homeland. These characteristics make the region interesting for anthropological research due to the fact that the Ticuna people have managed to preserve a strong ethnic identity in a transnational context. At the same time, I will describe how my fieldwork was set up, as Atkinson defined it, not just as the result of the anthropologist's design, but as a contingent product of the circumstances and the participation of local actors (2015).

[2] Ticuna population settled in the inland territories on the Leticia-Tarapacá road have different dynamics to the riverine populations I studied. They live in multiethnic territories, are connected to the cities of Leticia and Tabatinga by roads — a faster and easier commute — that allows them to have closer relations with the so-called national-society and capitalist economy. Part of the population in *los kilómetros* has homes and jobs in Leticia (Micarelli 2010a; Tobón 2009).

Delimiting the ethnographic object: Ticuna People across national Amazonias

The Amazon River crosses the South American subcontinent from east to west. It begins at its source in the Andean mountains, in the Apurimac region of Peru, and it descends 6,400 kilometres to discharge its waters in the Atlantic Ocean, around Marajo Island in Brazil. It is known as the largest river by volume in the world, and its watercourse configures numerous ecosystems and territories.

The river is the backbone of a hydric system that spreads over seven million square kilometres, mostly covered by rainforest. Amazonia is the name given to this enormous biome which extends over the current territory of nine countries: Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. The first three countries contain around 80% of its extension, and their confluence is, despite the considerable length of the river, the only point where the Amazon River constitutes a geopolitical boundary. That area, located in the upper part of the river's watercourse, is known as the tri-border region. It constitutes a remote area in all three national contexts.

The territory historically occupied by the Ticuna people spans along the upper course of the Amazon River. It includes the tri-border region, situated where the Javari River pours out its waters into the Amazon River. Nowadays, the Ticuna people are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Amazonian region, with an estimated population of 47,000 (López Garcés 2014). They live primarily in communities around the tri-border region in the stretch between Chimbote, Peru and Tefé, Brazil. This is a multicultural zone also occupied by other indigenous people, such as the Yagua, Cocama, Huitoto, Cambeba, Culina, and mestizo people. In this thesis, I focus on the intricate cross-border network of Ticuna riparian communities of the tri-border region. This delimitation excludes ticuna communities located further away from the tri-border — those which are not exposed to the persistent borderland dynamic — and those connected to and accessed by roads, which have different dynamics to the riverine Ticuna.

Despite the undeniable influence of the overlapping territoriality of Ticuna dwellings and the three nation-states that meet in the region, most ethnographic studies of Ticuna people have framed their scope within a single national context. This methodological nationalism (Amelina et al. 2012; Gellner 2012) has permeated much of the anthropological literature produced in Latin American countries. Much of the explanation corresponds to the interests that drove anthropology as a professional, scientific field, shaped by the logic of national policies and oriented to solve the conundrum of indigenous minorities facing assimilation or extermination as part of a monocultural national project. I will briefly overview the

literature that analyses the Ticuna people, the topics they address and the delimitations of their scope. I will also contextualise these studies within broader Amazonian literature.

The pioneer in the study of the Ticuna people was Curt Nimuenjadú. He conducted numerous ethnographic explorations among the native populations of Brazil and produced an influential ethnography of the Ticuna people, focusing on their social organisation and cultural particularities, referring to the populations within Brazilian territories that he visited on three different occasions in 1929, 1941 and 1942 (Nimuendajú 1952).

Nimuenjadú acknowledged the fact that the Ticuna population was scattered across three countries but implicitly situated the Ticuna people within just one of the countries they inhabit –Brazil– and focused on the tensions arising from their relations with Brazilian national society. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira also conducted fieldwork in Brazil during the early 1960s. He later wrote a relevant study using the concept of interethnic friction to describe the economic and political subordination of the Ticuna people to the mestizo elites of the region. That study raised the question of how the native people of Brazil were classified and inserted into a class structure under the logic of exploitation and bonded labour. Cardoso's research was conducted in the context of rapid changes and the persistence of ethnic identity (Cardoso de Oliveira 2014). João Pacheco de Oliveira, mentored by Cardoso de Oliveira, continued the work of his professor, deepening and enrichening our knowledge of the ways the expanding market relations, national policies and indigenous political organisation resulted in a process of territorialisation where new Ticuna villages emerged and gained recognition from the Brazilian state (Pacheco de Oliveira 1988, 2015).

These works situated the Ticuna studies as a landmark in Brazilian anthropology. The Ticuna became a case that illustrated the complexity of the expansion of the capitalist economy and the importance of the political intervention of the state to protect the rights of native people. All of these studies share a national political economy approach.

Another set of studies that focused on the internal structure of the group ignored the importance of the border in a different way. The structural determinations of the state and capitalism are obscured in favour of an approach that heightens the group's sociocultural particularities in their own terms. This body of literature includes studies that focus on the internal logics of the group rather than emphasising the broader context in which the Ticuna live. They explore their world vision, mythology, rituals, conceptions

of the body, community and mythology. These works do not confine the Ticuna people within national borders, instead, they blur the importance of these dimensions to understand their reality[3].

An excellent example of this second approach is the work of Jean Pierre Goulard. He conducted research in a community located in the interfluves of the Colombian Amazon. These communities were much more isolated and had little or no contact with other Amazonian communities. Goulard's research focused on obtaining descriptions of Ticuna among groups that lived further from the borderline (2015). Another contribution to the study of Ticuna cosmovision is the work of native Anthropologist Abel Santos, who systematised important categories of Ticuna thinking, such as the body and territory (Santos Angarita 2013). Some research focused on specific Ticuna cultural practices has been published recently. In particular, Belaunde's (2016) study of the importance of the celebration of a feminine coming-of-age ritual in a Peruvian community has caught the attention of several anthropologists. Equally, Ramos Valenzuela has registered and analysed ritual elements in a Colombian community (2010). At the same time, Matarezio has written numerous approaches to elements of the ritual in Brazilian communities (2015).

In the later years, the literature expanded to include a third approach: studies that started to draw parallels between similar integration processes of the nation-states converging on the border. Claudia López conducted research that enquired about the processes of nation-building and the adoption of national identities among the Ticuna people in Peru, Brazil and Colombia. The focus here was on the different interventions of state politics and how they impacted the identities of the Ticuna people, leading to identification with each nationality (López Garcés 2002, 2014). Similarly, João Bento researched the ritual celebrations in different sites across the border (Bento Ramos 2017). Though the emphasis of these recent researches is principally comparative, drawing parallels between the social and cultural processes in the three countries, there is still a lack of research that considers the tri-border area as a unit of analysis

[3] A similar classification of the literature regarding indigenous populations in Brazilian anthropology has been proposed to delineate two frameworks: the "contact" approach and the "internal" approach. While the first prioritises the effects of the relations between the native groups and the national societies focusing on social organisation, political domination, cultural change, economic subordination, the second focuses on the internal definitions of the world highlighting topics such as ritual, body, and cosmology (Grimson & Semán 2006; Lazar 2022; Lima 1977; Peirano 2000; Ramos 1990; Viveiros de Castro 1999)

and that investigates the complexity of border permeability and its effects on the communities strongly connected to the border[4]. My investigation seeks to fill this gap.

I use the concept of borderland as a reference to reframe the way borders have been studied. It emphasises the importance of covering all sides of the border when designing the research. This viewpoint takes the traditional comparative perspective that selects analogue isolated cases as units of analysis from each side of the border to compare them and extends the comparison beyond their characteristics to cover also the interactions between the cases. It changes the angle from isolated units of analysis (communities, organisations, events) to trace the connections between them across the border. This approach accounts for another dimension of social phenomena: the transactions, networks, interactions and crossings that occur in a territory dissected by the borderline (Alvarez 1995; Asiwaju 1993; Baud & Van Schendel 1997; Martinez 1991).

I came to this part of the world to conduct my anthropological research, drawn by the opportunity to enquire about the struggle of native people to maintain their identities from a different perspective, informed by the cross-border condition. It took me a couple of months of exploring the region to outline a rough overview of the relevant dynamics of Ticuna connections with the border. I wanted to delve deeper into the elusive nature of the boundaries and explore how they influenced the life of the Ticuna people. In the next section, I will explore the multiple dimensions of the problem I identified, summed up in the following research question: to what extent do the Ticuna people consider themselves a unified transnational ethnic group and how does the border matter to the persistence of the Ticuna people as a social group?

In the following sections, I will explore three complementary aspects of the border that I identify as crucial to analyzing the phenomenon. These aspects also led me to select three field sites, one Ticuna village in each country, guided by their connections and interactions across the border. Afterwards, I will present the localities where I conducted fieldwork, followed by three brief examples of the life trajectories of the

[4] The area studies approach is an exception in this divide, situating Ticuna and other original peoples of the subcontinent around the concept of cultural areas. Nimuendajú wrote the entry of the Ticuna in the third volume of the influential Handbook of South American Indians (1948). More recently, Goulard did the same for the Ethnographic Guide of Upper Amazonia (1994).

people who welcomed me into their homes and hosted me during my fieldwork. These biographic vignettes illustrate how Ticuna people´s life trajectories interact with the border phenomenon.

Conceptual coordinates

The Ticuna people have played a prominent role in the development of anthropological thinking. Many researchers have worked among them and produced an interesting corpus of literature. Nevertheless, as I have already said, the framing of this research has been from a nationalist perspective. This research will address questions that arise from the problematisation of ethnic identity in a border context. “Border” is a conceptual keyword that has a long history in Anthropology to conceptualise multiple phenomena (Kurki 2014). It has been used, in a literal sense, to study the physical limits of nation-states, focusing on the problems of people occupying these spaces. It has also been used to address the problematic expansion processes of capitalist economic relations. Finally, it has been used in a figurative way to study symbolic processes of human interaction (Alvarez 1995; Grimson 2000).

It is important to note that the terms *frontera* and *fronteira* are used by Spanish and Portuguese-speaking people in a very broad sense that can refer to the three different dimensions that I will disaggregate here using the terms border, frontier, and boundary. These three concepts refer to the limits of complex phenomena such as the state, the capitalist economy and collective and individual identities. They are helpful to draw delimitations that simultaneously separate and articulate different social orders. The literature produced in English does not always make a clear distinction between them. Crossborder regions are perfect for analysing how these transitions between orders are experienced and managed in different ways, reinforcing them, eluding them or trying to change them.

Borders, the margins of the nation-states

The first dimension configuring the region's dynamic is the presence of the international border. The borderline is considered a political delimitation of sovereignty that inscribes the three nation-states' territorial limits. What comes into the discussion are the dimensions of power inscribed in the state-form and the historical process of its implementation. The tri-border territories were claimed by different sovereigns under the colonial domination of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires and, later, by all three independent countries. With the rise of the Modern Interstate System after Westphalia, the state-form expanded, reorganising global territorialisation and shaping geopolitical space between mutually exclusive powers (Arrighi 1994; Hansen & Stepputat 2005, 2006).

Two relevant topics arise from the main characteristics of the state domain: control over territories and people. State spatial reorganisation played an essential role by creating new political borders and changing the nature of indigenous territorialisation through tenure and property regimes (Alexiades 2009). The state engenders a multiplication of land delimitation and claims the right to define territories (Rubenstein 2001). Classification of people is also a crucial dimension of nation-state projects concerned with alterity. Since the conquest of American territories by the colonial empires, the local population was classified as *indios* to fit into the European worldview. Since then, "indigenous" has become a social, legal and cultural category used to subordinate the native populations (De l'Estoile et al. 2005; Quijano 2015; Shah 2010). This topic has been studied from the perspective of all adjacent states with defining characteristics: paternalism in Brazil (Guzmán 2013; Lima 2005, 2010; Pacheco de Oliveira 2012; Ramos 1998), assimilation in the Peruvian case (Degregori & Sandoval 2008; Gow 2003; Marzal 2016), and integration in Colombia (Del Cairo 2010; Friedemann 1975; García et al. 2012; Jimeno & Triana 1985)

Recently, a prolific corpus of literature on the anthropology of the state has emerged. Corrigan and Sayer propose an analysis of the state as a cultural revolution in which the state's activities are central to understanding the constitution and regulation of social identities (1985). This cultural and historical perspective is also illustrated in the work of Sharma and Gupta, who conceptualise the state as a "cultural artifact" (2009), and Mitchell, who speaks of it as a structural "effect" of practices and processes (1991, 1999). What is relevant in these approaches is that the state is not approached as an empirical object — state apparatus — but as the result of both everyday practices and representations, which calls for an ethnographic approach that explores what the state means and does (Fuller & Harriss 2001).

Another relevant topic is the nature of the political dimension of native societies. A meaningful discussion regarding the non-state forms of political organisation has been raised, particularly in ethnographies on South American lowland tribes[5]. This literature traces the nature of indigenous chieftaincies as non-sovereign forms of leadership, demonstrating the multiple ways native people have challenged the ways political organisation has been studied. This literature draws from Clastres to contemporary discussions of autonomy, self-government and self-determination within, against and outside of the state (Brown 1993; Clastres 2020; Lévi-Strauss 1944; Surrallés et al. 2016; Veber & Virtanen 2017; Yashar 2005).

[5] For a similar debate in other parts of the world, see Scott (2010) and Shah (2010).

Other authors have focused on the dynamics between indigenous and state politics in the language of contentious struggles. This approach calls attention to the fact that states are not monolithic, homogeneous entities but instead arenas of public debate among the multiple groups that comprise them. Powerful indigenous movements demanding self-government, land rights and cultural autonomy arose in the tri-border region in the last half-century. The border perspective shows the scope and limitations of each movement depending on the national framework in which the political struggles take place, because the Ticuna have different levels of rights recognition depending on the country they inhabit (Chirif & García 2007; Pacheco de Oliveira 2018; Sousa et al. 2007; Vieco et al. 2000).

Finally, an important dimension of border studies focuses on the state institutions that function as part of the persistent presence of the state. Many studies describe and analyse the routine practices of the bureaucracies that the population continuously faces. The border dimension determines essential changes in the type of realities Ticuna people experience, exemplified by schools, hospitals, police, electric supply, housing, and transportation, all of which vary from one country to another. This aspect of the state, "the banal practices of bureaucracies" (Sharma & Gupta 2009), directly impacts how Ticuna people live in a cross-border region. The literature here has provided much information about how governmentality and state action function on the ground (Ferguson 2006; Foucault 1991; Gupta 1995; Scott 2020).

My research benefits from these discussions and expands on these topics by addressing the implications of the political border that divides the Ticuna people into three sovereign countries. This condition allows me to enquire about the effects of different state interventions on the Ticuna population — in the form of indigenist policies, internal administrative orders, the recognition of diverse degrees of territorial rights, cultural diversity, and political autonomy. This research is also an exploration of the mechanisms that have allowed the Ticuna to insist on their unity as one people and maintain a sense of identity across political borders by adapting, deceiving or playing with the state rules. Ticuna people maintain strong social ties cemented on sociability, kinship, and a cultural sense of common origin, reinforced by autonomous political organization, myths and ritual practices.

Frontiers, the edges of capitalism

The concept of the frontier has been used extensively in the social sciences in reference to the expansion of capitalist economic relations. I will draw on this literature to analyse the historical trajectory of the insertion of the Ticuna people into the fronts of capitalist expansion that shaped the region. Frederick

Turner's work is probably the most influential characterisation of the importance of the frontier in advancing modern relations of production. Turner depicted the expansion of North-American colonies to the West as the driving force of American nation-building (Turner 1921). This early analysis became referential for many Latin American intellectuals who believed the replication of this model would contribute to the prosperity of their nation[6]. During the 20th century, the imaginaries of progress incorporated the idea of a productive frontier advancing over territories not yet occupied by the national society as a logical process of civilisational advance.

This representation of the tide-like advance of capitalist presence into national territories, moving from the high-density populations to the less accessible zones, became the epitome of the civilising process in Brazil, Peru and Colombia. In the South American lowlands, this advance was mobilised and potentialised by the longstanding idea of the Amazon basin as a dangerous, untamed, unproductive territory, almost unoccupied, except by backward indigenous populations (Romero 2015; Serje 2011). Simultaneously, it was regarded as a resource-rich reservoir open for expansion. The colonialist figures of *pioneros*, *colonos* and *bandeirantes* became the forefront figures in Peru, Colombia and Brazil's march towards progress.

The frontier advance perspective provides an insight into the types of problems and questions researchers adopted to analyse the economic dynamics of capitalist expansion in the region. Important studies develop this topic from a national perspective on all three sides of the borders. Otavio Velho (2009) illustrates the Brazilian case in his classic book *Moving Frontier*. Velho studies the expansion of capitalism in Brazil both as a social and geographical process that advanced first in the coastal plantation regions of the country, then the cattle-raising hinterland, and ultimately into the last frontier: the Amazonian region. According to Velho, the authoritarian character of Brazilian capitalism is determined by a weak bourgeoise national class that profited from the extra-economic control of the labour force.

Similarly, Santos Granero and Barclay's *Tamed Frontier* (2002) describes the process of incorporating Amazonian territories into the Peruvian national economy. Granero and Barclay chart how bonded labour in enclave economies eventually disappeared as market forces expanded into the frontier territories. In the Colombian case, frontier advance was closely related to the process of colonisation by productive forces that occupied the territories, "improving" them by making them more productive and eventually incorporating them into the capitalist sphere (Gómez López et al. 2015). This internal frontier perspective

[6] Another important reference was the process of soviet expansion into Siberia (Lenin 1964).

suggests that sovereignty and development were effective paths for nation-building, introducing capitalist relations — or at least a type of *sui generis* capitalism — to induce the transition towards modernity.

In dialogue with this set of concerns, an original approach to the problems of national capitalism developed in the 1960s and 1970s. In the context of slow growth in the region, an increasing number of studies focused on the reasons why capitalism did not fully develop in Latin American countries, emphasising the situation of the indigenous populations, trying to understand the causes of their underdevelopment and incorporate them into modernity via economic integration. The perspective of what was later known as dependency theory criticised the thesis of structural dualism that portrayed the transition from traditional to modern societies as part of a progressive, linear modernisation process (Redfield 1989). Dependency theory proposed conceptualising these gaps as the result of the differentiated insertion of Latin American societies into the global capitalist system (Katz 2022). They reformulated the diagnosis, postulating that Latin American underdevelopment was not caused by the absence of capitalism but by the type of dependent capitalism instituted in these countries. According to dependency theorists, underdevelopment results from the insertion of peripheral countries within the world economy, forcing them to transfer the value of what they produce to the central economies (Cardoso & Faletto 1973). The presence of so-called backward sectors in national economies drew attention to indigenous groups to the extent that scholars and intellectuals devoted a lot of effort to understanding the 'Indigenous problem'. The explanation given was that the dynamics of poverty and exploitation of many indigenous people was often not due to their lack of incorporation into national economies but in fact because of the particular ways the economic structure included them: the conditions of their disadvantages were not eradicated but in fact perpetuated to make the system as a whole work (Gunder Frank 1967). This framing influenced the analysis of third-world countries' economies in the following decades (Bambirra 1978; Marini 2022; Santos 1980; Amin 1976).

In the context of that debate, world system theory contributed to discussions about the nature of capitalist expansion in emerging countries in an attempt to broaden the scope to a worldwide process. Immanuel Wallerstein (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) developed this approach, followed closely by the discussion of the analysis of capitalism on a historical and global scale. The publication of his *longue durée* analysis proposes the world-system as a unit of analysis capable of understanding the contemporary world as a coherent system that links together modern and traditional societies in a world-economy. This world-system emerged in Europe in the long 16th century and expanded, incorporating new territories and populations, pushing the frontier of capitalism inside Europe first, then throughout the Atlantic and finally

across the globe. This historic process articulated and subordinated a multiplicity of ways of organising production and exchange, dividing the world into hierarchically articulated zones (central, peripheral and semi-peripheral) with different roles and, therefore, different types of labour control (slavery, serfdom, peasantry, and wage work), but always under the logic of capitalist accumulation and expansion. This ongoing process allowed capitalism to arise as a system that linked these zones to a world-market in a hierarchical division of labour through large cycles of expansion around hegemonic centres. Wallerstein's historical analysis describes capitalism as a system that incorporates territories, heterogeneous logics of production and diverse populations to explain the genesis and nature of capitalism in our societies. The impulse of this interpretation generated similar analysis, broadening the focus to the importance of environmental and natural systems to better understand these frontier expansions (Bunker 2003; Hornborg 2006; Moore 2015).

The concept of articulation of modes of production provided another approach to understanding the frontier as the locus of coexistence of different logics of productions enclosed in the national societies. Marxist scholars rejected dependency and world-system theories for their focus on trade and exchange. Instead, they proposed focusing on production. The idea of different modes of production articulated within specific social formations helped them to raise the question of why the so-called pre-capitalist modes of production did not disappear with the generalisation of capitalist relations. This analysis developed in two strands: the first one focused on the colonial period and the discussion of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in Latin American countries; the other focused on the contemporary niches in national societies where, despite the prevalence of capitalism, the existence of other modes of production persisted. The contribution of these studies is that they focused on the local dynamics and the regional processes that could explain the variations of a large-scale process, underlining the dynamics of class struggle (Cueva 2007, 2010). They prioritised the endogenous factors that characterise the particularities of capitalism, not just the external forces that act over the incorporated societies. The implantation of capitalism in Latin America was not a straightforward process, and it did not produce homogenisation within national social formations. Given their structural heterogeneity, these differences are understood in terms of the articulation of diverse modes of production (Meillassoux 1981; Palerm 2008; Rey & Becker 1982; Stern 1988).

In American anthropology, a different approach was taken to modern/traditional societies in third-world countries. Focusing on the socioeconomic elements of the peasantry rather than just cultural elements (Silverman 1979), Marxist political anthropologists, like Sidney Mintz, William Roseberry, and Eric Wolf,

opted to emphasise the peasantry's structural relations as segments of a larger world. According to this approach, the population linked to the coffee haciendas, sugar plantations or the Caribbean's small peasantry are not remains of pre-capitalist societies. These are societies that exist because they are fully incorporated into larger processes of economic accumulation (Cole & Wolf 1999; Mintz 1977; Roseberry 1983; Wolf 1982). These anthropological studies focused on the intersection of global and local processes, rejecting the abstraction of market forces that ignored the actors. This framing signifies a shift towards an analysis of power and history. They tried to understand peoples' history in their own terms and contextualise it within a larger scope. According to this approach, peasantry and other subaltern classes are not just the byproduct of world history or capitalist accumulation but living forces with political subjectivities forged in their struggles.

Finally, I would like to address the importance of recent anthropological studies that have focused on the frontier to draw attention to *sui generis* forms of capitalism that have emerged in the context of globalisation. New research analyses the heterogeneity of capitalism as the result of the dislocation of production, the integration of economies, and the forms in which these are presented to local actors around the world (Escobar 2012; Li 2014; Tsing 1994, 2003).

In my research, the conceptualisation of the frontier addresses essential questions regarding the material dimensions of the livelihood of the Ticuna people, as they are not fully incorporated into capitalism. Therefore, a central topic of analysis in my study is the historical conditions by which the Ticuna were inserted into the logic of capital accumulation by land dispossession and regimes of labour exploitation. Their contemporary conditions result from an organised struggle to reverse their economic subordination by organising and regaining control over their territories. Land rights allow them to maintain a degree of economic self-sufficiency that exists in tension with their increasing engagement with the capitalist economy as petty commodity producers and temporal wage workers. Paradoxically, this articulation with the cash economy allows them to ensure the conditions of their reproduction as a social group.

Boundaries, the contested limits of identities

A third way to conceptualise and analyse the multiple types of limits that demarcate different spheres of social life in the Amazon River tri-border region is with the notion of sociocultural boundaries. The concept of boundaries has been used as a metaphor to describe the interaction between different worlds of meaning, often used to consolidate identities among social groups. Ethnicity, broadly defined as the identification of belonging to culturally and socially differentiated groups, is a dimension that has been

intensively studied in anthropology, with an extensive bibliography. I will briefly outline the most relevant approaches that helped me to understand the Ticuna reality in the tri-border region.

Many Latin American national governments promoted anthropology as a discipline to address the tensions between their culturally homogeneous national projects and the numerous indigenous populations. The debate was framed in terms of the ethnic-national problem — the paths towards the inevitable sociocultural homogenisation of the nation's population. This approach was taught at national universities[7] and dominated the formulation of indigenist political policies from 1930 to 1970 (Fábregas Puig 2021). This approach has its origins in the Chicago School and ideas on assimilation produced by cultural contact (Burgess & Park 1924). The work of Robert Redfield, formed in Chicago's Local Community Research program, was paramount in anthropology. Redfield established the concept of the folk-urban continuum to explain the passage from traditional livelihoods to modern ones as a lineal process, where contact between civilisational poles was key (Redfield 1989, 2002). Numerous governments in Latin America adopted the ideas of acculturation laid out by Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville Herskovitz (1936).

By the middle of the 20th century, Latin American countries entered a process of accelerated industrialisation. The contact of the so-called national society with numerous native societies increased at a frantic pace. In Brazil, Darcy Ribeiro led an effort to draw attention to the dynamics and consequences of these contacts. In his book *The Ethnic Frontiers of Civilisation*, Ribeiro analysed the processes of ethnic transfiguration, denouncing that these contacts engendered a harsh reality: the dangers of ethnocide or even the physical elimination of ethnic minorities (Ribeiro 1979). Acculturation theories were denounced as concealing profound acts of violence, and as a result, a more critical approach to cultural contact was formulated. Based on his fieldwork experience with the Ticuna People in Brazil, Cardoso de Oliveira (1964) proposed the term 'interethnic friction' to give an account of domination and exploitation in situations where cultures that come into contact do so under unequal conditions. Numerous voices emerged to analyse the processes of cultural contact in colonial contexts or where systems of ethnic classification superpose with class formation, putting power, exploitation, and domination at the centre of their concern (Balandier 1973; González Casanova 2009 [1963]; Stavenhagen 1963).

[7] A particular relation between indigenism and anthropology as a discipline resulted from the interest of national governments to produce knowledge to facilitate acculturation processes (Pacheco de Oliveira 2006).

Other anthropological studies contributed ideas about how the social and political organisation of small communities is related to the larger systems they form part of. The focus on history and ecology played an essential role in de-naturalising the correspondence between cultural boundaries, social boundaries and political systems in the work of Edmund Leach in Burma (1960). Similarly, the work of Eric Wolf and John Cole (1999) in neighbouring villages in the Tyrol region, under Italian and German jurisdiction, criticised ideas of communities as isolated spaces or determined solely by the dynamics of broader political or economic systems.

Native populations often contested national indigenist policies. Since the 1970s, indigenous peoples' organisations have emerged throughout the continent to reclaim their rights. Understanding these mobilisations required an anthropological approach to account for how ethnic identity is not just imposed from above but appropriated and revitalised from below. Many scholars addressed the processes of resistance and contentious politics around the concept of ethnic identity (Gros 2000; Jackson & Warren 2005; Postero & Zamosc 2004; Ramos 2003; Roseberry 1996). If ethnic difference was the language imposed by the state and the market to establish mechanisms of domination and exploitation, it is also the category used by many native people to organise and articulate their political projects. Although the emergence of an ethnic political subject in recent decades is common across Latin America and sometimes articulated internationally, the national context has proved to be the most critical arena of struggle.

Fredrick Barth (1998) analysed the problem in terms of relational categories of belonging, where the importance of identification is not set in a series of cultural characteristics but in the process of differentiation *vis a vis* other groups. This relational approach proved helpful in analyzing identity formations as socially constructed on many levels, from tribal groups to nationalities (Anderson 2016). In more recent years, an approach to denaturalising the correspondence of identity and cultural elements emerged, positing a definition of 'boundary' as something much more permeable. According to this approach, sociocultural boundaries are not a clear-cut, delimitated worlds of meaning. They are the scenario for mixtures, syncretisms and hybrids. This inflexion reflected the accelerating cultural exchanges and contacts brought about by globalisation and the intensification of flows of exchange. This group of authors highlights the permeability, plasticity and mutability of boundaries. The agency of the people who live, embody, and use these categories is central to understanding the contemporary mobility processes of people, goods, and information (Canclini 1990; Hannerz 1997a, 1997b; Rosaldo 1993).

To summarise, in this section, I have delineated keywords to understand three fundamental dimensions of a social reality whose limits influence Ticuna everyday life in the tri-border region: the edges of nation-

states, the margins of capitalism and the contours of social identities. Previous studies on the Ticuna, grounded in methodological nationalism, have overlooked how the Ticuna population transgress these various limits to maintain their identity as one people. My contribution from a transnational approach is to shed light on the dynamics of change and permanence by which the Ticuna have modelled an ethnic identity that adapts to different contexts but remains connected across borders.

My research deals with the historical processes by which these limits — borders, frontiers and boundaries — have influenced the Ticuna riverine population of the Amazonian tri-border region: the formation of three different national states that divided the Ticuna population and its territory, the impact of diverse forms of capitalist accumulation, and finally, the multiple tensions that have arisen from the multiplications of forms of identities (national, ethnic, religious, panindigenous). The Ticuna people constantly cross the political borders of three states, they navigate between capitalist and non-capitalist economies, and adopt multiple identities in different contexts.

Overall, the literature I build on in the present thesis has helped me to locate and characterise the multiple limits, edges and margins that affect the lives of the Ticuna people. My research investigates the nature of these limits and their effects on Ticuna everyday life. By doing so, the research helps to understand, from a perspective situated in everyday life, how significant structural processes such as state intervention, capitalist expansion and identity are experienced. It also contributes an understanding of the particular paths the Ticuna take to navigate through these limits, which not only divide but also articulate different social orders delimited by the state, capitalism and ethnic identity.

Methodology and field sites

As a methodological approach, ethnography allows the researcher to move between different domains of reality and use various techniques to gather evidence and build convincing arguments. However, this is not a given or unproblematic research method. Instead, it is a craft, a regulated process from the formulation of the research to construct the object of inquiry by combining theoretical elements with empirical realities and gathering diverse kinds of information to produce a vision of totality from that heterogeneous conglomerate of evidence.

In a certain way, ethnographic fieldwork condenses anthropology's ability to move between spheres of social reality and simultaneously navigate between the abstraction of theory and concrete empirical information. Regarding research techniques, I resorted to the anthropologist toolbox depending on which aspect of reality I studied.

For my research design, I resorted to two complementary methodological approaches: border as method and multi-sited ethnography. These approaches helped me select and turn my attention to crucial dimensions of reality during my fieldwork, which helped me build a robust multidimensional ethnography.

Border as method refers to a frame that Mezzandra and Neilson articulated as a response to the proliferation of conceptual and material borders in the contemporary world. They suggest that the social analysis should focus precisely on the articulation and disarticulation of the multiple kinds of borders and their effects on society. This methodology addresses the constituent properties of these different sets of borders that shape our reality. "Our primary concerns in this book is to trace and analyze the relations between different kinds of borders, as well as the struggles and knowledge conflicts that arise along them […] also crucial is the ontological sense in which borders are involved in making or creating worlds" (2013: 28-30). I use the term border assemblage to designate the concrete configuration of borders, frontiers, and boundaries that affect the lives of the Ticuna people in the region.

Multi-sited ethnography, advocated by George Marcus, proposes strategies to articulate the local site and the global system. This research method "moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space" (1995: 96). I selected three different field sites across each side of the borderline to trace the border crossings and other types of networks that Ticuna people build and maintain in their everyday activities.

According to Tadeu da Silva (2016), by addressing a certain level of reality, every theoretical framework simultaneously constructs its methodological dimension by postulating the information we need to gather to answer these questions and the appropriate techniques to do it. During my fieldwork, I employed diverse research techniques, such as participative observation, interviews, oral stories, censuses, economic surveys, life trajectories, and photographic records, to document the different levels of reality that interact in the tri-border region in order to understand the ethnic identity of the Ticuna people.

In ethnographic research, bounding also refers to delimiting the object of study by two simultaneous mechanisms: theoretical framing and selecting a location to conduct the research. The theoretical debates discussed in the previous section provide a better framework for studying the dynamics of everyday life of Ticuna people in the cross-border region. Using these conceptual coordinates allowed me to define the object of study not as a coherently bounded entity but as intersected by multiple types of boundaries. Another critical dimension of my study was selecting the research location.

Field sites are defined in close relation to the research question, the theoretical perspective and the methodological approach. I decided to conduct a multi-sited ethnography. This approach emerged from the crisis of the idea of correspondence, according to which the anthropologist selects a social group to conduct their research, and the rest of the field delimitations would be self-contained within the same coordinates: the confines of the community would coincide with the limits of their culture and the bounds of the identity of the group (Marcus 1995). A multi-sited ethnography is suitable for the object of study I pursued as the construction of Ticuna identity crosses multiple types of limits, whether they are borders, frontiers or boundaries.

Candea has noted a problem in confusing open, flexible and holistic fieldwork with a lack of delimitation (2007). The fundamental dimension of multi-sited ethnography is mapping diverse flows and movements. I conducted fieldwork in the region for eighteen months, from September 2017 to March 2019. A fundamental task for me to be able to produce an accurate ethnographic account was to map how the Ticuna population is territorialised and involved in constant border-crossing. The selection of the localities responded to criteria based on the information I was collecting and interpreting *in situ*. It was a process of constant back-and-forth from the observed reality to the research design. Malkki referred to the object of study as something that "is never inert, lying somewhere out there in the landscape waiting to be discovered" (2021: 173). It is constructed and shaped in the process of research.

I worked in three Ticuna settlements to better understand how border crossing works in different national contexts. I will present the field sites and the conditions that led me to select them as I explored the intricate edges of the cross-border region. Following Atkinson's (2007) definition of ethnographic research design as a continuous process will help to understand how the selection of localities responded to the connections, dynamics and tendencies I observed, but also the ways in which the research process is not divorced from pragmatic considerations and the mundane decisions involved in participant observation.

Arara, Colombia

The first Ticuna village where I conducted my fieldwork was Arara, a community located in the Colombian national territory. There is always some uncertainty in the first approaches to fieldwork. In this case, having spent several weeks in the border cities of Leticia-Tabatinga-Santa Rosa allowed me to understand the regional dynamics better. I spoke with professors and students from the National University of Colombia and the Federal University of Amazonas. Based on their considerations, I chose Arara as my first field site.

Most people I asked for advice agreed that Arara was an excellent place to start my research. The name Arara comes from the Portuguese word for macaw. It was regarded by my first interlocutors as one of the region's most organised communities and a place where the Ticuna culture was better "preserved"[8]. I grew curious about the causes of that perception, so I decided to try to understand it. I contacted the Colombian regional organisation, the Indigenous Cabildos Association of the Amazonian Trapeze (ACITAM). Their leader, Augusto Falcon, received me with enthusiasm and informed me that he was meeting with the Arara residents sometime in the following weeks. Falcon suggested I seize the opportunity and travel with him to the community. He explained that I could present my proposal to the meeting once the assembly gathered to discuss organisational issues. I accepted the invitation.

We travelled in the second week of October 2017 to Arara. The village is 20 kilometres from the triple border upstream of the Amazon River, and another 40 minutes of navigation over a small ravine called Charatü. When we arrived, we were greeted by Rusben, the authority of the *resguardo*. *Curaca* is the name given to the community leader, and resguardo is the name of the indigenous collective territory recognised by the Colombian state. The chief, along with other representatives, is elected every year to form a directorate known as *cabildo*, which the state recognises as the ruling organ of the community. I had spoken with Rusben previously in Leticia, where he often attends meetings with other indigenous authorities.

We arrived early on the day of the visit, and Rusben took us to his house. He offered us some water and fruit and asked us to wait until the evening. Around seven o'clock, we heard the loudspeaker placed on a water tower. It was calling the residents to a meeting. We headed towards the communal hall in the village centre. After a few minutes, people started to gather. Most older men sat in chairs at the front, while women and young people preferred to stay at the back, sitting on the floor.

The meeting started. The agenda led quickly to a discussion with the leader of ACITAM. People were displeased. There were two recent projects in which people had invested time and resources under the promise of being compensated with money the Colombian government transfers to the indigenous communities. ACITAM managed that money, and the association had not yet paid for their work building a bridge and cleaning the resguardo boundaries. The meeting was held in Spanish and Ticuna because Augusto Falcon does not speak Ticuna. Although most people present were proficient in Spanish, they

[8] I later learned that the main indicator of this preservation was the realisation of the woreküchiga or female coming-of-age ritual.

usually intervened in Ticuna first, addressing their fellow commoners and later translating their speech into Spanish.

The meeting turned into a bitter discussion in which the ACITAM leader explained to the disgruntled groups that while some of the resources had already been delivered, the government still held a substantial part of the funds. The discussion prolonged the meeting for hours, and some people left the meeting upset. By the end, I was able to address the assembly. I introduced myself and explained my project. After my intervention, Rusben asked those gathered to share their thoughts. Some of the older men intervened, but in Ticuna only. Afterwards, they explained to me that they were suspicious of anthropologists. According to them, we were there to steal their culture. Others supported my proposal — I discovered later — but by the end of the interventions, the curaca asked if my proposal was approved or dismissed. Silence took over the room, and no agreement was reached.

I was confused. I asked Rusben if I should look for another place to start my fieldwork. He shook his head, "Give it time", and invited me to present the project at the next meeting, which would take place two weeks later. He also invited me to a traditional celebration the following weekend. I accepted the invitation and returned to the community the following week. The *woreküchiga*, a coming-of-age ritual for young women, also known as *pelazón* or *festa da moça nova*, lasted the whole weekend. Drinking was an important element of the celebration, and I was continuously invited to join small groups of men to whom a traditional manioc beer or *masato* was offered. Later that evening, I was offered a hard liquor called *cachaça*. It is distilled from sugar cane and produced industrially all over Brazil. In the region, it is popular due to its low price. Although its importation is prohibited in Colombia and Peru, it is ubiquitous on all sides of the border.

By the end of the first day, most people were drunk. I was introduced to the father of the young woman undergoing the ritual. We continued drinking for the rest of the night. Some of my jolly partners had already headed home by dusk, while others lay on the ground sleeping. The celebration concluded on Sunday. When I go back to my notes nowadays, they are useless in the ethnographic sense, but my attendance helped me to establish familiarity with the community.

I prepared some new material for my presentation at the next meeting. This time, I took a communitarian boat that travels from Arara to Leticia twice a week for people without transportation to sell their produce in the marketplace. On Tuesdays and Fridays, it arrives in the city early in the morning and returns in the afternoon. The journey lasted around three hours, so on the way to the community, I had the chance to

chat with some people I met during the woreküchiga. They all laughed and told jokes about the celebration and my tolerance for alcoholic beverages. At the meeting, the atmosphere was different, and people joked and laughed. The assembly listened to my presentation. Afterwards, the women, many sitting in the front row, approved loudly. The change in mood was remarkable. There was not even a discussion. They even suggested I should stay in the house of Policarpa, one of the members of the cabildo who just recently built an extra room next to her house, to receive foreign people –usually state officials, teachers sent to give training, and occasionally, students carrying out their professional practices.

In retrospect, I believe the perception of my presence in the community changed drastically in the two weeks between the first and the second assemblies. At the first assembly, people had related me to the leader of ACITAM, with whom members of the community had conflicts. Also, and most importantly, I introduced myself as an anthropologist, and people immediately associated me with knowledge extractivism. Visiting the following weekend and spending time during the woreküchiga celebration in a context of conviviality modified the positionality in which I was initially placed by some people in the village. I perceived the most significant change occurred when I explained in more detail that I was an anthropology student. Many people in the community have relatives or acquaintances who, in order to finish school, have to travel outside of Arara. People in the village were sympathetic to the situation of leaving your home to finish your studies, and they were more open to the idea of helping me to do the research to conclude my Ph.D.

Arara is a large village of 921 people[9], mostly Catholics. It is located in *terra firme*, a series of elevated formations of earth crossed by small ravines. The village never floods; the rainwater runs off into the Arara stream, also known as Charatü, and eventually discharges into the Amazon River, which serves as the main access route to the community. The waterway is navigable most of the year, but in the dry season, the water level can drop to the point where no boat can navigate it.

Arara is divided into five sections or *barrios*. The oldest is Centro, located on the left side of the Arara River, over a steep bank that is continually eroding and might force a relocation in the future. The main public buildings are located there: the Catholic temple, the communal hall, the cabildo offices and the medical post. South of there, over a small hill, are Barrio Loma Linda and Barrio Hormiguita. Further south is Barrio Campo Alegre. To the east lies Cananguchal, a section that hosts a big football field and the

[9] The demographic information I present on the communities I conducted fieldwork in is the result of a census I conducted, and may differ from official government data.

facilities of a children's centre that provides care and education to children under five. Finally, the elementary school and the Santa Rosa sector are to the west.

The village is large and connected by dirt roads and bridges. Social life starts early in the mornings; all the young people and children attend the school where they are taught the first nine grades, and adults visit their gardens to work. Most of the swidden fields are within walking distance of the village. People return home in the afternoon to eat and rest. Arara has a water supply, which makes cooking, washing clothes and bathing easy tasks performed inside the houses. People relax in the evenings, enjoying social activities such as playing football, visiting friends, or just strolling in the Barrio Centro. The community has a permanent electricity supply. Therefore, activities continue even after sunset. Only two spots in the community have cellphone reception. Luckily for me, one of them was in a corner of Policarpa´s house. People usually came at night to make or receive phone calls, and it was an excellent opportunity to chat about what was going on in their lives: a relative visiting soon, news from a son or daughter studying or working in Leticia, and even state functionaries trying to contact community leaders. It all happened in the corner of the house, in less than one square metre, playfully called “the phone booth”.

I spent eight moths living in Arara, from November 2017 to June 2018. I continued to visit occasionally while conducting my fieldwork in Peru and Brazil.

Yahuma-Callaru, Peru

As someone unfamiliar with the intricacies of borderland movement, getting to know how to travel throughout the region was my main concern. From the beginning of my fieldwork, people suggested I should buy a small boat and a *peque-peque* engine. Although it looked like an advantage in terms of time and autonomy, I was more interested in accompanying people's everyday movements and experiencing what Malinowski called "the imponderabilia of actual life" (2013: 18 [1922]). Therefore, mastering how and when to jump into someone's canoe for a ride was not only a lot cheaper (usually, they only ask for a small contribution to buy gasoline) but an integral part of cross-border region ethnography. In my first months in Arara, I did not waste any opportunity to accompany anyone travelling to other communities or neighbouring cities.

The mapping of local travel and border crossings was a determinant factor in choosing my next field site. On the anniversary of the founding of Arara, the community organised a celebration. A football tournament was one of the most important activities (along with musical performances and dance). Six

teams from Arara signed up and paid the inscription fee. Five teams came from afar, including one squad from a Peruvian community that became my second field site: Yahuma-Callaru[10].

After that tournament, some reciprocal visits took place to play football matches between teams from Arara and Yahuma-Callaru over the following months. It was a well-balanced rivalry, as no community ever wholly dominated the other. Martha, Policarpa's sister, started inviting me to travel with her to Yahuma-Callaru on weekends. She occasionally sold homemade popsicles prepared from the juice of seasonal fruits or a combination of water and unrefined cane sugar. Since there is a permanent energy supply in Arara, she can use a freezer to prepare such treats. Selling them in communities like Yahuma-Callaru – where there is no permanent electricity supply– is an excellent business. The Peruvian community relies on power generators to obtain energy for a few hours daily.

Yahuma-Callaru is a *comunidad nativa* — the officially recognised status of an indigenous community in Peru — located on an anabranch on the right bank of the Amazon River. This is a section of the river that separates from the main channel and goes inland for several kilometres to rejoin the main channel a few kilometres downstream. This segment of the river, known as Yahuma, is fed by the waters of a tributary called Callaru. The community is located just below the point where the Yahuma meets the Callaru. Arara and Yahuma-Callaru are both a few kilometres inland from the main course of the Amazon River, on opposite sides, 20 kilometres away from the tri-border. Travelling from one community to another usually takes two hours. This proximity makes people's visits reasonably frequent.

Despite my previous experience of the friction between the community and their regional political organisation in Arara, I decided to use the same strategy to gain access to Yahuma-Callaru. I introduced myself first to Francisco Hernandez, the president of FECOTYBA, the Spanish acronym for the Federation of the Ticuna and Yagua communities of the Lower Amazon. I travelled to meet Francisco in Caballococha, a Peruvian city located up the Amazon River, on the edge of my delimitation of the cross-border region. After a few weeks of waiting and getting to know other members of the FECOTYBA board, I was granted permission to carry out fieldwork.

The following day, I returned to Leticia. I looked unsuccessfully for someone from Yahuma-Callaru in the marketplace, where people from neighbouring communities sell their products. The merchants told me

[10] A Brazilian team from the community of Guanabara III, located in Lauro Sodré, competed in the tournament as well. Talking with some of the players pointed me in the direction of the community that would eventually become my third field site.

that people from that village do not usually do business in Leticia. Instead, they travel to Tabatinga to sell their products in the Brazilian marketplace. For the next few days, I explored the docks near the marketplace in the Brazilian territory, locating the part of the river where people from Yahuma docked directly on the bankside. Finally, I embarked for my field site.

When I arrived, I introduced myself to Teofilo Ahué, the *apu* — elected leader — of the community. I found his home easily because people told me the apu's house was decorated with a Peruvian flag on a pole at the entrance as a sign of his position. I presented to him the approval I had received from FECOTYBA, but he dismissed it by saying, "I do not even know the appointed leaders". We discussed the project, and after a brief presentation with the village assembly, they offered me to stay at the Apu's home. I lived with his family for four months.

Yahuma-Callaru is just a few hundred meters away from the meeting of these two streams. It is a smaller community than Arara, with a population of 426 people. The distribution of the houses is quite different as well. Instead of a scattered pattern, they are aligned along the right bank of the Yahuma River. The village centre is where most public places are located: a football field, a basketball court, the elementary school and the communal hall. Almost every house has a small port in the river where they tie their boats, take baths, and wash clothes and dishes.

There is no running water in the houses. Most people have tanks to collect rain water. They have filters attached to the tanks to purify the water and use it mainly to drink and cook. Going to the port to wash clothes or to shower is everyone's favourite social activity, early in the morning or during the evening, and it provides a time to chat and catch up on the latest news and gossip. The village relies on a power generator fueled by petrol to supply electricity in the evening, from six to ten. Given the irregular energy supply, refrigerators are not used, and people tend to rely on other preservation methods, such as salting or smoking fish and meat. Yahuma-Callaru has intermittent cellphone coverage with telephone signal but no data service. The school is allegedly connected to the internet, but the service was never available during my stay.

The community is strongly linked to the ecological cycles of the floodplain. The river waters periodically cover the areas of land where Yahuma-Callaru is located. The houses are built on stilts to prevent flooding when the river level rises. People classify the land into two different categories. The *bajío* or lowland *várzea* comprehends the areas that flood annually and remain covered by water for prolonged periods; the other category is *restinga* or high várzea, which designates the areas that flood only in years with

exceptionally high precipitation. The flooding cycles of the high várzea are longer, usually every four to six years. During the dry season, the Yahuma River dries up completely, and it is difficult to travel outside the village because there is no road. Yahuma-Callaru has no community boat, but people travelling to Leticia-Tabatinga-Santa Rosa can catch a boat that covered the route from the neighbouring village of Erené to the tri-border cities. It passed by the community every day in the morning and returned in the afternoon.

The soil where the houses are built is considered restinga. Most constructions are built over piles at least one meter high to avoid flooding. The *chagras* or croplands are usually located on the low várzea. These gardens take advantage of the soil enriched by the alluvium deposited by the white waters of the Amazon River. The gardens cultivated near the houses are also used to plant food, but the soil is not as rich. People usually plant short-term crops and a few trees that can resist flooding. The gardens are much closer to the village centre than in Arara, usually less than half an hour walk. People worked in the mornings and rested in the evenings. Compared to Arara, the activities in public spaces were less intense and ceased as soon as the night fell. Much of the social life takes place in the interior of the houses, illuminated by candlelight.

In Yahuma-Callaru, most of the residents are evangelicals. Teofilo was an evangelical leader, and some of his sons had roles in the religious organisation. The church's official name is in Portuguese: Igreja Evangelica Tres Fronteiras do Amazonas. It has a presence in the whole region. In the village's main street there is a large concrete temple used at least four days weekly to pray. Religious music could be heard from the temple every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. The influence of religion on the community is noteworthy. It is forbidden to sell liquor, and most celebrations that still take place are toned down.

Living in the Apu´s home was also advantageous because when someone wanted to deliver a public announcement, they would have to use the speakers installed in Teofilo´s house, and I was always around to chat and inquire about the details. I carried out fieldwork in Yahuma-Cayaru from August 2018 to November 2018, and I visited occasionally afterwards when I started my fieldwork in Brazil.

Lauro Sodré, Brazil

I conducted the last part of my fieldwork in a Ticuna village in Brazil. Although I was based during the first stages of my work in Colombia and then in Peru, I frequently crossed the border to Brazil and visited some Brazilian Ticuna communities, invited by friends and acquaintances.

I continued with this strategy to present myself in Lauro Sodré and ask permission to work in the zone through the indigenous regional organisation. Accessing my field site In Brazil was difficult due to the

fragmented political scenery and the divisions inside the Conselho Geral Da Tribu Ticuna (CGTT). This organisation once united all Brazilian Ticuna communities in the struggle for land during the last quarter of the 20th century.

Since my arrival in the region, I visited the Magüta Museum, an important initiative to revindicate and celebrate the culture, identity and rights of the native people in the region. The museum, located in the city of Benjamin Constant, acted as a meeting point for activists to articulate the struggle for land that started in the early 1970s and remained a space of convergence for the Ticuna people of the neighbouring communities. My first contacts in the museum were the manager, Nino Fernandez and the vice manager Paulino Nunes. Unfortunately, Nino died while I was doing fieldwork in Peru, but I continued to visit the museum and learn about the political dynamics of the CGTT.

Attending these meetings, I realised that two factions of the organisation existed, and they were both struggling to gain recognition from the Brazilian government. One faction led by Sebastião Nogueira, elected by an assembly with the votes of teachers, religious leaders, and other Ticuna leaders holding important positions, was often linked to the state and its bureaucracy. On the other hand, Paulino was elected by a significant number of *caciques*. Cacique is the title received by a community leader, elected periodically in an assembly and linked to more traditional forms of power and authority. Because Paulino could not dispute Sebastião's influence, he was removed from his responsibility as the successor to Nino as head of the museum and replaced by another Ticuna activist named Santo Cruz.

I maintained a good relationship with both Santo and Paulino. Santo Cruz invited me to collaborate in organising some events in the museum in order to revitalise it. When settling in a Ticuna community in Brazil, I considered several options, but Santo advised me to work in his hometown, Lauro Sodré. The community was close to the border cities of Benjamin Constant, Brazil and Islandia, Peru. These two cities are separated by the Javari River and are an important urban hub on the opposite side of the Amazonas than the joint cities of Leticia-Tabatinga-Santa Rosa.

By the end of 2018, I arranged to visit the community to present my project to the assembly. I was surprised by the little gathering taking place in one of the classrooms of the elementary school. I was informed that these types of meetings were infrequent, and more often than not, the assemblies had little attendance, making it difficult to reach collective decisions. Nonetheless, I was granted permission to conduct fieldwork for the coming months.

In December 2018, I moved to Lauro Sodré, where I spent the last four months of my fieldwork until March 2019. Cristina Cruz, Santo's younger sister, is a teacher, and she kindly invited me to stay at her house. The history of the community is linked strongly to Cristina's father, Leonilo Clemente Lima. Leonilo had organised the Ticuna people who used to live and work in a *fazenda* (an agro-extractive estate owned by a white Brazilian known as Magalhães) to reclaim the land. Leonilo died several years ago, but everyone recognised his legacy. Nowadays, the community is divided. When I first arrived, Cristina introduced me to the cacique of the community: a man called Porfirio, the oldest son of Leonilio, who had been cacique for 40 years. A few weeks after my arrival, I realised that another person was claiming to be the cacique of the village; his name was Carlitos, and he was Leonilo's nephew. Carlitos argued that Porfirio had been cacique for too long and the village needed a change. The problem was that the cacique must be elected in a general assembly every year, with continuous possibilities of re-election, but there had not been a general assembly in years. The rivalry between the two self-proclaimed caciques was acute, with mutual accusations of witchcraft and threats with machetes and fire weapons. Despite this, I had a good relationship with both authorities, and spent the evenings listening to both accounts of the political struggle, helping them write several documents in Portuguese to the Brazilian state agencies, and tracking down their participation in the struggle for land.

The village is a small community with a population of 184. The *terra indígena* Lauro Sodré is an indigenous territory recognised by the Brazilian legal framework comprising four communities: Guanabara III, São João de Veneza, Lauro Sodré and São Luís, all of them with permanent energy supply. All of them are located on the right bank of the Amazon River. The community of Lauro Sodré is located in terra firme and has immediate access to the Amazon River.

Life in the community was as tranquil as in my previous field sites, but people travelled much more. Transport was fast, accessible and frequent, influencing the dynamics of the community. Many people travelled to the neighbouring communities routinely. For example, the local school in Lauro Sodré only covered the first five years of education, and afterwards, the students travelled to another school in the village of Filadelfia. There was a boat provided by the state school that offered transportation services. Besides, every household in Lauro had a floating dock on the Amazon River, the region's highway, a few meters outside their houses. Most families had access to a peque-peque engine, but if it broke, there was always the option of taking a ride from one of the many boats travelling on the river to Benjamin Constant.

It is important to note that the village is in front of Aramaçá island. Aramaçá is the biggest island in the region. It formed at the confluence of the Amazon River and the Javari River. This body of land greatly

influences the communication of the neighbouring cities because it splits the Amazon River in two. The island, twenty kilometres long, stands between the community of Lauro Sodré and the cities in the tri-border area. This strange hydrography makes travelling to the urban hub of Leticia-Tabatinga-Santa Rosa significantly more expensive and time-consuming. The cities of Benjamin Constant in Brazil and Islandia in Peru, located at the mouth of the Javari River, represent a closer and more accessible pole of attraction for people living on the right bank of the Amazonas River. Overall, Lauro Sodré is easier to access than Arara and Yahuma-Callaru. Here, the reduced commuting time was an important difference to that in my previous field sites, where people spent a significant amount of time travelling before reaching the Amazon River.

Lauro Sodré has electricity 24 hours a day. The village is connected to the electric system of Benjamin Constant. There is no running water, but that is not a problem because the waters of the Amazon River are always available for showering and laundry, even in the driest years. Water tanks collect rainwater for human consumption, although most families boil it before using it. Every village household has a refrigerator and a television. The mobile signal covers practically the whole village and, in some places, especially near the shore, it was possible to pick up data service to use the internet.

Since the village was located in the same place occupied by a former fazenda, most of the land had been deforested and used to raise cattle. The availability of wood is limited. The territory is covered with grass, and only in the last decades have people grown small parcels of secondary forest, but this is insufficient for the demand. Another consequence is the scarcity of game animals. The few villagers who practise hunting told me they must travel long distances to catch some small prey. In their opinion, this is not worth the effort. Consequently, most pack their hunting rifles and hunt outside Lauro Sodré.

Most of the people in the community used to be followers of a messianic movement called Irmandade da Santa Cruz, a religious movement that expanded across the region during the 1980s, congregating many Ticunas around shrines. Nowadays, most followers have joined new evangelical churches, and there are two temples in the community.

	Arara, Colombia	Yahuma-Callaru, Peru	Lauro Sodré, Brazil
Population	921	426	184
Religion	Mostly Catholic	Mostly Evangelic	Evangelic and formerly Santa Cruz
Public Services	Water Supply	Rainwater collection	Rainwater collection
	Electricity 24/7	Electricity only 4 hours a day	Electricity 24/7
	Cellphone reception almost non-existent	Limited cellphone reception	Cellphone coverage
	Community boat	Private boats and a daily route	Private boats
	Elementary and Secondary school (nine years)	Elementary school (six years)	Elementary school (five years)
	Health post	No health post	Health post
Ecosystem	Terra Firme	Várzea	Terra Firme
Period of fieldwork	November 2017 to June 2018	July 2018 to November 2018	December 2018 to March 2019

Figure 1 Comparison of field sites

The best way to illustrate how Ticuna people transit borders, frontiers, and boundaries is by presenting three biographic vignettes, which will illustrate the intricate ways these structural dimensions influence the life trajectory of the region's inhabitants. These vignettes will also briefly introduce a profile of the people who hosted me in the villages where I conducted fieldwork and who appear throughout the body of the dissertation. In the biographic accounts, the elements that first appear disjointed are brought together and revealed as in flux (Hannerz 1997a). Countries, nationalities, families, production and exchange, ethnic identities, conceptions of the world, of the person and of societies all assemble in the life experience of the cross-border region dwellers.

Policarpa is a Ticuna woman. She was my first host during fieldwork. She was born in 1980 in the village of Arara, Colombia. When she was merely 15, she married an 18-year-old Ticuna boy from the same village. After having problems with her marital family (caused by her mother-in-law), they decided to move to another Ticuna Community in Brazil called Belem de Solimões. As Policarpa told me, "We closed the doors and windows of our house and went to spend some time with my godmother". They went to

spend the celebration of the Independence of Brazil (celebrated annually on September 7th) and stayed there for five years. Policarpa — often called Poli — returned to Arara after her husband developed cancer.

During her husband's treatment, they moved temporarily to Bogotá, where the oncology hospital is located. Policarpa got a job as a domestic worker for a catholic missionary. Her partner survived but had his arm amputated. Afterwards, they returned to live in Arara. When I lived with her family during my fieldwork, her household was one of the few in the village that did not have a garden for self-consumption nor did they devote any time to fishing or hunting due to her husband's disability. Poli took care of the family's expenses by cooking for visitors and renting a room in her house. Although she wanted to have a garden, she insisted that her sons should study and get a job outside the community.

Teofilo was my host in the Community of Yahuma-Callaru in Peru. He was born in 1954 in Loretoyacu, a community located in Colombia. In his twenties, Teofilo fell in love with a girl and started a relationship with her. Her family disapproved of it, so their relationship was a clandestine affair. After a while, they got caught, and her father was furious. That situation forced Teofilo to leave his village and start a new life in Yahuma-Callaru, where his uncle lived. Teofilo started a new life and soon got married. After his third child, he decided to obtain new documents as a Peruvian citizen. According to Teofilo, he just had to apply for the documents and declare he was born on Peruvian soil to obtain the nationality. He has always lived in the tri-border region, and although he visited the city of Iquitos in Peru once, he did not like it. On the other hand, Teofilo spends extended periods in Colombian communities visiting relatives. He devotes most of his time to cultivating his garden, not just for self-consumption but also to sell produce in the marketplaces of Tabatinga, Brazil. We often chatted about my frustration during the dry season when the river level was so low that it was impossible to reach his community by boat and we had to walk over the river bed. Teofilo responded, “Ohhh, it is part of the seasonal variation. This is how our life is. We are used to it. Our community is in the restinga, so we are used to the river’s rhythms. Every seven years or so, the river floods our community completely. The last time we decided to move temporarily to my brother’s village in Colombia, we just took our stuff, closed the door and visited them for a couple of months.”

Cristina was my host in the Ticuna Community of Lauro Sodré. She was born there in 1975. She has never lived outside Brazil, although she often crosses to Colombia and Peru to make purchases or visit relatives. When she was young, she lived in Manaus, where a cousin lived at the time. There, she worked as a domestic employee with a family that treated her well and "adopted" her. After a couple of years, she returned to the Amazonian tri-border region and lived in Benjamin Constant, where she studied to

become a teacher. She married a mestizo soon after returning to the region, but they divorced after a few years. Cristina's main complaint was that her former husband did not know how to maintain a garden properly. For her, it is impossible to depend on a salary alone "to buy all the food and products we can easily produce here in the community is for crazy or lazy people," Cristina used to say. She remarried again to an indigenous man, Cocama, and Cristina is delighted because he works hard in the garden. The fruits of their agricultural work are not just for family consumption, they sell part of their produce in the cities' marketplaces. Of all my hosts, Cristina was the only one who owned a boat.

These biographies illustrate how many Ticuna people change residence between Ticuna villages across borderlines in an unproblematic way. Sometimes, they settle and decide to obtain a different citizenship, like Teofilo; in other cases, they return to the country they were born, like Policarpa; and there are life trajectories like Cristina´s, where people never leave the country. Within each country, there are national dynamics that influence internal migration as well. In certain circumstances, they spend periods of their lives working in the big cities outside the region, participating in highly racialised and gendered job structures, as Policarpa and Cristina did, working as domestic employees. In all three cases, it becomes clear that the Ticuna travel regularly between countries and constantly debate the advantages and disadvantages of cultivating a garden or opting for wage work, shifting between them. Life stories like these are just a sample of the many I heard while conducting my fieldwork that constitute the fabric of the reality of being Ticuna in the tri-border region.

As Grimson (2003) points out in his study of the Uruguay-Brazil border, the ethnography of a cross-border region is not just the sum and comparison of the ethnographies of each one of the localities, but an ethnography of the linkages between them and the interrelation that is produced in the limits of different orders of social reality. This dissertation follows this objective, presenting a multi-sited ethnography of the construction of Ticuna identity in the tri-border region of the Amazon River.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is organised into five chapters. The first chapter addresses historical narratives on the past. On the one hand, I present the narrative of a Ticuna origin myth that describes how they were created by the action of two mythical heroes named Yoi and Ipi, who fished them from a river called Eware. On the other hand, I present the historical narrative used by the national states that depict the past as the result of the conquest of an empty, pristine territory incorporating its few inhabitants into a collectivity called a national state. These two narratives emphasise different dimensions of the present

Ticuna reality. The mythical narrative emphasises the particular identity of the Ticuna people, their presence in the territory, their precedence over the national state and their unity as a people. The national narratives of the colonial states are built over two historical falsifications: the idea of an empty territory and the imposition of a generic identity over the native people. I explore how both these accounts are used by people nowadays to interpret their reality and justify their actions.

Chapter two addresses the topic of sovereignty. Using ethnographic descriptions, I portray the different levels on which national projects institute administrative and territorial orders inside their jurisdictions, and the everyday impact these have on the Ticuna. The notion of internal order links these peripheral regions to the nation and its centre. An ethnographic account is used to problematise the presence of the state: a military drill exemplifies the legitimacy of violence against an external other; the education and health services show the many faces of the statecraft on a daily basis. Finally, different indigenist policies reflect the levels of autonomy in which Ticunas are incorporated into national projects. Borderlines divide and differentiate three different models of ticuna territoriality with different legal statuses and differentiated legal rights over their lands. This mosaic of different sovereign orders is challenged by the everyday practices of people that continually blur these limits by eroding the impositions of the state, smuggling goods, having different identities or building transnational communities based on family ties.

Chapter three describes the economic activities of the Ticuna families in the three field sites. It analyses the household economy as a strategically combined activity of production for self-consumption and selling in the marketplace, an activity tied to the city hubs on the border. The marketplaces are described as a focal point of this overlapping logic. The border-crossings from the villages to city markets articulate different logics of production, currencies, and ecological dynamics. The image of an economic frontier advancing homogenously over the Amazonian territories, incorporating and erasing traditional economies, is substituted by a nuanced account of mechanisms that subordinate the rural to the urban and intertwine different economic spaces of production and social reproduction. At the same time, many families erode the logic of the commodification of life by not completely incorporating the logic of the market into their lives.

In chapter four, I address the internal mechanisms through which Ticuna communities have undergone radical transformations in their settlement patterns and the conformation of multi-family communities. In the process, they have maintained a differential identity and a project for common life. I analyse the native notions of political power as distinctive from sovereignty and coercion, relying on the capacity to mobilise people towards a common goal. The chieftaincies have crystallised under different leadership

figures: *apus* in Peru, *curacas* in Colombia and *caciques* in Brazil. What lies behind these differences is the struggle for land under national movements framed in the generic category of 'indigenous peoples' rights', built at the national level. The emergency of leadership in the context of the struggle for land rights draws attention to the specificity of the local processes of construction in the villages that provided the basis for recognition and structured the sense of community as a political and territorial entity. Also, in a more profound sense, they can be seen as the concretion of a political project for communal life. The existence of assemblies that delegate responsibility to the village chiefs to enact collective decisions poses the question of non-sovereign power, a power based on the possibilities of cooperation and collaboration towards a common goal.

Chapter five focuses on the celebration of woreküchiga, a coming-of-age ritual for young girls still practised in many Ticuna communities. The main interest will rest in exploring the notions of personhood, social structure and world order that circulate in these three-day rituals. These notions inform ways to act upon reality from a productive perspective. The world is not given but constantly renewed by its inhabitants. The continuity of the Ticuna people amid vertiginous changes relies on the actualisation of these principles, the rules of the mythical hero Yoi that ensure the continuity of its people and protect them from the world's perils. As with the political organisation discussed in the previous chapter, I describe the tensions between the people who no longer practise this tradition and those who regard it as a milestone for their collective identity. The celebration allows them to connect interwoven myths, ritual practices, and playful activities that put world-ordering schemes at the centre of collective action.

In the conclusion, I offer an analytical reflection regarding the topics addressed in the thesis and propose how the persistence of Ticuna ethnic identity in a border context is the result of multiple structural transformations to which they have adapted, learning to navigate them, just like they do with the pulse of the Amazon River.

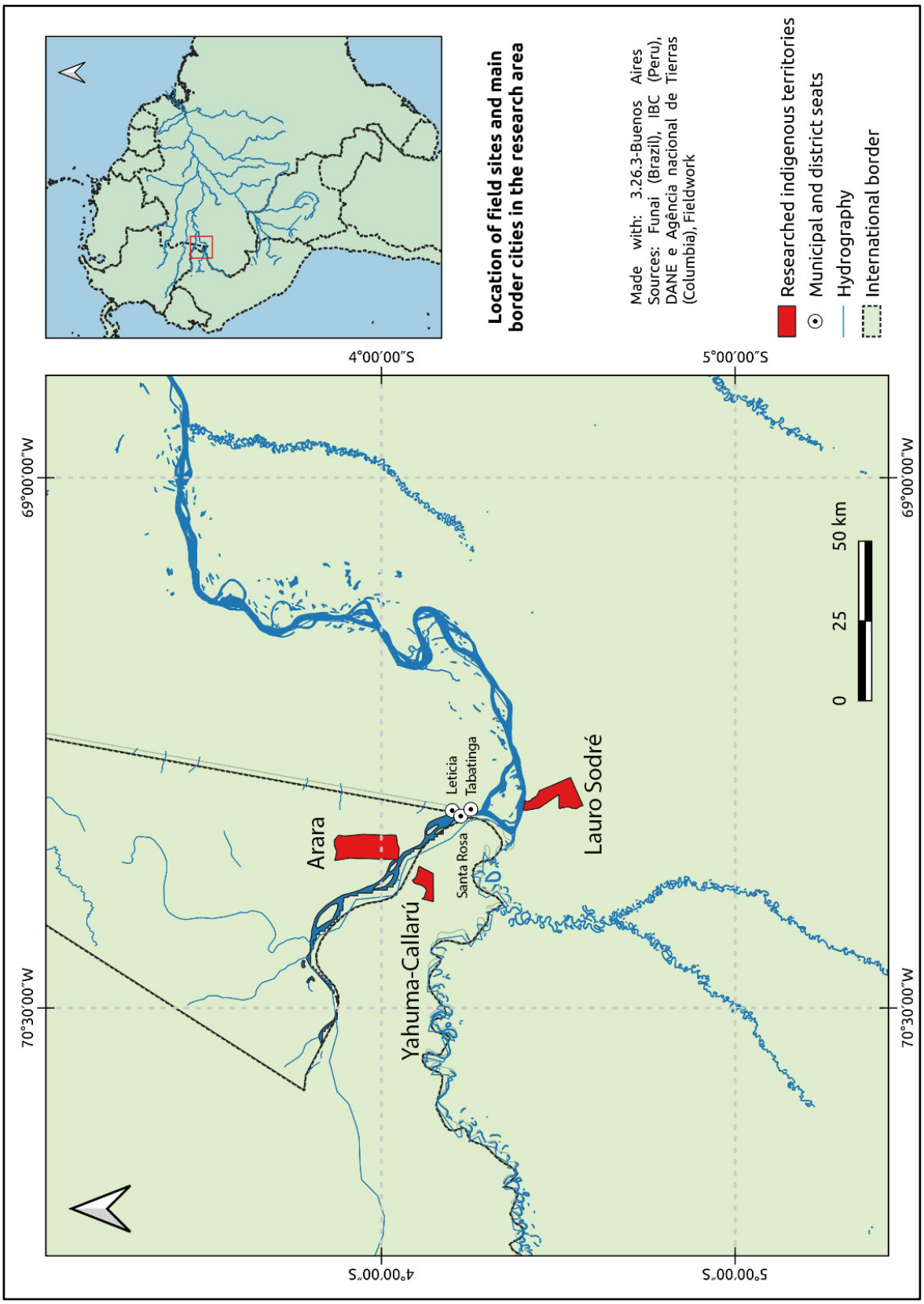

Figure 2 Location of the field sites (Credits: Rodrigo Oliveira Braga Reis)

Chapter One. Becoming Indian

This chapter discusses the historical processes by which the region of study was configured as a border zone. It describes the historical disputes between the European powers to establish dominion over the South American lowlands and the people living there throughout the 16th to 19th centuries. Political borders and the modern concept of sovereignty were imposed in the region in the context of expanding European imperial powers and the consolidation of the state-form. It crystallised over the Spanish and Portuguese crowns' progressive colonial incorporation of territories, including the Upper Amazonian territories. These claims over the control of Amazonian territories and populations disrupted the demography, interethnic relations, and territoriality of the native people, including the Ticuna.

The dispute shaped an unstable frontier between the two Iberian empires at the convergence of the Amazon River and the Javari River. These disputes continued throughout the process of American independence from the colonial powers into relations between the newly created republics over the 19th and 20th centuries (Contreras & Zuloaga 2014; Fausto 2022; Melo 2017). The controversy was first settled with the Upper Amazon territory being divided between Peru and Brazil. Finally, part of the territory was relinquished to Colombia in the 1930s, giving shape to the contemporary tri-border region.

The imperial and national states that colonised the region operated under a modality of power that based its dominion on imposing schemes of classification onto peoples and territories: indio was a category assigned to indigenous people, which suggested incomplete or underdeveloped humans (and later on, childlike citizens), and their territories were designated *terra nullius*, vacant land open to occupation. Consequently, during this long process of border consolidation, native people were not considered actors in the territorial disputes between States.

The Ticuna people adapted and survived the disputes between imperial powers. They responded with a high level of mobility, swinging settlements between the interfluvial regions and the banks of the main rivers to escape and adapt to the progressive pressures the Europeans exerted over the Amazonian tribes and territories. They reorganised their world and adapted to the continuous divisions of their territories, producing accounts of their past in the form of myths that challenged the colonial discourses: they provided a narrative for their own organisation of the territory and people. These are the accounts of the past through which the Ticuna explain and base their identity and belonging to the lands they occupy today.

Likewise, the three national states occupying the tri-border region produced their own national myths, competing accounts of the past to legitimise their existence. These narratives incorporate the image of deceased natives as part of a glorious past but obscure the processes of dispossession and subalternisation of the surviving native populations. Both national and Ticuna narratives of the past play essential roles in the dynamics of the present day as they are both mobilised by the government and the Ticuna population to make sense of the current reality where the borderlines cross and divide Ticuna territory.

I am interested in the historical analysis of the frontiers to show the processes of violent dissolution of the pre-existent orders and societies that lived there. Nevertheless, it is not just a topic from the distant past. I insist on the topicality of these processes as they set the conditions of possibility for subsequent state policies and capitalist relations of production. The role of state violence is crucial to understanding the transition from a colonial order to modern independent nations and the continuities of two fundamental dimensions that remain central to life in the tri-border region in present times: land property and indigeneity. Another related topic of interest is people's accounts of the past. Two confronting narratives explain contemporary reality: the Ticuna myth of origin and nationalist discourses that try to naturalise the order of things.

Throughout my fieldwork, I was interested in the degree to which the Ticuna people considered themselves in relation to the rest of the Ticuna population living in different countries. I observed that my interlocutors preserved a sense of unity across the various nationalities: "Ticuna people are one", I was told consistently. The conversation invariably resulted in a recurring argumentation to support this statement: "We are the people fished by Yoi and Ipi", referring to their origin myth. The myth was often quoted in the public discourses of political organisations, Ticuna academics or cultural organisations. It was also mentioned in private conversations in people's homes or on long boat rides. I heard the mythical story many times, but what I found most interesting was how people interpreted this story. They alleged that before any national border existed, the Ticuna were created in this territory, and they belong to this territory despite any national identification.

In the first part of this chapter, I present a Ticuna mythological narrative that describes Ticuna identity, explaining their origin in the acts of fishing of two cultural heroes named Yoi and Ipi. This narrative also explains the Ticuna links to the territory they occupy. Eware, the ravine where they were created, is close to the tri-border and is the centre of a territoriality that overlaps the international borders.

Afterwards, I present a brief overview of the incorporation of the territories of the Upper Amazon River into the imperial and national states, from the European conquest to the final settling of the national borders in the first half of the 20th century. The construction of the borderlines was a long process. It started in the 16th century and was characterised by exploration and indirect contact. The 17th century saw progressive colonisation from competing colonial forces. In the 18th century the border stabilised around the convergence of the Amazon and Javari Rivers, followed by the formation of independent national states and the incorporation of the region into the global market in the 19th century. Finally, the 20th century saw the conclusive delimitation of the tri-border region.

Finally, I will discuss in detail how the current national narratives conceal the ways the state-form reconfigured the territory and the people to set the conditions to incorporate them into circuits of capitalist exploitation. The incorporation of the tri-border region and its inhabitants into the world-system did not happen harmoniously, nor was it a straightforward transition to private property and a wage-labour regime, but a slow and contradictory transition driven by diverse and violent forms of labour exploitation and people trying to escape it. Two procedures were essential for this "great transformation": the introduction of modern private property and the control of labour, the first achieved under terra nullius and the second under the form of an ethnic-racial category of indigenous people.

The Ticuna origin myth

The Magüta Museum in Benjamin Constant is an important initiative of the Ticuna communities in Brazil who seek to rescue and preserve elements of their culture and to give visibility to their problems and struggles in a context where indigenous people's rights have been systematically denied. I first visited the premises in September 2017, when I had just arrived in the area. I had read about the Magüta Museum during the preparation for my fieldwork, and I was interested in getting in touch with the people in charge of it. Nino Fernandez, a long-time Ticuna activist for indigenous rights, received me.

He had been in charge of the museum since its creation in 1991 and was an essential interlocutor for anyone interested in the Ticuna culture. However, I had been warned by other colleagues that Nino had a reputation of being very critical of anthropologists and other researchers. After the introduction and formalities, he seemed enthusiastic about my presence, welcoming me and spending several hours talking about his experience with the indigenous movement, the museum's history, and his passion for Mexican culture. Nino told me he had visited Oaxaca, Mexico a few years earlier and how he believed that the indigenous people from Mexico and Brazil had a lot in common. We discussed the possibility of me helping

in the museum when I finished fieldwork in Colombia and Peru. Unfortunately, Nino died aboard an ambulance boat while being taken to the Tabatinga Hospital for heart treatment in February 2018.

On the rainy afternoon we first met, Nino gave me a guided tour of the museum. He showed me the impressive collection of more than 500 artefacts of the Magüta People, with a museography designed by the indigenous people themselves. I want to address the first object he showed me: a map of the Ticuna territories.

When you enter the museum, on a wall on the left-hand side of the first gallery, the first item on display is an enormous map of the Brazilian northwest, depicting the 15 Ticuna terras indígenas recognised by the Brazilian government. Above the map, four wooden figures represent Yoi, Ipi, Mowatcha and Aicüna. They are mythical characters that inhabited the world much earlier than other creatures and human beings. They were responsible for creating the rivers, fish, animals and, most importantly, the Ticuna people. The contrast was interesting. The map presented a detailed account of Ticuna communities inside the Brazilian territory. Outside the Brazilian borders, there was just blank, empty space. As we now know, several Ticuna communities are located in territories now considered part of Colombia and Peru, but they were not shown on the monumental map. The museum's narrative was only focused on the Ticuna people living in Brazilian territory.

When I pointed this detail out to Nino, he explained that the museum is the result of the indigenous movement organised in the decade of 1970 to fight for *demarcação* — land titling — which was shaped in the political arena of the Brazilian State. I enquired if the borders make a difference to Ticuna identity. He giggled and replied, "No. We Ticuna are scattered in three countries, but we are one people — the people of Yoi and Ipi — from the beginning of the times, and we will continue to be united despite the borders" and proceeded to tell me the origin myth of the Ticuna people, or how they refer themselves: Magüta.

The ethnonym "Magüta" originates in the word that describes the action of pulling a fish out from the water and is the term most of my interlocutors use to refer to themselves in their language: "People caught with a rod". Nevertheless, this ethnic group is more commonly known as Tikuna or Ticuna in the national censuses of Colombia, Peru and Brazil[11]. Other natives used this term to designate the Magüta

[11] Another illustration of the conflicts generated by the presence of different national projects in the area is the existence of 4 different alphabets to write Ticuna language. Therefore different forms of writing their ethnonym

people as those who inhabited the region at the time the Europeans colonised the continent. Ticuna is considered of Tupi origin, meaning "people painted in black", referencing the practice of painting their bodies with genipap juice (*Genipa Americana*). The extract stains the skin black after being washed away, and the dye remains on the skin for several days. It is still widely used for ritual and aesthetic purposes.

Ticuna mythology comprises a series of stories narrating the adventures of immortal beings, prominently two brothers called Yoi and Ipi. That day at the museum, Nino narrated how Yoi and Ipi, the immortal brothers and cultural heroes of their people, fished different beings that inhabit this land, including the Magüta people, in the Eware Ravine.

The story begins with Ipi, the brother regarded as being playful and daffy, taking care of an umarí tree (*Poraqueiba sericea*), grown from a seed taken from the heart of an enormous ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra*) that the two brothers knocked down in a previous adventure. In that story, the ceiba leaves cover the sky entirely, blocking the sunlight and plunging the world into darkness. After falling, the ceiba transfigured itself into water: the trunk became the Amazon River and its branches all its tributaries.

After some time, the umarí tree grew with the care of Ipi. The first umarí fruit sprouted, and Ipi became increasingly anxious about having it, warning his brother constantly that only he should have the fruit. Yoi assured him that he had nothing to worry about and promised that he could have it as soon as the fruit fell from the tree. To Ipi's despair, the days passed, and the umarí fruit did not fall from the tree. Ipi started to feel hungry and decided to go hunting. Before leaving, he warned his brother, "If the umarí fruit falls, do not pick it. Leave it there until I return".

After Ipi went away, Yoi heard a sound. He went out to check the tree, and the umarí fruit had fallen, but it had transformed into a beautiful woman named Tetchi. In his brother's absence, Yoi took Tetchi with him and made her his wife. However, to keep the secret, he shrank her and carefully hid her inside a flute.

When Ipi returned from hunting, he realised the umarí fruit was missing and asked his brother about it. Yoi replied that he knew nothing and had not taken anything from the tree. Ipi decided to go to sleep but suspected his brother. Later that night, he heard the voices of his brother and a woman. They were both talking and laughing.

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exist: <k> in Colombia, <c> in Brazil, and in the case of Peru, both are used <c> and <k> as both grammatical systems coexist, one formulated by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and another by the Inter-Ethnic Association of Peruvian Jungle Development (AIDESEP) (Leturia 2010).

The next day, Yoi left the house to go hunting. Ipi started looking for the woman whose voice he had heard the night before. After searching for a while, he devised a plan: he placed several small fish in a hot pan, and immediately, the fish started jumping and bouncing. This caused Tetchi to giggle and chuckle. Next, Ipi took his penis out and started jumping up and down. Tetchi, who was watching Ipi, laughed loudly at his wiggling penis. Following the sound of the laughter, Ipi found the flute, picked it up and shook it, making Tetchi fall from her hideout.

Afterwards, Ipi and Tetchi engaged in sexual relations, and she immediately got pregnant, causing her abdomen to grow. Scared of his brother's rage, Ipi tried to shrink Tetchi and put her back inside the flute, but he did not succeed. When Yoi returned, he realised what had happened between his brother and Tetchi, and got mad at Ipi.

The next day, the baby was born. Yoi instructed Ipi to gather some genipap fruits to paint the newborn. However, Yoi sent all the genip trees far away from home to punish his brother. After a very long walk, Ipi finally found one tree, but Yoi made it grow taller and taller, making it almost impossible to collect the fruits growing in its branches. Nonetheless, Ipi climbed and collected some genipap fruit. When Yoi realised that his brother had succeeded at the task, he tried to stop him from climbing down. He blocked his way by making an enormous fungus grow on the genip tree's trunk. Facing this difficulty, Ipi transformed into a bullet ant, and carried the genipap fruit to the floor.

Once Ipi returned home, Yoi instructed him to grate the genipap fruit to extract the juice. Ipi started the task immediately. After a while, Ipi asked his brother if there was enough genipap zest to paint his son, and Yoi replied: "Not enough, keep grating". Later, Ipi asked his brother again if there was enough zest already, but Yoi replied: "Not enough, keep grating". This scene repeated several times, and Ipi continued grating the fruits frenetically until he ended up grating his hand in which he held the fruit, and then his arm and, eventually, his entire body.

Afterwards, Yoi took the grated body of Ipi, mixed it with the genipap fruit, and handled it to Tetchi, asking her to use the juices of the grated fruit to paint her son's body and throw away the residues into the river. Tetchi, ignoring that Ipi's body was grated altogether with the genipap fruit, obeyed Yoi and painted her baby. When she finished, Yoi informed her that Ipi's remains were part of the debris. Afflicted, she threw the remains into a stream of water called Eware. The debris transformed into fishes that swam upstream in the form of *piracema*, the stational migration during the fish spawning period.

Over the following days, Yoi decided to create "his" people. In order to do this, he went to the Eware to fish. First, he used the fruit of a palm called tucumã (*Astrocaryum aculeatum*) as bait. Every time he caught a fish and pulled it out of the water, it transformed into a bush animal: a wild pig, paca, tapir, and so on, all of which have strong teeth because of the hard seed of the fruit Yoi used as bait. He caught both male and female animals of each species so that they could reproduce, but he was not happy. He wanted to fish humans to create his people. Yoi then tried another bait. This time, he used sweet cassava (*Manihot esculenta*); on this occasion, the fish he pulled out turned into men and women. After pulling out his people, Yoi angled for his brother Ipi, who appeared in the river as a fish with a golden spot. However, Ipi did not bite the hook. Yoi handed Tetchi the line, and as soon as she threw the line to the river, Ipi went for the hook and Tetchi pulled him up to the shore, where he retook his human form.

Ipi also wanted to create his own people, so he trolled in the river with the same sweet cassava bait, gathering a considerable amount of men and women. Afterwards, Ipi spoke with his brother about his desire to split up and live to the east with his people, downstream of the Amazon River, bearing in mind the things he saw when he transformed into a fish and visited the place. Ipi said he had found a lot of gold in that part of the river. Yoi agreed, but without Ipi noticing, he turned the world around. That way, Yoi tricked his brother into going to live west while he travelled east, where he finally stayed with his people.

"That happened a long time ago", concluded Nino while he showed me some panels with paintings illustrating the myth he had just told me. Many registered accounts of the myth can be found in the ethnographic literature (Chetanükü et al. 2016; Cruz et al. 2022; Nimuendajú 1952; Pacheco de Oliveira 1988). Furthermore, I heard many versions of the story during the following months. Some contained slight variations or were linked to different myths and adventures of Yoi and Ipi.

However, all the narrators I spoke to underlined the unity of the Ticuna people based on their common creation by Yoi and Ipi's actions and their belonging to the territory east and west of the Eware ravine. The mythical narrative of the Magüta people places their origin as rooted deep in the past, long before European presence in the region. Let us turn to the historical processes by which the Ticuna people and their territory ended up overlapping with the borders of three countries.

History

The upper region of the Amazon River has a long history of human occupation, but its configuration as a cross-border region starts with disputes over its control during the colonisation of America by European powers. The dispute over the limits of the colonies shaped the fate of the Amazon region and set up the

conditions under which the confluence of the Javari and Amazon Rivers became a borderland, first between the colonial empires and afterwards for the independent nations. Competing policies of territorial occupation came into effect depending on the sovereign power ruling and administering each side of the borderline.

Colonialism translated into different strategies of labour exploitation and territorial organisation. These forged long-lasting patterns of domination that survived the historical period of colonial rule and persist even today. In Latin America, these patterns have been called coloniality, which refers to the emerging global structure of control over labour and natural resources linked to a social classification based on the idea of race and a hierarchy of geohistorical spaces (Quijano 2000, 2015).

The native population resisted by many means, from strategic alliances with the colonial powers, armed confrontation or fleeing to more inaccessible territories. Their world changed. The border between the Spanish and Portuguese territories stabilised *de facto* in the 18th century, and later in the 19th century between the independent states of Peru and the empire of Brazil, to finally become a tri-border region between the republics of Peru, Brazil and Colombia in the 20th century. During that time, the Ticuna population oscillated between occupying the interfluve territories between the Amazon River and the Putumayo from the time of the first contact, and then the banks of the Amazon River in the 20th century. This section will describe these historical processes and present two elements upon which the colonial domination was based and which persisted into the independent nation-states: the category of indigenous people and the designation of their territory as vacant land. Both ongoing historical processes form the axis of the prolonged domination/exploitation of the Ticuna and other original peoples.

The conquest and occupation of America began with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean in 1492. The voyage was an attempt funded by the Crown of Castile to find a passage to India and China by sailing west. This event was part of a European impulse of expansion in which the Portuguese had already colonised the Atlantic islands of Madeira and Azores and portions of the African coast. The European powers explored and colonised the continent in the following years, establishing colonies that lasted three centuries until their independence.

The colonial conquest was an uneven process that first reached some territories of the American continent, such as Central America, the Caribbean Islands, and the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The inland territories remained unconquered for longer, and the colonial powers effectively occupied the Upper

Amazon in the 18th century. And even then, their control was limited to the course of the major rivers. This process included several stages: indirect contacts, exploration, and occupation.

Precolonial Amazonia

At the time of the colonisation, a vast multiplicity of native societies inhabited the region of study, establishing complex and dynamic relations among them. Many centuries of human occupation with constant adaptations and modelling of the ecological conditions of the lowland forest made this region as vibrant and favourable to human occupation as the rest of the continent[12].

The archaeological evidence suggests two defining moments in the configuration of the region's demographic profile (Goulard 2010). The first refers to the gradual occupation of the basin by Arawak groups, migrating from the Caribbean coast in the south of the continent and settling around the banks of the most important rivers such as the Amazon, Orinoco, Negro, Caquetá, Putumayo, Napo and Javari. This migratory movement occurred from the 5th to the 10th centuries and greatly influenced the ecosystem and all the other populations in the area. Following this period, another extensive population movement began. From the 11th century until the period of colonisation, Tupi groups — established on the Atlantic coasts of the continent — started to expand towards the west. Following the courses of the rivers, they reached the upper region of the Amazon River by the time the Europeans arrived.

There are no written records of the societies that occupied the Upper Amazon River before European occupation. Goulard (2010) proposes that the Ticuna occupied the várzea of the Amazon River somewhere around the 11th century. They were displaced by one of the Tupi-Guarani groups known as the Omagua, who pushed the Ticuna to the riverine inland zones by the time of the first contact with the Europeans. Contrary to the notion of a green desert, by the time of the first contacts, the Upper Amazon harboured an extensive network of settlements with complex relationships among them.

Santos Granero (2005) posits that the Upper Amazonian region was occupied by numerous tribes connected by an extensive trading network based on positive exchange relations, trading goods and marriages, and hostile exchanges such as wars and captivity. This depiction of the lowland regions as intensively interconnected within the different ecosystems of várzea (floodplains) and terra firme (upland

[12] The idea of Amazonia as a limiting environment that restrained the formation of socially complex settlements in vogue some decades ago (Meggers 1971) has since been replaced by a nuanced mosaic of heterogeneous societies that not only have adapted themselves to the environment but have succeeded in modifying it, creating and shaping anthropic forests (Roosevelt 2013).

forest, interfluve) extending to the coastal and mountain regions is based on the evidence of the circulation of products according to ecological specialisations[13].

By the time of the first contacts, the Omagua people occupied the privileged zone of the main course of the Amazon River and monopolised trade with numerous peoples, linking the moist forest of the Andean region with the várzea the terra firme of the Upper Amazon River. The Ticuna occupied the interfluves between the Amazon and the Putumayo/Içа rivers and had a complex relationship with the Omagua, trading curare for tools and products. There were also constant clashes between the groups, with warring expeditions led by the Omagua, who practised capturing people from other groups to incorporate them economically and socially into their society.

According to Unigarro (2017), the interethnic borders between the various groups populating northwest Amazonia were not fixed nor impermeable. These interethnic relationships were fluid and configured more like "spaces of integration and economic, social and cultural dynamism" (Unigarro 2017: 65). Serje characterises the spatial logic of pre-Hispanic societies as a dynamic of superposition and overlapping, which is expressed in fluid and permeable borders and spaces of multiple sovereignty (2011). This reality changed with the European conquest. The imperial powers divided the world and appropriated their portion, stripping the natives of their sovereignty and upsetting the local spatial categories and limits.

The Iberian expansion and first explorations in the 16th century

The Iberian powers were the first to initiate maritime expansion to find new routes to the territories of China and India. The Crowns of Castile and Portugal competed to control the uncharted routes across the Atlantic and the coast of Africa. The Catholic Church mediated the conflict, divided the world into two spheres of influence, and assigned control over them to each Crown. The Treaty of Tordesillas[14] (1494) traced a limit along a meridian line halfway between the Cape Verde Islands occupied by the Portuguese and the land conquered by Columbus on his first voyage to the Caribbean. The occupied territories and those yet to be colonised to the East of this line — traced 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands — were declared Portuguese dominions, while all the lands to the West were declared Spanish possessions.

[13] The presence of stone and metal axes in the lowlands, found far away from production centres, is among the most telling evidence (Santos Granero 1992).

[14] This treaty excluded other European powers. By the end of the century, France, Great Britain, and the United Provinces emerged as dynamic commercial centres. They disregarded the Tordesillas Treaty and claimed their right to conquer and establish their own colonies (Pagden 2007).

While there was no accurate way to measure longitude at the time, the Tordesillas delimitation coincided roughly with the coastal region of South America, where the mouth of the Amazon River is located. Accordingly, the Portuguese claimed the right to occupy the oriental coast of the continent after Pedro Alvarez Cabral arrived in Porto Seguro in 1500. They founded the colony of Brazil which included the territories where the estuary of the Amazon River discharges its waters into the Atlantic Ocean.

During this period, the Spanish Crown conquered vast territories in North and Central America. Their military raids advanced south, swiftly penetrating the Andean regions. During the first half of the 16th century, the Spaniards conquered the Inca empire. They founded the Viceroyalty of Peru to control their new territories and organised important colonial centres in Lima, Quito and Popayan. The exploration into the Amazon began from these Andean territories, where the headwaters of the main tributaries of the Amazon River are located towards the west of the subcontinent.

Although the mouth of the Amazon River is registered in the chronicles of numerous explorers[15], the interior of its course remained unexplored for many decades. The colonisation focused on the Atlantic coastal regions for the Portuguese and the Pacific coasts and Andean regions for the Spaniards. The first expeditions over its course were conducted by the Spaniards from the western extreme of the continent through the numerous tributaries of the oriental mountains. The Crown of Castile sent exploring parties from the Andes down the river as part of their efforts to explore and conquer new territories. These incursions were motivated by rumours about lands of great wealth that led many colonisers to seek out the city of El Dorado and the country of Cinnamon.

The first recorded expedition to navigate the entire river course was led by Gonzalo Pizarro, lieutenant governor of Quito. Facing many adversities and troubles, they advanced down the Napo River until their supplies ran low. The party divided, resulting in Pizarro returning to Quito. His second in command, Francisco de Orellana, continued downstream. Orellana became the first European to navigate the river through the continent, reaching the Atlantic Ocean in 1542. These explorers baptised the river the "Amazonas" because of a battle they had during their journey with a group of female warriors, which they related to Greek mythology[16]. Friar Gaspar de Carvajal, the chronicler of the expedition, registered

[15] Records confirm the estuary was reached on different explorations by Amerigo Vespucci in 1499, and by Vicente Yañez Pinzón, Diego de Lepe, and Alonso Velez in 1500 (Santos Granero 1992).

[16] During the first centuries of colonisation, it was called indistinctively Marañon River, Fresh Water Sea, and Grão-Pará among other names.

important ethnographical information in his notes. He records that the native population lived in large settlements along both riverbanks. The Omagua people occupied hundreds of kilometres in the Upper Amazon River, between the Napo and Jutaí rivers, forming a large confederation called Aporia Grande (Medina 1894).

After Orellana, Pedro Ursúa attempted to navigate the Amazon River again in 1560 in an infamous expedition in which he was murdered in a mutiny. The remaining group was commanded by Lope de Aguirre, a rebel who declared war against the Spanish Empire. Aguirre reached the Atlantic[17] only to be judged and killed by the Spaniards shortly afterwards. This episode illustrates the discords the conquerors had with the Crown. The lack of a robust mechanism of control from the metropolis was one of the reasons why it took a long time to consolidate the conquest.

For the rest of the century, no other exploration of the long and uncharted course of the Amazon River took place. As the stories of cities filled with riches to plunder proved to be chimaeras, the colonisers' attention shifted to organising productive activities and exploiting the native labour force, which proved to be the actual source of wealth to appropriate. Another reason the Amazon was left unexplored was the formation of the Iberian Union, a dynastic union between Spain and Portugal under the Spanish Habsburg monarchs between 1580 and 1640. Although the Crown of Castile and the Kingdom of Portugal remained independent, during that period they fell under the rule of the same monarch.

Occupation and control over the Amazon River in the 17th century

At both extremes of the continent, at the origin of the Amazon River and its outlet, intense economic activities linked these regions to an emerging world economy. Profitable enterprises and modalities of exploitation emerged in the conquered lands. The coast of Brazil produced sugar, introduced in 1570 along with a plantation economy. In the Viceroyalty of Peru, the exploitation of minerals in the Andean mines became the motor of the colonial economy.

Nevertheless, the dominion of the Iberian crowns over the American continent started to decline. Other European nations did not recognise the Tordesillas treaty. France, Great Britain and The United Provinces

[17] The confusion about the route of the expedition reveals the lack of knowledge about the hydrography of the Amazonian lowlands. Originally it was thought they had arrived at the Atlantic through the Orinoco River, but nowadays it is believed the most likely course was through the Amazon River.

disputed Portuguese and Spanish spheres of influence in America and Asia. It was a period of intense confrontation between the emerging centres of power and the declining empires of the Iberian Union.

These new rising powers expanded their trade networks at the expense of the Iberian crowns. In the first two decades of the 17th century, they occupied numerous islands in the Caribbean, backed the activities of corsairs to undermine Spanish control over the seas, and established colonial enclaves in the Brazilian northeast and Guyanas, close to the mouth of the Amazon River.

Amidst the colonial disputes, the Amazon River had become a priority, and the Iberian Union made many efforts to secure it. The combined fleets of Spain and Portugal expelled the French from São Luis do Maranhão in 1612 and installed a strong presence in the city to project military force towards the Guyana enclaves. In 1616, the Portuguese consolidated their control of the mouth of the Amazon River, founding the Precepio Fortress and the city of Belem do Pará in 1623. In 1619, the Audience of Quito formed the Governorship of Maynas as an administrative jurisdiction to control the vast and unknown territories around the Amazon River.

From both edges, the need for labour pushed exploration into the Amazon and its tributaries for captives to feed the mines and plantations. Maynas granted *enconmiendas* to secure control of the territory and its people. The colonial jurisdictions of Maranhão and Grão Pará were colonial enclaves used by the Portuguese to gain control over the territories up river during the following years. France, the United Provinces and the United Kingdom consolidated their Guyana territories between the Captaincy of Venezuela and Brazil. The Guyanas were linked to the Amazon River through the intricate hydrographic system of the Orinoco, from where they had access to the Rio Negro and the mid-course of the Amazon River.

All these colonial enclaves became notably important in the dispute for world hegemony. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1668 signalled the spring of a new international order based on international relations between sovereign states. The control over the extremes of the river signalled the advance of a new order that, over time, incorporated these lands into the periphery of a new world-system and included them under the sphere of control of the emerging modern states as a form of political power.

The end of the Iberian Union in 1640 sparked competition between the Spaniards and the Portuguese to incorporate more territory into their respective colonies. One expedition became extremely important in that dispute. Pedro Texeira navigated the Amazon River course for the first time since the expedition of Orellana, this occasion in the opposite direction, from the Atlantic to the Andes, in 1637-1639. Allegedly,

Texeira claimed possession in the name of the empire of Portugal and marked the border with a milestone over the waters of the Rio Ouro. This *auto de posse* was fundamental for Portuguese claims, but as would prove to become a recurring problem in most disputes over Amazonian territories, there were contesting claims over the actual location of said river.

The strategies used by the empires to expand further inland into the Amazon basin were different but served the same purpose: the control of the indigenous population and their labour force. The Spanish opted for a missional approach, while the Portuguese relied upon armed incursions. That difference was rooted in the historical processes that shaped their colonial policies.

The Spaniards' abuses in the territories of New Spain resulted in the decimation of the native population in North and Central America. By the time of the conquest of the South American lowlands, the methods of incorporation had shifted from enslavement to serfdom. Early on, laws prohibited the slavery of the Indians. The institution used to exploit forced labour was the encomienda. The New Laws of 1543 prohibited enslavement. The encomienda system granted private individuals rights over the lands and the people living on them, including the right to obtain labour in exchange for the conversion of natives. Numerous injustices and abuses were committed, and the Spanish Crown extinguished these rights. The encomienda was replaced by the *repartimiento* and the *mita* systems that coerced indigenous communities to provide a certain number of labourers to work mainly in the mines as part of their tributes to the Crown.

The Spanish Empire determined that the conquest of the Amazonian territories should be achieved by pacific means. To incorporate indigenous peoples in the Upper Amazon, the Spanish Crown gave the Society of Jesus a monopoly over the colonising enterprise, intending to protect the indigenous people from the abuses of the colonisers, and thus establish a better administration for their exploitation[18]. The Jesuits arrived in Maynas in 1638 and started their missional work organising reductions or settlements on the banks of the main rivers to convert the natives spiritually and to the ways of life of the Spaniards.

The plantation economy, the backbone of Portuguese colonial exaction in their American territories, also required increasing amounts of labour. The Portuguese were determined to obtain more labourers, and resorted to using armed force. The previous experience of the *Bandeirantes Paulistas,* who organised raids

[18] This strategy reproduced methods used in the Region of Paraguay, another contested territory between the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns.

to capture and enslave indigenous people during their early expansion west, proved efficient. Consequently, the colonial authorities organised similar armed groups called *tropas de resgate* in the Amazonian region.

Nominally, the enslavement of native people was prohibited on American soil by the Portuguese Royal Decree of 1587. However, there were conditions under which the captivity of people was permitted. The legal figure of *guerras justas* served as an alibi to capture and trade indigenous people. In the first years of colonial expansion, enslavement was carried out through the pre-existent trade circuits of native peoples. In the Upper Amazon, the Portuguese initially engaged in the commerce of human beings with the Omagua, given their dominion over other tribes and their practice of taking prisoners. Nevertheless, as they could not meet the demand, the Omagua became victims of Portuguese enslavement (Santos Granero 1992).

The Company of Jesus initiated evangelisation, and for a short period, they established several reductions along the Amazon River, reaching the Rio Negro. Their advance frequently clashed with the incursions of the tropas de resgate who targeted the reductions, destroying them and taking the indigenous peoples as prisoners for the slave market. The Portuguese also recurred to evangelisation, but they marginalised the Jesuits[19], an order with autonomy that responded directly to Rome. They resorted to the Carmelites instead, a religious order that responded to the Portuguese catholic structure and was not opposed to enslaving practices. With the armed incursions, the Portuguese rapidly gained control of the middle course. They built a series of military posts along the Amazon River. In 1668 they established the Fort of São José da Barra at the confluence of the Amazon River and the Rio Negro. This outpost was crucial for blocking the Dutch and British incursions from Guyana and Suriname. By the end of the century, they reached the Upper Amazon, and continuous clashes with the Jesuits occurred.

This phase of permanent presence consolidated Portuguese control in the territory. It disrupted the social and territorial organisation of the natives in the basin. The population dropped because of war incursions, enslavement, illness, and migration out of the reach of the colonisers. The Omagua, who once linked the Upper Amazon region with the east Andean region and the riverine tribes, were decimated, and only a few sought refuge in the missions.

[19] The Jesuits' missional work among the Guaraní in the province of Paraguay clashed directly with the incursions of the Bandeirantes. To avoid a similar situation, their missional work in the Amazonian region of Brazil was limited to the Madeira River.

Stabilisation of the colonial borders in the 18th century

During the 18th century, the disputes over the limits of the Portuguese and Spanish empires reached their height. The competing strategies clashed along the course of the Amazon River. On the one hand, the Jesuits' missions expanded east and, under Friar Samuel Fritz's leadership, founded forty reductions in Maynas. On the other hand, the tropas de resgate — more decided and coordinated — advanced west, targeting the Jesuit Missions when possible. Both strategies of control trapped the Amazonian native populations into increasingly violent circumstances. Most of the population was decimated by epidemics, captured by the Portuguese or fled the region into the jungle, settling in more inaccessible territories. Although it had always been a region of fluid interethnic frontiers, this change resulted in the irreversible decline of the native population. It never recovered its original dimension.

The Portuguese's definitive impulse crystallised in the first decade of the 18th century. Their military offensive reached the region where the Javari meets the Amazon River, and the region stabilised as a *de facto* borderland. During the following decades, the territorial domain of the Spaniards and Portuguese oscillated around this area. The dispute was finally settled with the Madrid Treaty in 1750 and the San Ildefonso Treaty in 1777. Zárate (2008) draws attention to the fact that despite stabilising the borderland between the two empires, the borderline was not legally constituted.

The scramble for the Upper Amazon region was one of the pieces of a larger stage in the colonial appropriation of the world. In 1713, the Utrecht treaties that broke peace between the European countries reflected in the Amazonian reality. The Amazon River and Rio de la Plata were considered the principal vectors in the delimitation of the two crowns, and the treaty established peace around the claims over the Banda Oriental (modern Uruguay) and Amazonian territories. Afterwards, the limits became relatively stable, even though no agreement about the final delimitations was reached until 1777.

The border was loosely defined around the last Spanish mission and the first Portuguese fort. On one side, the reduction of Nuestra Señora de Loreto de Ticunas, a mission a few kilometres upstream of the mouth of the Javari River. It became the furthest Spanish possession along the Amazon River around 1760 when the territorial conflict between the empires stabilised. The Portuguese counterpart assured the control of the territories East of the Javari by establishing Tabatinga Fort in 1776. The definitive setting of the border resulted from the San Ildefonso Treaty in 1777, in the context of a major reconfiguration of the colonial world after the Seven Years' War, a dispute for the hegemony of the world between France and the United Kingdom. This solution was based on the principle of *uti possedetis* (As you possess, so shall you possess),

recognising the occupation of the territories. According to the San Ildefonso Treaty, the exact delimitation of the borderlines was supposed to be agreed on by a bipartite commission, but it never reached its objective due to discrepancies. Nonetheless, the nation-states that emerged after independence used these documents as the baseline for delimiting their territories.

The Bourbon reforms in Spain and the Pombal reconfigurations in Portugal reorganised the colonial administrations in the second half of the century. Both sought to increase state power and tighten the grip of the colonial centres over production and trade overseas to strengthen the battered economy of the empires. The Jesuits' presence was seen by the Portuguese and the Spanish colonisers as political interference by Rome and as a powerful economic competition given the economic exemptions the order possessed. The Jesuits were expelled from Spanish territories in 1767. By then, they had organised around 40 missions along the Upper Amazon River watercourse with their influence reaching indigenous people of more than 150 nations. They were replaced by Franciscan missionaries after a few years. The Jesuits were also expelled from Portuguese territories in 1757, with the Carmelites taking charge. The expelling of the Jesuit Order was an essential part of the reforms of the administration of Crown possessions by the Bourbons in Spain and Marques de Pombal in Portugal. They both sought a better administration of the colonies during a period of decline in their empires. The reductions were abandoned for a few years and then administered by other religious orders. Amidst these agitated circumstances, many missions disappeared or were relocated.

Slave capture drastically changed the dynamics of the Upper Amazon. The region ended up with strong links to the Atlantic axis. With the success of the sugar plantations on the coasts, the Amazonian region focused more on the extraction of *drogas do sertão* (vanilla, cinnamon, sarsaparilla, cinchona bark, anatto, among other spices). The Spanish Andean pole, dominated by mining activities, lost interest in the Upper Amazon region. The annihilation of the Omagua created the conditions for many Ticunas to occupy the banks of the Amazon River again. With their historical flexibility in occupying both the terra firme and the várzea regions, the Ticuna were able to survive the decimation. The records show that The Ticuna people lived intermittently in the mission of San Ignacio de Pebas, but interethnic conflicts arose, and the Ticuna moved to a new mission named Loreto de Ticunas. In the mid-century, they were reduced in the San Javier de Javari and Loreto de Ticunas missions. The interethnic and imperial borders overlapped again (Zárate 1998).

The reconfiguration of the Portuguese administration in colonial Brazil led to the creation of a civil system called *Diretorio de Indios*, where a crown official replaced the authority of the Carmelite religious order.

The official was in charge of administrating indigenous affairs, including controlling their labour force that was nominally entitled to a wage. In reality, the directors allied with landlords to exploit the indigenous people, providing only essential goods and other subsistence products as payment.

Emergence of the independent nation-states in the 19th century

Independence struggles took place in the first decades of the 19th century in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America. The region was transformed from a confluence of imperial borders to a convergence of nation-state borders. The centres of the political units shifted from transatlantic to continental capitals, but the region remained neglected and peripheral. The incorporation of the Amazonian region into the newly independent nation-states only gained impulse due to the economic boom of rubber exportations by the end of the century.

The independence of Spain's American colonies went through a conflictive process of armed confrontation that resulted in their fragmentation into several countries. Freed from Spanish rule, the territory of the Upper Amazon was claimed by the newly formed republics of Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The colonial region of Maynas, dependent on the Viceroyalty of Granada, was transferred to the Viceroyalty of Peru by royal decree on the 15th of July 1802, a key event for the posterior disputes over the region. The independence process from Spain culminated in the creation of the independent republics of Gran Colombia in 1819 and Peru in 1821. With the dissolution of the Republic of Gran Colombia in 1830, Colombia and Ecuador claimed the region. The territory remained in complete possession of Peru until the following century when it was ultimately divided, and a portion fell under Colombian control.

On the other hand, the independence of Brazil followed after a series of political decisions that created a smoother transition and resulted in the conservation of its territorial integrity. The Portuguese colony was elevated to the status of The Kingdom of Brazil as a strategy orchestrated by the Portuguese royal court to escape from the Napoleonic invasion by transferring the kingdom's seat overseas. These events led to the proclamation of the Empire of Brazil as an independent state in 1822.

In this context, the still unsettled borders were a problem that the new political entities had yet to solve. In 1851, Peru and Brazil signed the Fluvial Convention on Commerce and Navigation. The document excluded Ecuador and Colombia and set the border in Tabatinga. The nations' limits extended to the south following the course of the Javari River and to the north in a straight line from Tabatinga to the Apaporis River in its confluence with the Japura River. In 1867, Peru founded a fort called Leticia next to Tabatinga, separated only by the San Antonio ravine. This tacit acceptance of the borderline between Leticia and

Tabatinga lasted during Brazil's transition from monarchy to republic in 1889 and was ratified in the Treaty Velarde-Río Branco in 1909.

Steam navigation was introduced on the Amazon River in 1852, resulting in the acceleration of trade. By the mid-century, the exports of the Brazilian Amazonian region were all products of extractivist activities: Pirarucu, sarsaparilla, copaiba oil, Brazil nut, and rubber. The Port of Iquitos was inaugurated on the Peruvian side to take advantage of the steam navigation. Loreto was created as a new political and administrative governorate to control affairs in the region more efficiently. New investments in explorations and navigation prepared the region for extractivist activities (Santos Granero & Barclay 2002). Naturalists and scientists drew attention to the varieties of natural rubbers that could be extracted from trees containing vegetable latex. By the end of the century, the region experienced a drastic transformation with the adoption of rubber as an essential raw material in the industrialisation process. The extraction of this resource attracted investment, and the rubber trade intensified across the Amazonian Valley.

England and the United States envisioned early on the importance of rubber, given its numerous applications and pressured Brazil and Peru to open the Amazon River to other countries. In 1867 the Amazon River was open to international navigation, rapidly becoming monopolised by Great Britain. At the start of 1870, the incorporation of the Amazonian region into the world-system was marginal, situated in the periphery of the significant trade circuits.

The first rubber boom (1870-1920) changed the face of the region. The ever-increasing demand for rubber linked the Amazonian valley not only to the national economic centres but directly to international trade centres and the world’s financial capitals. It mobilised immense amounts of workers — mainly indigenous — in deplorable conditions, introducing the private possession of land and the formation of large estates in a few hands. It also deepened the logic of plundering resources to the benefit of investors, not the region's population.

Two models of extractivist activities emerged based on the ecological characteristics of the trees that produced rubber, the availability of the labour force, and the connection to the urban centres where rubber was traded. Essentially, two species of trees produced latex: *Hevea* varieties that could be bled periodically and produced a better elastic material, and the *Castilla* varieties, of a more fragile nature, that could not stand much bleeding and tended to die in a short period of time. The distribution of the latex trees was disperse, making their exploitation extremely labour-intensive, and the capacity to

mobilise workers relied on diverse modalities of debt slavery. According to these ecological characteristics, two extractive modalities were consolidated. The first one, labour-intensive, focused exclusively on extraction and meant that the workers were closely controlled to produce fixed amounts of latex. The second one relied on the diversification of activities which meant labourers had time to devote to household production and only extracted rubber periodically (Pacheco de Oliveira 2016; Zárate 2008).

Both systems relied on debt bondage to control the workers. In most cases, this turned into an extremely violent system of coerced labour. The dynamics of the concentration of production by a few enterprises and the authoritarian control of debt peonage produced a well-documented genocide of the native population (Casement & Chirif 2012). The main regions of rubber extraction shifted over time, but the most important regions were the Putumayo-Caqueta, the Lower Amazon around Belen do Pará and the Acre region.

Rubber extraction impacted the Upper Amazon region. Ullán (2000), citing Pacheco (1988) and Sánchez (1990), informs of 18 *fundos* in the stretch between Tabatinga and Sao Paulo de Olivença in Brazil and 13 *haciendas* between Leticia and the Atacuari River in Peru by the end of the century. A commercial house was located in each of these extractive estates to dispatch the raw materials and receive goods and merchandise to pay the workers in kind. The control over commerce and debt articulated the population's dependency on these large estates. The Ticuna population was forced to work in rubber tapping. Many families were relocated to the proximities of the fazendas and forced by debt to work for the owners. There, the model was characterised by mixed forms of exploitation that combined rubber extraction with other economic activities.

The rubber extraction in the Upper Amazon/Solimões accounts for the growth of urban centres such as Benjamin Constant in Brazil and Caballococha in Peru that were connected to the rest of the world thanks to steam navigation. The impact on land tenure was considerable. Private land ownership increased, and haciendas expanded on the banks of the Upper Amazon River, especially around the smaller tributaries that allowed access to inland territories where the rubber trees were located.

Final configuration of a tri-border region in the 20th century

The final delimitation of the border occurred during the first decades of the 20th century, yet not without conflicts and a brief armed occupation of the territory. The main changes during the first half of the century were the increase of state presence and the implementation of nation-building projects.

With the bust of international prices provoked by the flooding of the market by plantation rubber produced in southeast Asia, the region lost its economic dynamism. The land became cheap, and private property was further concentrated. However, with the incorporation of Asian rubber production and the decrease in prices, the rubber economy declined, and much of the production shifted towards national markets. There was a brief resurgence of demand for natural latex during World War II due to Japan's control over the Malaysian territories, but the end of the war and the newly developed synthetic rubbers derived from oil forever buried the demand for natural latex for industrial processes. The haciendas shifted to other activities, but the authoritarian control over the labour force remained[20].

A definitive fixation of the borderline was reached with the Treaty Salomón-Lozano, signed by Colombia and Peru. This gave Colombia access to the Amazon River; the Colombian state gained control over the territories to the north of its course, and the borderline was set in the thalweg of the Amazon River from Leticia to the Atacuari River. From that point, the treaty traced a straight line up to the confluence of the Putumayo and the Yaguas Rivers.

Nonetheless, the cession of territory sparked a localised armed conflict between Colombia and Peru in 1932-1934. A group of Peruvian armed civilians occupied Leticia in protest, prompting a response from Colombia, whose public opinion was still impacted by the separation of Panama in 1903. After a period of armed confrontation, the borders between these two nations were acknowledged in the Rio de Janeiro Protocol of 1934. We can see the international recognition of the triple border in 1934 as the culmination of disputes between the different powers to control the territories of the Upper Amazon River. The final delimitation of the borderline inaugurated a period when the nation-states started to operate in the region in a more articulated form. This also set the conditions that shaped life in the region during the last century, marked by the presence of the borderline that fragmented the territory. This set the frame for the transborder lives of the Ticuna people in the modern era.

In the 20th century, the Amazonian territories became increasingly viewed as part of the geo-body of the newly consolidated nation-states, resulting in the nationalisation of Amazonia. Three national regions were produced which converged along the Amazon: the Solimões Region in Brazil, the Amazonian Trapeze in Colombia, and the Loreto Region in Peru. These processes fragmented Ticuna territories as nation-building processes started to operate differentially in the region. I will analyse these processes in the next

[20] Otavio Velho (2009) characterises the development of capitalist relations in Amazonia as authoritarian capitalism.

chapter, but in the following section, I look at the way accounts of the past became essential to articulating narratives that legitimise state order, with the effect of erasing the violence from national histories and naturalising the nation-state projects converging in the tri-border region.

National narratives of the past

The Amazon River was the gateway for the Europeans to explore, conquer, and colonise the inland of the South American subcontinent in the name of their respective empires. It was a long and contentious process between the colonial powers and those living in the basin. The main consequence of European intervention was the decimation of the native population and the reshaping of ancestral territorialities. This historical process also helped to consolidate an imaginary of the past that still dominates contemporary national historical narratives.

With some variations, these national narratives fabricate a past in which the violent process of conquest and the extermination of native people is dissociated from the current conditions in which the surviving native people live today. The idea of a demographic vacuum appears as the natural outcome of the ecological conditions of the region, instead of the objective result of centuries of colonial and republican intervention. The empty tropical forest is a notion projected to the past to naturalise the idea of a vacuum that national societies must fill. These nationalist accounts of the past reinforce and perpetuate dispossession and land grabbing in the contemporary Amazonian Valley. The phrase "too much land for few Indians" has been ubiquitous in the political discourse of all three countries in the past decades. Two concepts helped to historically produce and reproduce the subaltern position of the native people nowadays: the category of indigeneity — indigenous people as the inferior other — and the notion of terra nullius or vacant land.

The category of indigenous people and coloniality

The historical process of the conquest of America is directly linked with the advent of modernity, the articulation of a global market and the emergence of the modern state (Arrighi 1994; Wallerstein 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). I propose to analyse the diverse strategies the European powers implemented to control labour and land— human and non-human nature — to understand the profound transformations that have taken place in the process of incorporating the Amazonian region into a world-system and a world-ecology (Moore 2003). The first aspect in this process of domination was the imposition of the category of indio as a social classification linked to race and culture that put the native population in a worldwide structure of exploitation.

Indigeneity was a colonial social category imposed on the people of the newly discovered continent to reorganise and incorporate them into the emerging modern world system. Mechanisms of conquest and domination were put to work since the first contact in 1492 which then endured over the following centuries. It was a long and uneven process operating differentially over a vastly diverse population. In the case of the Amazon basin, the intervention of the colonial powers took place in a relatively late period, when the conquest and colonisation of the Andean region by the Spaniards and the coast of the Atlantic by the Portuguese were already well established. The dispute over the control of the interior territories and their inhabitants – to use them as a workforce in extractive activities — was the motivation that guided the action of the colonial powers.

In both the Spanish and Portuguese colonial policies in the Upper Amazonian region, the subduing of the population was only possible through the production of colonial discourse, a particular and informed way of "reading" local realities that framed, delimited and made possible specific procedures and practices of domination (Serje 2011). *Coloniality* was the resulting process of reorganising American space/time into a worldwide system of domination. The category of race was the conceptual and symbolic apparatus that enabled the colonial relation as a power relation (Quijano 2000).

The term indio was used to designate all the native populations of the continent. It became a supra-ethnic category that did not denote any specific content but reinforced a particular relationship between the American people and other sectors of the global social system of which they became part. It was a relationship of subordination: "The invention of the Indian, or what is the same, the implantation of the colonial regime in Latin America means a total break with the pre-Columbian past [...] the culture of the colonised is only intelligible as part of the colonial situation" (Bonfil Batalla 1972: 24).

Before the process of conquest and colonisation, people living in the Amazonian basin constituted a broad and diverse spectrum of different societies, with multiple types of social organisation, some small scale and simple, others large and complex, all with remarkable capabilities of adaptation to the natural conditions as well as the ability to transform nature and shape their environment (Pahl 2014; Roosevelt 2013; Stahl 2002; Viveiros de Castro 1996). Furthermore, many of these societies were inserted in a vast network of exchange, making them considerably well-integrated with other geographies of the continent (Eriksen 2011; Hornborg 2005; Reeve 1993; Santos Granero 2005).

The long process of colonisation described in the second part of this chapter gives us an overview of how the colonial system destroyed that complex reality. The category of indigenous people defined all ethnic

groups of the continent as subordinates — vassals or enslaved people — within a more extensive social system where the exploitation of people followed a racial pattern, producing enduring effects. There were some specificities in the way *coloniality of power* was exerted by the Spaniards and the Portuguese, particularly in the ways they understood the nature of the otherness represented by the native population of America. The ways the Portuguese and Spaniards appropriated the labour of the indigenous people diverged. Portugal maintained a legal slavery system over the indigenous people while Spain forbade it — although it maintained diverse forms of forced labour.

The Portuguese colonisation in the territories in America differed from their colonies in Asia and Africa, where a system of *feitorias* was put in place to control the trade of products. In their Pau-Brasil colony, the objective was to occupy the territory and subjugate the population, expanding from the coast inland, especially along the Rio de la Plata and Amazon rivers[21]. This expansion was initially propelled by the necessity of a workforce for the coastal plantations. Afterwards, as the transatlantic slave trade grew, indigenous people were exploited to work in extractive enterprises of coveted drogas do sertão commodified into the world-market. The Lusitanian expansion beyond the lines of the Tordesillas Treaty set the conditions for the fixation of the limits between the two empires in the Upper Amazon. The conflict was motivated by the exploitation of the native labour force.

The slavery of the natives by the Portuguese was justified under the laws of 20/03/1570 and 11/11/1595 for captives of war. Afterwards, to address all the denunciations of illegal slavery, the Crown proclaimed the liberty of all indigenous people in Brazil under the law 30/06/1609. However, since the entire functioning of the colonial economy relied on forced labour, slavery was eventually reinstituted using the concepts of *guerra justa* and *resgate* under the Carta Regia of 17/10/1653. These cases were supposed to be used in exceptional circumstances but ended up being the rule due to their lax and indiscriminate use. In the territories adjacent to the Amazon River, the Portuguese *tropas de resgate* justified their raids under the "just war" and "rescue" legal figures, thus continuing to enslave natives.

Initially, the militias — formed by soldiers and merchants — navigated the Amazon River and its tributaries, searching for indigenous people enslaved by other tribes to "free" them. The rescued natives

[21] The idea of the Portuguese administration was to give the Brazilian interior a sense of unity by demarcating its limits around the main rivers of the Amazon and La Plata drainages. Both the Madrid and the San Ildefonso treaties sought to uphold the recognition of Rio Grande do Sul and Matto Grosso in the south of the continent, and the Amazonian territories in the North, even if they had to cede the Sacramento colony and the Philippines (Hecht 2013).

remained under the service of the Portuguese for ten years, and those natives who opposed the Christian faith remained enslaved forever. This law fostered the slave trade and spurred intertribal wars to capture enemies and trade them with the Portuguese people. This dynamic disrupted the demography of Amazonia, including that of the Upper Amazon River.

To weigh the scope of these transformations, I draw on Antônio Porro's (1992) analysis of the historical sources on western Amazonia of the 16th and 17th centuries, based on the early reports of the explorers of the Amazon Basin. According to Porro, the 16th century documentation, although scarce, describes the region as composed of numerous villages set along the Amazon River, a continuum of occupation along both banks of the river as well as the islands. The existence of trails on the terra firme, the presence of gardens with maize and manioc as staple crops in quantities enough to sustain a considerable population, and an encounter with fleets of hundreds of canoes, among other evidence indicates the existence of large populations with complex societies in the Upper Amazon River. Porro ponders that although there are some fantastic elements in the chronicles, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of this information.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, detailed accounts indicate that the banks of the Upper Amazon River were occupied by the Aparia chiefdom, inhabited by people speaking a Tupi language likely to be the Omagua. The Omagua became well known for being at constant war with other tribes, especially with the Ticuna. The Omagua were also known for practising the capture of their enemies in war to enslave them, but as happened with native forms of slavery in Africa, this turned into a very different dynamic once the Omaguas started to trade their prisoners with the Portuguese. The strategy of incorporating external people into their social system became the commodification of human beings for profit. Ultimately, the Omaguas, like the rest of the natives, became a target of the resgates to feed the colonial plantation system, decimating the entire population.

A different approach by the Spaniards regulated the exploitation of the native peoples in their domains. During the first decades of colonisation, the encomienda system was put in place. It rewarded conquerors with the control of the indigenous population in certain territories. This system proved extremely violent and led to the extermination of most indigenous populations in the Caribbean and Central American territories. It was substituted under the New Laws (1542) that pursued the protection of the indigenous people as vassals of the Spanish Crown. An important debate about the humanity of the natives of America took place in Valladolid, focusing on the rights and treatment of the indigenous people by the Spanish settlers, and resulting in the rejection of the idea of natives as "natural slaves". The humanist

point of view did not question the validity of Spanish rule but framed it as an act of progressive incorporation into civilization (Todorov 1999).

The introduction of the Indians Laws overturned the encomienda system and introduced *reducciones* to relocate the native population, allowing them certain land rights. They also instituted the repartimiento as an obligation to pay tribute in the form of labour. This mandatory unpaid labour was the main instrument used to force members of the communities to provide workers for diverse enterprises: mita in the mines, *obrajes* in the workshops, *mita urbana* for public projects and *mita agraria* for agricultural haciendas.

In the Amazonian lowlands, the colonial administration relied on the action of missionaries to congregate natives in missions located along the Amazon River. The most important and successful of the missionaries was Friar Fritz, who evangelised a vast territory of the Amazon watercourse from the Napo to the Negro rivers. These missions also required compulsory work from the indigenous people to fund their expenses and even relied on raids or *correrias* to force the natives to resettle. This missionary work directly contrasted and opposed the Portuguese slavery system, which the missionaries denounced for their treatment of the natives, describing the Lusitanian troops as a "hellish enemy" (Gómez González 2012). Despite their differences, both colonial systems practised the exploitation of the natives for their own purposes. In practice, *misiones* and tropas de resgate incorporated the inferiorised other into colonial systems of production.

The end of colonial rule made no difference to the way native people were placed in the lower rungs of the social hierarchy, and discrimination was reproduced in the form of internal colonialism (González Casanova 2009; Stavenhagen 1963).

Vacant land: Imperial and national territories

The notion of vacant land is the second element of the coloniality of power that justified the dispossession of the American territories during the colonial period and which perdured after the formation of the independent nation-states. Behind the concept of unused land — free for the colonialist to appropriate — is the European point of view that only lands that reflect specific technical transformations are seen as

someone's object of labour and therefore someone's private property[22]. The historical narratives disregard the presence of production systems with little visible impact on the landscape and characterise Amazonian territories as wilderness and untouched nature.

Nowadays, we have evidence of substantial human influence in the configuration of the Amazonian ecosystem through foraging, horticulture, arboriculture, hunting, soil modification, plant management and domestication (Clement et al. 2015). The ecosystems shaped in a long process of human intervention were defined from the conquerors' point of view as unoccupied spaces. This logic only conferred ownership to the natives over the products of their activity but not over their territories, which the colonisers considered untouched and pristine. This apparent absence of land improvement was used as an alibi to erase the human production of Amazonian landscapes and commit one of the greatest thefts in history, the appropriation of the Amazonian lands from their original inhabitants.

Such worldviews were part of the advent of modernity and capitalism. If we consider that the European expansion of the 16th century saw not only the beginning of capitalism as a world-system but also as a world-ecology, we can better understand the effects that European concepts of nature had over the way colonisers acted upon indigenous territories. Amazonia was not a pristine wilderness. The people that lived there before the conquest were diverse and complex. They adapted to their environment and modified it according to their needs. There was an immense diversity in production systems and social formations (Viveiros de Castro 1996). Territorial control of pre-Columbian polities was less rigid, and its limits were much more flexible than the ones evoked by the notion of sovereignty and the state-form, but these systems were completely upset after the first contact with the Europeans (Santos Granero 1992).

The emergence of nature as something abstract (homogeneous wilderness) and external (pristine and untouched) instead of a co-produced ecology was a prerequisite for the European expansion of commodity frontiers overseas and the incorporation of entire ecosystems into the sphere of capitalism (Moore 2003, 2015). It was the expression of the modern dichotomy of society/nature and its underlying assumptions that justified the appropriation of land and labour.

Introducing private property in the Amazonian territories was a long process that required, first and foremost, the erasing of previous rights over the territories. This was achieved through the annihilation

[22] Locke´s doctrine of private property and colonial acquisition reflects a similar worldview by justifying the appropriation of lands by the colonists in North America, who sought to subdue the wilderness through labour (Locke 1980).

of most of its population, the resettlement of many survivors, and the displacement of those who managed to escape from colonial control. A second moment was enacted by state appropriation of "empty" territories under the figures of unowned lands, *bienes baldíos* or *terras devolutas,* and its adjudication as private property (López & Gamboa 2020).

The idea of unoccupied, unused land is one of the most pervasive elements in the narratives about the Amazon and is still an argument used to justify the dispossession and extermination of the native people living there today. Although rooted in a modern representation of empty territory naturalised as a historical truth, this narrative is far from accurate. By analysing how this characterisation of Amazonia as a place untouched by humans came to be established, and how the region was dispossessed of its past and the native people from its history, we can unveil the historical consequences of this counterfeit image.

Founded in the papal donations of the Alexandrine Bulls, the appropriation of the territories by the Crowns of Castile and Portugal followed a complicated series of debates about the nature of property rights over these territories. Dispossession was first validated under the papal jurisdiction, later justified by the School of Salamanca under the Natural Laws, and finally legalised by International Law that resolved the claiming of dominium by virtue of subsequent occupation (Pagden 1987). Nevertheless, once colonial control was instituted, the imperial states granted property to private owners and, in some cases, to indigenous communities[23]. The decimation of indigenous people by the exploitation under colonial rule and its continuation after independence reinforced the image of empty territory.

After independence, the property of the territories not adjudicated by the Crowns reverted to the nation-states. The agrarian problem in all three countries originated not because the lands were unoccupied but because the native population settled there (permanently or not) did not possess private property titles. When tierras baldias or terras devolutas, turned into private property, most of the time these ended up in the hands of the people with money and political power to afford land titling.

[23] Under the New Laws that enforced the strict separation of Spanish settlements and Pueblos de Indios. These colonial titles became important in the second half of the 20th century as documented proof of the longstanding occupation by indigenous peoples over certain territories. Nonetheless, the figure of *resguardo* was only instituted in the Andean regions, not the lowlands.

Relevance of the past

I now turn my focus to summarize the specificity of Ticuna territoriality in the regional context of the Upper Amazon River. As we have seen throughout this chapter, in the dispute for appropriating the natural resources and the work of the natives, the limits between the two colonial empires were being traced, not just by diplomacy and negotiations, but by force and *de facto* occupation and control of the territories. In this dispute, the original people's territoriality was utterly upset. The new imperial borderlines disrupted previous demarcations, and ethnic groups had to adapt to this new reality. The Ticuna people reacted to the pressures of Portuguese incursions, relocation by the missionaries, and expansion of the hacienda regime. They responded with a high degree of mobility and adaptation, displacing back and forth from the interior lands to the riverine territories. In this context, Zárate (1998) argues that the reason the Ticuna survived as an ethnic group despite all the turbulent changes throughout Amazonian history is their capacity to adapt to the várzea/terra firme ecosystems and to alternatively resist by confronting or fleeing contact with other human groups.

By the third decade of the 20th century, the territorial disputes between the three countries were resolved. The nation-states asserted sovereignty, but the Ticuna and other native peoples were stripped of land rights. German Grisales (2000) notes that this conflict for setting the borderlines between states — imperial and national — did not count on the participation of the people originally occupying these territories. In the same way as the land, the original population was scattered across the three states. The Ticuna people and their traditionally occupied territories ended up in a cross-border region.

To conclude this chapter, I want to highlight the importance of analysing the broader context of the incorporation of the Upper Amazonian territories into the nation-state, focusing on the history of the delimitation of the borderlands. This process is highly relevant, not just as a discussion about the past, but as a process that continues to be important in the present. Sandro Mezzadra (2011) speaks about the topicality of prehistory, referencing the importance of primitive accumulation to understand the emergence of capitalism, a process Marxists characterise by the role of violence. Similarly, we cannot address the configuration of the nations that converge in the tri-border region without highlighting the history of dispossession and subjugation of the native populations.

Since the final fixation of the borderlines, the three nation-states intensified their actions to reorganise their territories. They promoted an account of the past that naturalised their existence and internal orders. The relevance of the Ticuna origin myth is that it counters national claims over the territories by

emphasising the common origin of the Ticuna people and their belonging to the territories around Eware Ravine. This spatial segment overlaps with the confluence of the borderlines of the three countries.

I started with the testimony of Nino, the former director of the Magüta Museum. I want to finish with the words of his successor, Santo Cruz. When I asked Santo if the borderline had any significant impact on Ticuna identity, he replied, “There is no difference between Peruvian, Brazilian and Colombian Ticunas, we are all the same. Our history is the same, the festivities are the same, and we have the same clans. Nowadays, the only difference is that some of us speak also Spanish, and some speak Portuguese as second language. But the Ticuna language is shared, obviously”. He acknowledged that either Ticuna or Magüta are appropriate ways to denominate his people but remarked the negative connotations of the category indio, “It is really ignorance, the colonisers named the populations living here indio because they thought they were in India, but for us, it would be just native people, or the original people because they were here first. We can accept to a certain extent that the encompassing society calls us indios, but we know that is because they consider us inferior. When someone calls you indio, he is implying you are worthless, that you have no intelligence, culture, or knowledge. That is what indio means for the encompassing society and for many people still today”.

Chapter Two. Sovereign Bodies and the Production of Limits

It was November 2017, which meant drought season in the tri-border area. During summer, the region's rivers languish, and the water flow decreases considerably — the shores of the Amazon River retreat, revealing extensions of beaches. In the Amazon River, the limits of the tri-border cities are indiscernible. For most of the year, we can only see a mass of murky water flanked by ports and a large row of floating rafts. On them, a great variety of businesses offer their services. However, during this season, all the rafts move along with the shores, the river gets narrower, and therefore, the cities move closer to one another.

On the eleventh day of the month, I travelled from Tabatinga to Santa Rosa in a small boat. Nothing seemed different about that border crossing from Brazil to Peru, a practice so frequent that no passengers would even consider it an international crossing. I went to fulfil a bureaucratic responsibility –to stamp my passport and receive authorisation to stay another 90 days in the region[24]. Suddenly, over the noise of the motor, we heard the sound of helicopters approaching. "It is the drill", the driver shouted laconically. We all knew what he was talking about, as news had been all over the radio in the last few days. Curious, we leant on the left side of the boat to watch the spectacle.

In the middle of the river, just between Tabatinga and Santa Rosa Island, we saw an anchored ship suddenly catch fire (Or was it just a smoke bomb? It was impossible to tell from this distance). Just like an action movie, we saw three camouflage-painted speedboats approaching the burning ship. They were military vehicles, and people started murmuring that they were Brazilian. As impossible as it was to tell which country they belonged to — they had no flags or any other form of identification — people assumed their origin by reproducing the common sense idea that the Brazilian army is the best equipped and has the most modern vehicles.

As we finished crossing the Amazon River, I descended on the Peruvian side, where I saw two helicopters and a hospital ship manoeuvring around the vessel in distress. I joined a small crowd of people watching from the shore. There was a sense of admiration for this display of force. A group of men, most of them

[24] I had to carry out the procedures of “leaving” and “entering” the countries every three months to renovate my permit. It was a cumbersome reminder of the control states exert over the population that kept me grounded every time I was carried away in my interpretations of the apparent lack of border control in the area. Nonetheless, as with many of the bureaucratic procedures in the tri-border region, getting my passport stamped was partially a simulation as well because it never really mattered which country I was living in. There was no effective way to track the displacements within the tri-border region.

boat drivers, speculated about the speeds these vehicles can reach and the power of their engines. A few minutes later, after the fire had been extinguished and the vehicles retired, the crowd dispersed, and I left the port to carry on with my activities.

This unusual scene was part of a series of joint military exercises called Amazonlog, performed by the armies of Brazil, Peru and Colombia in November 2017. Over a week, the border region became the scene for logistical exercises coordinated by the three governments, focused on humanitarian action in a multinational context. The training was performed by military personnel from the three neighbouring countries and the United States of America. The exercise was vastly commented on both in the news and among the region's population, raising questions about sovereignty and intervention. The exercises were conducted in the context of a recent turn in Brazilian foreign policy towards Venezuela. The president of Brazil, Michel Temer — who took office after the impeachment and removal of left-wing politician Dilma Rousseff — aligned Brazil with Colombia and Peru as critics of the Venezuelan government.

The narrative driven by these countries, as well as multilateral organisations such as the Lima Group and the Organization of American States (OAS), was that Venezuela was in the midst of a humanitarian crisis due to the rule of President Nicolas Maduro. According to them, this situation represented a threat to peace and stability in the region, pointing out the massive migration of Venezuelan citizens to other South American countries. The Venezuelan regime condemned the exercises and accused the three national governments of interfering in their internal affairs while serving as instruments of US imperialism to depose a democratically elected government[25].

What I found to be the most relevant aspect of these military drills was how they were presented to the region's dwellers. Although it was overall an exercise of coordination among the armies of the neighbouring countries, the respective governments broadly announced the exercise as an act of state presence in what is described as a remote region, isolated from the rest of the national territories and, therefore, difficult for the agencies of the state to access. It was, after all, a demonstration of power which exemplifies how important these geopolitical borders are to national imaginaries. In this narrative, the main characteristic of a border region is the importance of state borders as markers of the limits of the

[25] This hypothetical scenario became a reality in February 2019, when the regional tensions escalated once more, with the Brazilian and Colombian governments actively supporting the political opposition to the Venezuelan regime, that sought to change their government. With humanitarian aid as an excuse, a large amount of resources were mobilized towards the border regions of Cucuta in Colombia and Pacaraima in Brazil. The Venezuelan government reacted by closing the borders, impeding circulation across the borderlines.

sovereignty and dominion of a state *vis a vis* other states (Donnan & Wilson 1999). From this perspective, the exercise represents a display of state-making efforts.

As part of the exercises, a Colombian Airforce demonstration took place in the stadium of Leticia. It was announced on the radio as a military display that showcased the army's capacity "to reach every corner of the country". A group of paratroopers jumped from an aircraft that flew over the city and landed in the stadium. This exercise was called a "sovereignty flight", and the border dwellers were mesmerised by the display of the yellow, blue and red coloured parachutes depicting the Colombian flag, visible from every corner of the borderland cities.

The overall message was that when it comes to exerting sovereignty, it is the state's prerogative to exercise the use of force. Nevertheless, danger does not only come from outside national borders. Pedro Pereira (2018) analyses how the narratives of the border operate within the Brazilian armed forces, especially in the Amazonian context. According to him, at the same time that the borderland represents a perfect setting to demonstrate the ability of the armed forces to deploy in a remote and difficult-to-access area, this is also considered a dangerous zone – a region of possible unrest and a threat to public and national security. The dangers to the nation are multiple: drug trafficking, illegal extractive activities, and guerrilla subversion, to name the most common examples. This narrative is present in all three nationalistic characterisations that portray the Amazon as a national heritage that must be protected from both outside and domestic threats.

As we saw in the last chapter, the military has always played an important role in the history of the border region, and today, it still plays an essential role within the discourses and practices that serve to delimit state sovereignty. Therefore, events like Amazonlog reveal the state narrative about the monopolisation of violence for border dwellers. The displays of might and force that the nation-states commonly perform are used as justifications for their own existence. The tri-border region is home to numerous armed bases that are an enactment and reminder of state power.

The internal orders and statecraft

Borders do not just separate countries. They also set the boundaries of the nation-state as a unified political body where a multiplicity of territories and populations are integrated as a totality, at least from an administrative point of view. According to the state narrative, the peripheries are considered the limits of their respective sovereign body, the lines that mark the beginning and the end of their corresponding

inner order. In this sense, the tri-border area embodies the confluence of three different internal political and administrative orders.

This administrative order suggests coherence and homogeneity inside a country *vis a vis* adjacent national territories. Whether achieved or not at ground level, these efforts to establish domestic order produce discontinuities in border regions. Living in a borderland requires practical knowledge and the ability to manage diverse internal arrangements and transition from one border territory to another.

Cartography, as a way of seeing from above that simplifies reality and manages scale, is the most common manifestation of these orders (Scott 2020; Winichakul 1997). A political map that renders visible the territories within a nation can be bought in any stationery store in the tri-border area. Usually, the interested person can find political maps of Brazil, Peru or Colombia as separate charts, but there is no accessible way to obtain a political map of the tri-border area[26]. This shows how problematic it is to dwell in a border area where the political and economic order depends on and is conceived of from a state centre hundreds or thousands of kilometres away.

The national political map is an instrument that allows a clearer vision of how given spaces are transformed into national territories. A map also provides a more legible understanding of the kinds of transitions between orders that people must navigate when they embark in a peque-peque for a visit to the city hubs or any neighbouring town located just on the other side of the border.

I will briefly describe how the three different territorial orders coexist as the respective nation-states attempt to exercise sovereignty over people and territories. In the three cases, the subnational entities that converge in the triple border region of the Amazon River are the biggest in their respective administrative divisions. Compared to the rest of their national territories, these national divisions are also occupied by a sparse and dispersed population. These facts reproduce national imaginaries of a vast, deserted region. They represent a continuity of the coloniality of power described in chapter one.

In the case of Peru, Loreto is one of the 24 Departments that make up the Peruvian Republic, which itself is divided into eight Provinces. The Province on the eastern side is called Mariscal Ramon Castilla and

[26] After a long time looking for one, I finally came across a wonderful map of the border region elaborated by the Transborder Study Group (GET by its acronym in Spanish) of the National University of Colombia. This map, which took several years to draw up, was not used in schools or by any large segment of the tri-border area population, as it was aimed at a more specialized audience of researchers (Zárate et al. 2017).

corresponds to the territory between the Amazon River and the Javari River. Ramon Castilla is also divided into four Districts. The Yavari District lies on the border with Brazil and Colombia.

The Peruvian state's administrative and political hierarchy defines a grading of towns and cities where administrative centres are located. People dwelling inside Peru must know the different jurisdictional orders when dealing with the administrative issues of everyday life: political representation, registration offices, hospitals, schools, etc., are arranged and managed according to this particular form of state organisation. Only the most important issues are solved in Iquitos, the capital of the Department, located 480 kilometres upstream, near the point where the Amazon River receives its name at the confluence of the Marañon and Ucayali rivers.

Teófilo, the leader of Yahuma-Callaru, often speaks about the time he travelled to Iquitos to resolve a community lawsuit regarding logging permits and how amazed he was because getting there only took 12 hours on the ferry, a recently introduced transportation service. He was also amazed by the experience of visiting a city of half a million people.

On the other hand, people living in smaller villages like Yahuma-Callaru travelled more often to Caballococha, the capital of the Province. Caballococha is also the Peruvian city closest to the border that has universities. Therefore, if any families want to send their children to a Peruvian university, Caballococha is usually their first option. María, Teofilo and Alicia's daughter, had just finished studying nursing at the Caballococha campus of the National University of the Peruvian Amazon. Furthermore, the Local Educational Management Unit (UGEL) is located there. Hence, any issues regarding the administration of elementary schools are addressed in that office. At least once a week, the Yahuma-Callaru elementary school teachers travel for six hours or more upstream of the Amazon River to visit the office.

Finally, the most common bureaucratic procedures are dealt with in an office in the District Capital of Islandia at the Javari and the Amazon River confluence. This town is nearer to Yahuma, about 3 hours downstream. Here, Peruvian border dwellers carry out common bureaucratic procedures, from registering newborns, marriages and divorces to requesting their National Identity Document (DNI) or registering for social assistance programs. For diverse reasons, most of the Yahuma-Callaru dwellers visit Islandia frequently, at least once every month.

The case of the Brazilian territory is similar. Its tri-border territory corresponds to the massive State of Amazonas, the biggest of the 26 states constituting Brazil's Federative Republic. The state capital is

Manaus, a city of two million people located at the confluence of the Amazon and the Negro Rivers. Because of the considerable distance between Manaus and the border region, it is uncommon for the Ticuna dwellers of the region to travel to Manaus, which would take an extenuating three-day journey down the Amazon River in a cruiser or a two-hour flight from the airport of Tabatinga. However, Cristina, my hostess in Lauro Sodré, lived and studied there when she was young. These displacements are now less common, given that there are several options to study at the universities in the bordering cities.

The Brazilian State of Amazonas is divided into 62 municipalities, two of which have territories in the triple border region: Tabatinga on the left bank of the Amazon River and Benjamin Constant on the right bank. Both municipalities have small cities located just next to the border. Many of the state agencies that operate in the area are located in these cities. The primary institutions that attract people are the Universities. On one side, the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) has a campus in Benjamin Constant, which is well known for its inclusive policy of receiving indigenous students; on the other side, in Tabatinga, there is a campus of the Amazonas State University (UEA). Both cities also have offices of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), which manages most of Brazil's indigenous affairs. During my fieldwork in the community of Lauro Sodré, Cristina, as a schoolteacher, would travel two or three times a week to Benjamin Constant for work-related issues and at least once a week to Tabatinga for personal businesses regarding her recent divorce.

The Colombian border region is also arranged according to the country's national political structure. Colombia is organised into 32 departments. The Amazonas Department comprehends the border region of the Amazon River along with other territories in the Amazon jungle. The Amazon Department is divided into two municipalities and nine non-municipalised-areas known as *corregimientos*, an atypical form of territorial organisation still used in some regions of the country, which corresponds to areas that have not yet been organised in municipalities due to their remote and inaccessible locations. Both municipalities conform the Amazonian Trapeze region, located in the southernmost part of the Amazonas department, whose limit is the Amazon River. The tri-border area is located inside the municipality of Leticia. The city functions simultaneously as departmental and municipal capital. Therefore, most of the departmental and municipal institutions are located there.

Leticia is the most important Colombian administrative centre in the Amazonian Trapeze. The National University of Colombia has a campus there, along with numerous research institutions. It has private and public hospitals, although they only provide essential services, and for higher levels of care and specialities, patients are usually referred to other clinics in the country's capital, Bogota. People travel

from Arara almost every week to carry out administrative procedures. Policarpa routinely travelled to Leticia. I accompanied her on several occasions to take her daughter to the hospital or to the education offices to process the transfers of her children from the school in Arara to another school in the city so that they could continue studying beyond the ninth grade.

The convergence of different sovereign orders presents an important dimension that requires special attention: the ways each nation has dealt with the indigenous populations living in their territories. Native people who dwell inside the borders of these three countries have a special status regarding their relationship with the nation-state. Since their early origins as modern independent states, the three countries inherited the unsolved question of the existence of multiple nations within their territory. In the next section, I present a critical overview of the indigenist policies of each country.

Indigenism: nation-state and the problem of alterity

Brazil, Peru and Colombia have taken different paths to dealing with the 'indigenous problem' in their respective nation-state building processes. Given that the Ticuna territory spans the three countries, the tri-border region has become a zone of interplay where different indigenist policies coexist. The Ticuna people have learned to manoeuvre between these differentiated orders.

I will present a brief account of the literature that has examined the relationship between native populations and the so-called national societies in each of these countries. We will see how their respective indigenist approaches did not respond to the specific conditions of the Ticuna or the tri-border region more generally. They were designed and envisioned to operate throughout the nation as a whole, obliterating the differences and particularities of the ethnic groups in their territories and applying policies that homogenise diversity with broad categories such as indio or indígena. Since its creation in the colonial period, "indigenous" has been a social, legal and cultural category to define native populations and an instrument for their control and subordination. However, with the emergence of an "indigenous movement" as a collective actor, this generic identity has been appropriated by numerous native nations to articulate a common struggle (Roseberry 1996).

After independence and during the disputes to conform the different countries, the indigenous problem arose as an obstacle to the project of the recently formed nation-states. I will delineate the responses that each nation gave to this problem. It is important to point out that each configuration results from the particular colonial contexts and struggles to define national frontiers in each country. Also, these configurations are the outcome of specific preoccupations and debates within the political and economic

life of the emerging national societies, as well as the specificities of the indigenous populations in each territory (diversity, distribution, demographic importance). We must also consider the regional and international debates in a transnational arena in which each state took a political stance towards its indigenous populations. As we will see, all these factors shaped the paths of these "national projects" in dealing with the issue.

Indigenous groups were mostly absent in discussions of their place within the nation, and only in the late 20th century did they become a collective actor. Since then, they have become agents in the process of asserting their right to speak for themselves in national debates. In the following pages, I will also trace how indigenous political organisations have emerged and how they engage in struggles for the recognition of their territories, cultural differences and political self-determination.

States are not monolithic, homogeneous entities but arenas of public debate between the multiple groups that conform them. Nonetheless, we have also seen that states are capable of defining and shaping social realities. In order to examine this double condition, we will revisit L'Estoile, Neiburg and Sigaud's distinction of two different dimensions of the state. The first addresses the way that states are capable of "defining boundaries, identifying groups, legitimising rights, and establishing relationships and hierarchies (for example, among the groups studied by the anthropologist), as well as recognising forms of collective representation as authentic (such as the cultures of these populations)" (2005:10). The second dimension is referred as "a social field inhabited by individuals who enmeshed in competitive and interdependent relationships, devise and implement policies intended to govern populations or resolve social problems" (2005: 11). When analysing the indigenist policies of the national states in question, we have to look at both dimensions: the uses of indigeneity as a form to define, classify and govern over the native populations, but also the ways these populations dispute the terms of that domination, adopting indigeneity as a contentious language to organise and struggle for their rights.

Brazil: paternalism and dispossession in the national project

I take as a starting point the broad definitions of indigenism laid out by Arturo Carlos de Souza Lima (2005) to refer to the ideology and actions related to the nation-building projects of the elites who took power after the independence of the Hispano-American countries. Given the notions of unified, monocultural projects of the 19th century nations, the Brazilians integrated the natives into the social imaginary.

For the newly independent nation, the Amazonian indigenous people were considered a source of legitimacy. In this sense, Brazil's modern nation resulted from a glorious indigenous past combined with

European progress: the best of both worlds. Nevertheless, while the indigenous past was embraced, the relationship between the diverse ethnic minorities and the broader society remained problematic. The ruling elites considered Indigenous people trapped in a previous stage of evolution; therefore, the proposed solution was assimilation to improve their living conditions. This solution had continuities with the dynamics generated during the colonial administrations.

To understand the relationship of the so-called national society with indigenous populations in the Amazonian region, we have to inquire about the conditions of interethnic contact. Pacheco de Oliveira (2012) characterises the articulation of the Ticuna with the so-called national society as mediated by the early institutionalisation of indigenous affairs within a specialised bureaucratic body of the government. The independent period started with the proclamation of the Republic of Brazil in 1889. The Republican system relied on separating the church and the state. Therefore, the state agents designated with the task of incorporating native populations into national life were part of the nation's bureaucratic body.

The Serviço de Proteçao aos Indios — Indian Protection Service (SPI)[27] — was the first national agency created to deal with indigenous affairs. It functioned as the leading agent of government intervention in indigenous matters until its disappearance in 1967. Two contradictory objectives guided the actions of the SPI: the protection of the native populations and their integration into the nation (Ramos 1998). It is important to remark that this point of view reflected a paternalist position, which saw the Indians as incapable of taking care of themselves. Thus a tutelary regime was established to channel the state's official policies towards the original peoples (Lima 2010).

A special status was created, different from other citizens, that transformed the indigenous population into a legal category under the ward of the state. This subordinate position of the indigenous people in the national configuration was reinforced by the state action that judged them incapable of exerting the same rights and obligations as other Brazilians. This was inscribed in the 1916 civil code that established that the state indigenist institution should tutor the native population. This position reproduced the evolutionist view embedded in the positivism of the state. This tutelage was considered a temporary measure, as the ward condition would cease once the indigenous population were completely

[27] Founded in 1910 as the Indian Protection Service and National Worker Localization, the agency changed its name in 1918. The original name makes evident the relationship that the indigenous problem and the management of the workforce had for the government.

incorporated into national society. Indigeneity and citizenship were considered incompatible[28]. In order to fulfil its duties, the SPI established indigenous posts and regional inspections across the country.

One of the consequences of the legislation was that the indigenous people were not considered complete owners of their land, which was regarded as the state's property. In this fashion, the nation could grant its possession to indigenous groups, but this also opened up the possibility for land to be taken as a public domain that the state could assign to any other purpose and to serve the common benefit of the country. In practice, the 20th century gave rise to the progressive appropriation and dispossession of the indigenous lands, operated in complicity with the different governments.

After a military coup in 1965, this national integration policy intensified. The SPI was dissolved, and a new agency was created under the name of Fundação Nacional do Índio — the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). The national project of de-indianisation continued under this renovated façade, although critical voices started to denounce the extermination of natives as a consequence of state actions (Ribeiro 1979). Acute contradictions arose once the first significant expansion of the national economy was carried out into the Amazonian territories. The 1970s and 1980s saw a tremendous increase in the extractive, energy and agricultural industries in the Amazonian region. This development model was promoted by the military governments (1964-1985) that supposedly were in charge of protecting the nation's integrity. The discourse of development played a significant part in justifying these changes.

The Northern Corridor project, established in 1985, was the most significant attempt to reorganise the territoriality of the country's northern border. It established a military presence in a 150-kilometre-wide strip around the borders with Venezuela, Colombia, French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana. It sought to expel all indigenous populations from the frontiers, arguing that because of their particular condition — not fully citizens, therefore not fully Brazilians — they posed a threat to national sovereignty (Pacheco de Oliveira 1990).

Numerous indigenous groups — with significant Ticuna participation — organised into a pan-indigenous movement that struggled for the recognition of their rights. This organisation has its roots in the 1970s, when the Catholic Indigenist Missionary Council (CIMI), influenced by Liberation Theology, organised meetings between indigenous representatives to create a platform to demand an end to the ongoing

[28] This definition remained until the 1988 constitution. After several years of mobilisation and protests by indigenous organisations, the right to the difference was guaranteed in the highest law of the nation.

ethnocide. After that, the first national organisation emerged in 1980, named the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNIND), and numerous similar organisations multiplied over the following years.

The indigenous movement participated in the Constituent Assembly that passed the 1988 constitution. The new law changed the category of indigenous people from a transitory condition that must be overcome to be part of the nation into a permanent ethnic category in a constitution that recognised multicultural citizenship. Nonetheless, the paternalistic regime of tutelage remained embedded in state institutions. One of the biggest clashes during the drafting of the first constitution after the military dictatorship revolved around how the Brazilian state should recognise indigenous peoples. Controversy arose from the use of the term "Indian nations" because they were perceived as a danger to the sovereignty of the Brazilian state, which, up to this day, defines the Brazilian nation as one and inseparable (Guzmán 2013; Ramos 1998).

In the 21st century, the titling of indigenous territory — terras indígenas — continues to be the most contentious issue regarding the state's relationship with ethnic groups. The juridical definition of ethnic groups as a prerequisite for recognising land rights raises the question of authenticity. Nowadays, in Brazil, anthropology as a discipline has been required to produce expert opinions to decide if a collective can be defined as indigenous (Pacheco de Oliveira 2005). This is not a scientific debate but a struggle for political power and control over the resources located in the territory of ethnic groups. In this sense, many anthropologists position themselves against the politically charged question of who is and who is not indigenous. Viveiros de Castro argues, "It is not for the anthropologist to define who is indian. The anthropologist's duty is to create the theoretical and political conditions to allow the interested communities to articulate their indianess" (2008: 128).

Overall, Brazilian indigenist policies are characterised by paternalism and the constant denial of the rights of the indigenous population. After a long struggle and the conquest of legal recognition in the 1988 constitution, the state strategy has been to consistently narrow the scope of the category of indigeneity, excluding populations that are not exotic enough to be considered as such[29].

[29] This is the case of the indigenous population in the Brazilian Northeast, where recognition of ethnic identity was denied by the state because they were considered culturally mixed (Pacheco de Oliveira 1998).

Colombia, the limits of the state: inter-ethnicity and the building of an indigenous jurisdiction

The Colombian state is regionalist in character. The central government had counterweights in the local powers, shaping a weak state structure during the 20th century. The geographic marginality of the Amazonian region is the cause for a late and relatively loose presence of the state on the Colombian side of the border. In the study area, this presence was not established until the 1930's decade, when the Amazonian Trapeze was formally transferred from Peru to Colombia. Even then, there was uncertainty during the following years over the control of the territory and a brief war in 1932-1933 when Peru tried to take it back.

In post-independence Colombian society, the attitude towards the indigenous population was based on an evolutionary scale. The Amazon and Caribbean natives were conceptualised as located on the most backwards stages of the civilised scale, while the Andean indigenous were considered heirs of a more sophisticated and glorious past closer to European standards of modernity. However, no matter how "primitive" the natives were considered, the main objective was to incorporate all of them as part of the civilising project of the nation. The strategies might have varied according to regions and populations, but the ultimate goal was the same for all indigenous populations.

During the colonial period in the territories of the Spanish Crown, indigenous people were ruled by the figure of the resguardo, an institution that demarcated a territory assigned to the indigenous communities under the modality of collective property. These Indian Republics had their own local authorities called cabildos. The cabildos were under the jurisdiction of the King but retained certain autonomy from the Vice-regal authorities. The idea behind this system was to protect the original population from total extermination. It was not meant to stop their exploitation but to regulate it.

Many resguardos were founded during the colony in the areas where ethnic contact was frequent, mainly in the central highlands. They played an essential role in fixing the indigenous workforce to a territory for a more efficient exploitation (Friede 1976). The importance of these institutions in contemporary Colombia is that, after the independence, they endured under the legal recognition of the nation-state. First, under law 89 from 1890, and afterwards, they were ratified in the 1991 constitution, which is still in use today.

Jimeno and Triana (1985) trace the changes and continuities of indigenist policies in Colombia. The colonial approach, introduced by the Spaniards, attempted to regulate the workforce through the resguardos, allowing the extraction of taxes and labour. In the early republic period, forced assimilation

was pursued by implementing anti-communal measures against indigenous communities to dispossess them from their lands. The ethnic groups were equated to the peasantry, a social class-based category which ignored their cultural particularities and allowed them to sell their land, bypassing the law. Afterwards, the state aimed to accomplish their integration less violently and indirectly. When the disintegration of native territories failed, it was thought that voluntary integration could be implemented via the penetration of multiple modern relations (monetary economy, urbanised settlements, wage labour).

It is necessary to point out that these strategies were focused on the communities that lived in the most accessible territories, in direct contact with the broader national society. This was not the case for the Amazonian territories. In the Amazon, where the colonial powers and the occupation were less intense, there were no resguardos for most of the 20th century. For the most part, the natives continued to occupy large portions of land, moving from one place to another depending on their convenience.

In the Amazonian Trapeze, the introduction of resguardos took place in the 1980s and 1990s. In that period, sixteen such territorial figures were created to legalise the lands that the indigenous people already occupied. The reason for such delayed regulation is the irregular consolidation of territorial control in the country analysed in chapter one. A brief description of the non-state actors that have had a presence in the region might help us to appreciate the particular developments of ethnic contact in the Amazon.

The state conferred the administration of the remote and vast territories and the native populations that lived there to the Catholic Church. A concordat agreement was signed in 1887. It allowed the installation of missions and schools in the peripheral zones of the nation and functioned without significant changes until 1973, when the state reduced the Church's powers.

The catholic religious institutions played an important role in national unification in places where the state had little or no presence. This condition was achieved by the proclamation of Catholicism as the nation's official religion and Spanish as the national language. Unlike most other nations on the continent, positivism had little influence on the political transition. Colombian nation-building relied on transferring their responsibilities to external agents. "The Colombian Benthamism philosophy followed an opposite direction, transferring to the church attributions otherwise exclusive of the state" (García et al. 2012: 173).

The 1970s saw a significant turn in state policies towards the Amazonian region. The government began aggressively colonising the territory by opening it up to productive exploitation. This was accomplished

by concentrating the scattered indigenous people in new resguardos and reservoirs. Therefore, despite being the same legal figure, resguardos are very different in the Andean region to those in the Amazonian and Orinoco regions. The Andean resguardos were founded during the colony as a contention for the progressive expansion of new settlers. The Amazonian resguardos, on the contrary, are the product of recent demarcations in territories that were of little interest until the end of the 20th century. The demarcation of indigenous territory was necessary to declare the rest of the lands national property that could be sold to private hands.

Within the Amazonian region, there are also processes of differentiated integration. Carlos del Cairo (2010) describes two dynamics for the Colombian Amazon. West Amazonia is characterised as a frontier of agrarian colonisation, formed by the departments of Caquetá, Putumayo and Guaviare, near the foothills of the Andean mountains. This part of Amazonia has been linked to the rest of the country for longer. There is a significant mestizo presence due to heavy migration in response to the violence of the second half of the 20th century. East Amazonia is seen as a frontier for the exploitation of biological and natural resources. The Guainía, Vaupés, and Amazonia departments are relatively isolated from the national economy but have important connections with the world-economy and extractivist industries (rubber, coca, gold, wood, and animals, among others). Here, the economic cycles depend on the value of certain goods in international networks of exchange. Because no major roads communicate the region with the rest of the country, the extracted commodities are transported via fluvial or air transport.

The Amazonian Trapeze, part of the most isolated Eastern Colombian Amazonia, is characterised by its diverse composition of people, the product of the historical displacements of populations. The rubber regime at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century induced fragmentation and the mass migration of numerous ethnic groups. Nowadays, the Ticuna have demographic predominance and are recognised as the "original settlers" of the tri-border region, but they coexist with other groups such as Cocama, Macuna, Yagua and "People of the centre"[30] (Micarelli 2010b).

Numerous studies reported that the Ticuna resguardos are the product of state policies of territorialisation around the urban zone of Leticia (Tobón 2009; Vieco et al. 2000). Since Leticia is the biggest city in the region, it constitutes an economic pole and a political centre. The resguardos have been constituted along the Amazonian River and alongside the road Leticia-Tarapacá. This territorial orientation

[30] People of centre is a supraethnic identity shared by the Uitoto, Ocaina, Nonuya, Bora, Miraña, Muinane and Andoke people grouped together for their similar uses of coca and tobacco.

led to a relationship of dependency between the indigenous communities and the city. The emergence of numerous settlements around the city resulted in a hierarchical social classification of class positions and ethnic identities.

The history of the indigenous social movement in Colombia is rooted in the Andean region, where the first organisations emerged in the resguardos in 1971. In 1982, the first national organisation emerged, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), but with very little representation from the Amazonian region. In the borderland region, the first attempts to build a political organisation based on ethnic identities can be traced to 1989, when the First Indigenous Congress of the Amazonian Trapeze met. Afterwards, the Great Indigenous Cabildo from the Amazonian Trapeze[31] (CIMTRA) was created to struggle for the conformation of resguardos and recognition of their ancestral lands (Vieco et al. 2000). Numerous schisms have multiplied the number of indigenous organisations since then, but all of them maintain the resguardos as their elementary structure of the organisation.

In later years, the national indigenous movement gained a broader recognition of their rights in the new constitution of 1991. The legislation updated the 100-year-old law that regulated the relationship between the state and the original populations. Although this legislation is progressive, there are still conflicts surrounding its application.

The indigenist policies of the Colombian state sought the integration of the indigenous population into national life. There was a continuity in the colonial legal institutions of the cabildo and resguardos that were vindicated by the national indigenous movement to reclaim political and territorial rights. The contrast in the colonial history of the Andean and Amazonian regions did not constitute an obstacle for the indigenous movement to articulate and negotiate with the state a unified legal frame of political and territorial rights.

Peru's Amazonian peoples: distinct approaches based on class and ethnicity

Peru has a larger indigenous population than Brazil and Colombia. Thus, nation-building has been more contentious throughout the country's history. Manuel Marzal (2016) defines three great projects of indigenism concerning the native communities in the territory of contemporary Peru, all of which can be summarised as failed attempts at assimilation.

[31] This later changed its name to the Indigenous Cabildos Association from the Amazonian Trapeze (ACITAM).

In the colonial period, the Viceroyalty of Peru applied the Spanish rules that instituted the "Republic of Indians", concentrating the native population under the influence of the Catholic Church. The Church carried out a campaign of religious conversion to Catholicism and managed tribute payments to the Spanish crown. After independence, unlike in Colombia, the new ruling elite in Peru — influenced by liberal ideology — rejected the "indigenous populations" classification as a particular category. The idea of equality for all the nation's citizens in the eyes of the law permeated the new legislation. It granted natives the status of Peruvian citizens, with full political participation in the nation's affairs (the right to vote was granted in the 19th century, but many indigenous were deprived of this right between 1898 and 1979 due to illiteracy laws). Although dividing the population into different ethnic segments — indigenous and mestizo — was a structuring element of Peruvian society inherited from the colony, the national project of the newly independent republic pursued national unification through assimilation.

The Peruvian elite was formed by a minority of mestizos who advocated for modernising society, claiming the heritage of the Inca Empire and ignoring the diversity of native peoples in other regions. This "mestizo nationalism" remained at the core of Peruvian politics, characterised by the exaltation of the Inca past and a negative attitude towards contemporary indigenous people (Méndez 1995). Most of the indigenous population, mainly Aymara and Quechua people from the Andean highlands, were assimilated into the national social structure as subordinate classes. Despite the dominant discourse of assimilation, these cultural and ethnic identities pervaded.

Finally, the 20th century saw a different kind of integration project take shape: one that respected cultural differences but advocated for state intervention in communities in the form of projects designed according to a "scientific" approach. The constitution of 1920 signalled a drastic turn in state policy: special property laws for the indigenous communities were established, and the permanence and development of indigenous communities were recognised as a national responsibility. Despite these advances, once again, the concept of progress based on cultural assimilation was unchallenged.

The 20th century laws demonstrated an ideological stratification of the population. Campanera (2012) sums up this hierarchy, describing the white elements of society that were seen as a civilised population that represented a desirable state of Peruvianity, while the Andean elements embodied a semi-civilised part of the population, still caught up in the process of integration. Finally, the Amazon population was placed closer to the savage stage of civilisation due to their isolation.

A section of Indigenous Affairs was created in the Ministry of Public Works in 1921, and a Council of the Indigenous Race in 1922. The Peruvian Indigenist Institute was created in 1950 under the continental influence of the Inter-American Indigenist Congress of 1949 (Degregori & Sandoval 2008). The profound division between the urban mestizo population inhabiting the coast and the rural indigenous population living in the mountains grew, setting the conditions for the contentious second half of the century.

The Amazonian communities remained relatively marginalised from public debate in the first half of the century. Nevertheless, 1943-1970 represents a period of integration of the Amazonian region into national dynamics.

The construction of the Lima-Pucallpa road allowed for the integration of the Amazonian highland with the rest of the country. Commerce, migration, and the administrative presence of the government transformed Pucallpa into a prominent city. Furthermore, navigation on the Ucayali River allowed for better communication between highland and lowland Amazonia. Iquitos became a strategic interchange point between many communities and national society (San Román 1994). The region's economic structure remained heavily linked to the extractivist industries and dependent on international prices of raw materials. Cultural contact was intensified by the migration of the displaced population from the Andes. Simultaneously, the renewed efforts of the catholic missions and the incursion of the Summer Institute of Linguistics — acting on behalf of a state apparatus too weak to reach all of the national territory — inadvertently set the conditions for the emergence of the indigenous movement in the 1970s.

In the 1970s, a radical insurgency based in Marxist ideology emerged and proliferated in the Andes. This movement, known as The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), saw class struggle as the central dimension of social conflict, thus ignoring the cultural particularities between ethnic groups. Widespread guerrilla warfare resulted in a scenario where the population was trapped between the violence of the insurgency and the state (Degregori et al. 2012). However, a different kind of political organisation took root in the Amazonian region. Communities reacted to the aggressive incorporation of their territories into the national economy by organising themselves and procuring the recognition of their territorial lands. This was achieved using the legal institution granted by the state in 1974 called comunidad nativa.

During the presidency of Juan Velasco (1968-1974), state relations with indigenous groups shifted. The new terms were set by Law 20.653 of 1974 under the law figure of comunidad nativa — native community — designed specially to regulate the Amazonian populations. Another legal figure was instituted in the highland communities: the *comunidad campesina* — peasant community. The native and peasant

communities suited the description of the evolutionary hierarchy. The peasantry was considered a class-based category, which again resulted in ignoring cultural-ethnic differences. Changing the terms of debate into a question of class would in theory make indigenous assimilation into the nation-state easier.

The comunidad nativa was the first attempt to guarantee protection to the indigenous territories in response to the specific dynamics of land appropriation and use in the forest context. Nonetheless, in demarcating and recognising indigenous lands, the government tended to shorten their territory, leaving out vast extensions of land that the state could manage under their vision of national development (Campanera Reig 2012). This kind of injustice provoked the native communities to organise into federations and confederations with the help of NGOs, Catholic Missions, Evangelic organisations, and other agencies.

According to Chirif and García (2011), there are some antecedents of Amazonian ethnic groups forming political organisations, such as the Ashaninka[32] and the Amuesha[33]. Nevertheless, the rise of the vast Amazonian indigenous movement in Peru dates back to the second half of the 1970s, with the proliferation of local organisations on a national scale.

The Peruvian approach to the debate regarding the place of the indigenous population within the national project initially promoted universal citizenship. However, ignoring cultural diversity did not lead to the homogenisation of the population, and the problem persisted. In the 1970s, under a nationalist military dictatorship and a corporatist state impulse that sought to organise the population from above, from the perspective of the state, differentiated rights were recognised for native populations. The indigenous Quechua and Aymara communities of the Andean zone were classified around class-based criteria, organising them as comunidades campesinas, while the native populations of the lowlands were recognised as ethnic communities in comunidades nativas. These differentiated state policies divided the diverse ethnic populations. However, in the Amazon region, the indigenous groups managed to form strong and coherent forms of organisation.

Overall, the indigenist policies of the three countries can be summarised in the following way: The Brazilian approach generated a form of tutelage that has not yet faded despite the constitutional modifications in 1988. Colombian attempts at integration have transitioned from projects of acculturation

[32] Asociación de Nativos Campas, formed in 1959.

[33] Federación de Comunidades Nativas Yanesha, formed in 1969.

to multiculturalism. The Peruvian approach resulted in a fragmentation of policies around class in the Andean region and ethnic identity in the Amazonian lowlands.

Indigenous territories within the national context

Nowadays, indigenous territories have different degrees of recognition in every country that converges on the tri-border region, depending on the outcomes of the numerous struggles these segments of the population have engaged in with their respective states for the recognition of their rights. As we will see in chapter four, these struggles have occurred mainly in national political arenas, which makes the case of the Ticuna people in the triple border region significant, as their territoriality precedes the existence of the colonial and contemporary international borders.

The different regulations that govern Ticuna territories result from the absorption of their territories into the nation-state. Therefore, the Ticuna people have had to adapt and adjust their notions of territoriality to accommodate themselves to the three different legal frameworks. This process has contributed to the fragmentation of Ticuna territories, a reality that corresponds to the colonial logic of indigeneity, in which the territories inhabited by different ethnic groups were characterised as generic indigenous territories — exceptional territorial orderings within each nation-state — instead of being explicitly treated as the territories of particular ethnic groups. The Ticuna territory of Arara has more in common with territories occupied by other Colombian indigenous people, such as the Nasa in the Department of Cauca, hundreds of kilometres away, than with the territories of Yahuma Cayarú or Lauro Sodré, situated less than 20 km across the border[34].

In Brazil, the recognition of the indigenous territories by the state was enshrined in the constitution of 1988, under the notion of "traditionally occupied lands", which regulates indigenous peoples' rights over the territories that they have occupied continuously and prior to the formation of the state: "It is recognised that the indigenous peoples have the right to their social organisation, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, and their original rights over the lands that they have traditionally occupied, being the duty of the federal government to demarcate these lands, protect them and ensure that all their properties and assets are respected" (Senado Federal 1988: Art. 231)

[34] In chapter four, I describe how these transformations that aimed to integrate indigenous territories into national frameworks have produced differences in community social organisation and their relationship with the territory they inhabit.

Nevertheless, there are important restrictions to these rights. As Chirif and García point out (2007), the lands are ultimately considered assets of the Federative Republic of Brazil, which means that although the indigenous peoples hold their possession, the state has legislative power to decide over the exploitation of water resources and mineral extraction. The law gives indigenous people possession, but the property of their lands remains at the disposition of the Republic. This model is applied to indigenous lands — terra indígena — and other social groups that have traditionally occupied lands, such as *quilombos*, *babaçuais*, and *castanhais do povo* (Wagner 2004). All these territorial entities are subject to collective rights, a legal order different to that of private rights.

Lauro Sodré was officially declared terra indígena in 2004 after a lengthy bureaucratic process that lasted 20 years. Many people who started the struggle for legal recognition died before its declaration. This was the case of Cristina's father, Leonilo, who started the political organisation to struggle for land in the 1980s and died just months before the resolution was published in the official journal of the nation. The fact that the responsibility of demarcating indigenous lands falls on the Union is a highly contentious subject due to the influence of the *ruralistas*, a powerful lobby that represents the interests of agricultural and livestock producers, one of the most important investment sectors in the country's economy.

In Colombia, the official legal institution that recognises indigenous rights over land is called resguardo. The constituent assembly of 1991 that drafted the new constitution included indigenous legislators who fought vigorously for the recognition of indigenous territories under the communal landholding of the indigenous people. The resulting article reads as follows: "The confirmation of the indigenous territorial entities will be made subject to the provisions of the Organic Law of Territorial Planning, and its delimitation will be done by the National Government, with the participation of the representatives of the indigenous communities, prior concept of the Commission of Territorial Planning […] The resguardo is under collective ownership and not alienable […] The law would define the relationships and coordination of these entities with those of which they are a part" (Asamblea Constituyente de Colombia 2022: Art. 329).

However, as in the Brazilian case, limitations are imposed in favour of the state. A few paragraphs later, the constitutional text establishes that: "The State owns the subsoil and non-renewable natural resources." (Asamblea Constituyente de Colombia 2022: Art. 332). In this case, the Constitutional Court of the country has ruled that the state owns the subsoil and all non-renewable natural resources, rendering most communities vulnerable to mining interests.

Arara was the first resguardo officially recognised in the Amazon Trapeze in 1979. Before that, although it was an indigenous territory, from the state's point of view, the community constituted a *vereda*, a small rural community with no collective rights over the land. Aside from the indigenous territories, collective property is also recognised in Colombia in the case of black communities according to Law 70 of 1993. Peasant communities demand similar collective rights, and the consolidation of these territories has reached a standstill due to the unfulfilled commitments of the Colombian government in the peace agreement with the FARC-EP guerrilla.

In the Peruvian case, the law also recognises the existence of a particular territorial category for indigenous people under decree Nº 22175 –The Law on Native Communities and Agrarian Development in the Lower and Upper Rainforest Regions– decreed in 1974, and ratified by the constitution of 1993: "The rural and native communities have legal existence and are corporate entities. They are autonomous in their organisation, community work, the use and free disposal of their lands, and the economic and administrative aspects within the framework provided by law. The ownership of their lands may not prescribe, except in the case of abandonment described in the preceding article" (Congreso Constituyente del Peru 1993: Art. 89).

Substantial modifications were introduced to the constitution of 1993 under the government of Alberto Fujimori: while the first decree recognised the rights over the land as inalienable and imprescriptible, successive changes to secure the investments of logging and agroindustry allowed the prescription of rights for abandonment. Furthermore, the constitution establishes mineral resources, fossil fuels and water as state property.

The above-mentioned figures — terra indígena, resguardo and comunidad nativa — illustrate how a territory with historical and cultural continuity, such as that of the Ticuna, has suffered many transformations in legal status according to the national frame in which it is inscribed. Indigenous land rights often conflict whenever there is a superposition of rights over certain territories considered by the state as natural protected areas, national security, or any other consideration that puts the "public interest" above indigenous rights (routinely used as an excuse to give state concessions to private companies).

Urban-rural dependency

The Colombian city of Leticia, the Brazilian city of Tabatinga and the Peruvian city of Santa Rosa form a closed system of relations that can be understood as one important network hub that extends transnationally over the tri-border area.

The cities of Leticia, Colombia and Tabatinga, Brazil, are adjacent to each other and divided by the borderline. Nevertheless, people experience these two cities as one[35]. There is no physical barrier to impede transit between both territories. They are communicated by one main road, called Avenida da Amistade in Brazil and Avenida International in Colombia. Close to the shore of these two cities, there is an island formed by river deposits. South of this island, several kilometres long and a couple of kilometres wide, is the Peruvian city of Santa Rosa; a much smaller urban centre but an important commercial and administrative hub for the region. These three cities form one big urban conglomeration that acts as a bridge to their respective national centres[36].

Leticia and Tabatinga have airports with daily flights that connect the former with Bogotá and the latter with Manaus. Local flights also allow for travel to other smaller cities nearby. The other primary form of transportation is by boat. Each of the three cities has ports that receive cargo and passenger ships. The Santa Rosa port connects with Caballococha and Iquitos daily, either by ferry or speedboat. The Tabatinga port is serviced by a cruiser that travels between the border city and Manaus, covering most of the intermediate villages. Finally, speedboat services depart from the port of Leticia to Puerto Nariño and towns in between.

[35] Differences such as language or currency are easily surpassed in the day-to-day, as Spanish and Portuguese are mutually intelligible and most businesses — from the big supermarkets to street vendors — accept any of the three currencies in circulation. For a detailed analysis of the city dynamics, see the work of Unigarro (2017) which characterizes the tri-border urban space as simultaneously tri-national and cross-border.

[36] Another important urban hub is located on the right bank of the Amazon River. In the confluence between the Amazon and the Javari River, the Brazilian city of Benjamin Constant and the Peruvian city of Islandia sit in front of each other, only separated by an anabranch of the Javari River. Islandia is located on the northern extreme of an island, and Benjamin is on the mainland. This urban hub I s considered the entrance to the Javari Valley. It is well connected with the region as well. There is a continual circulation of boats between both cities and regular transportation from Benjamin to Tabatinga on the triple border. For a detailed account of the Benjamin-Islandia dynamics, see Souza (2015).

Connections

Arara's communal boat travels to Leticia every Tuesday and Friday at five in the morning. It is a big boat, around 12 meters long, but still not big enough to carry all the people that habitually travel to the city. I had gotten used to boarding early to get a seat before the boat filled up. The night before I travelled, I would ask Policarpa to wake me up early. She was always the first to open her eyes much earlier than dawn in our household. She would turn the lights on, put all her personal effects in a bag and wake up any family member joining her on the Leticia journey. On that occasion, it was her youngest son, Chilín, who wanted to study 10th grade, something the local school did not offer. Therefore, he needed to file some paperwork for his new school. Policarpa was careful not to make loud noises because she knew that if her little kid Danexi woke up, she would insist on going with her. For Danexi, going to the city meant skipping classes and enjoying a fun day out. In Leticia, she gets to eat a lot of the food she likes that cannot be found in Arara, mostly desserts and ultra-processed sweets. I was the last one to wake up. I had slept with my boots on and left my backpack ready. Just before leaving, I looked out the window of Policarpa's house, through which I could distinguish many other lit houses in the village where people were getting ready to travel.

We left the house at half past four. On our way to the main dock near Barrio Centro, we met many other neighbours walking with their flashlights towards the dock. If we knew of someone else travelling to the city, we shouted "uh" as we passed their house to see if we received the same response –"uh" signalled that the occupant was awake and would join us on the dock. The boat was waiting for us. We lined up on the shore and waited for Germán, the boat driver. His house was located just in front of the dock, which was handy because he had to carry the outboard motor from his house down to the boat for every trip. Despite being a small community, people never leave motors on their boats overnight because they fear someone might steal them. After attaching it to the rear, Germán drove the boat closer to the riverbank, and the people waiting could finally get on board.

There are just a few seats in the middle of the boat, which are always the first to get occupied. People who transport oversized packages also try to put them in the designated spaces where tables form a platform that keeps them dry. All boats have leaks, and Arara's communal ship is no exception. People on board routinely have to bail out the water with buckets. Packages can get wet if it is raining, which is common during most of the year. We put plastics over the bundle of packages once everything is piled onto the platforms to protect them.

People kept coming and taking their places inside the boat. Once the seats were filled, people sat on the edges of the boat. At five o'clock, we departed. On our way downstream to the Amazon River, we spotted other villagers waiting on the smaller ports of the community: the school dock, the Santa Rosa dock and so on. However, the boat was full on that occasion, and Germán did not stop. People who cannot get on board must find another way to travel to the city. Usually, this means waiting on the shore for someone travelling to Leticia with extra space to take them for a small fee to cover gasoline expenses. Many of the passengers that morning were elderly people travelling to Leticia to receive the bimonthly pension the government grants to people over sixty-five years old. Despite the multiple complaints against forcing the elders to travel to the municipal capital, the payment is still made face-to-face.

The cheap fare is one of the reasons why people prefer to travel in the community boat. Besides steering the ship, Germán carries a small notebook where he writes down the number of people travelling and whether or not they have paid the fee. It only costs 5,000 Colombian pesos, around £1.20, for a one-person roundtrip to the city. In the case of families, they pay 10,000 pesos for all their members. This travel cap is designed to reduce family expenses.

The sun was out by the time we reached the Amazon River. We still had a long trip ahead, but going downstream on such an enormous watercourse is always faster than taking the smaller streams. Two hours and a half later, we arrived in Leticia. During that time, I spoke with Claudio. He is a lumberjack and he had been feeling ill. He explained that his leg was hurting and that he had recently lost the vision in his left eye. He had been visiting the hospital in Leticia for some time. His leg felt better, but his eye remained affected. In Leticia, there was no specialist physician who could treat him. Therefore, he was applying for an appointment at a "level three" hospital in Bogotá. This was a lengthy process, but he decided to do it despite having to make constant trips to Leticia to follow up on the bureaucratic procedure.

Policarpa's brother, Dario, sat next to me. Dario is a fisherman, and he told me how he had fished two big Pacu fishes the night before. He showed them to me proudly; we joked about the resemblance between the fish's and human teeth. Dario was travelling to Leticia to sell them in the marketplace. Afterwards, he planned to use part of the money to buy a fishing net in Brazil. He invited me to go with him to Tabatinga, and I immediately accepted.

We arrived at La Pirañita dock in Leticia around seven in the morning. People were already waiting for the numerous boats that approached daily from all the neighbouring communities with a great diversity of products to sell in the city. The impatient buyers are mainly restaurant owners or resellers who buy a large

quantity of products. A man approached us, paddling in a canoe, and clung to our boat before we even had the chance to get ashore. He knew Dario well and immediately asked what kind of fish he had brought to the market. Dario showed him the two Pacus, and the man immediately tried to take them away from him. Transactions are aggressive sometimes. There is little opportunity to bargain after the buyer takes the merchandise, impeding other potential clients from approaching. Dario knew this, and he did not let them go. On our way to Leticia, we had previously discussed the price of these fish. Dario told me that on the market, he could get 40,000 pesos (£10) for each one, but the impatient buyer offered him 40,000 for both. Dario hesitated and asked for more, but the buyer did not change his offer. Dario accepted anyway and handed over the fish. By the time he got off the boat, he already had money in his pocket and wanted to go to Tabatinga.

The commercial area in Tabatinga usually opens early, and we took a small motorbike known as a *tuk-tuk* to get there. On our way to Brazil, I asked Dario why he had agreed to sell his fish for a cheaper price than he estimated. He nonchalantly responded that he wanted the rest of the morning free to run some errands. We crossed the border. When we arrived at the commercial area of the port of Tabatinga, he went straight to a fishing goods store. There, a Colombian woman greeted him in Spanish. She knew Darío, and she was happy to see him. He asked for a net measuring one and a half inches that he needed to catch bait. He paid for it in Colombian pesos, and instead of returning to Leticia immediately, he insisted on taking a walk around the port. I was in a hurry to return to Leticia's marketplace, and we agreed to meet back there.

Unlike Dario, most people travelling with us that morning refused to sell their products to the intermediaries. Instead, they went to the side of the road that divides the port from the marketplace, where they spent the morning selling them. Most of them were done by midday, and they spent the rest of the time buying stuff they needed, paying some bills, visiting relatives, meeting with the regional indigenous authorities, or just hanging out in the city.

Around two o'clock, I returned to the port. This is the customary time to return to Arara, but as usual, Germán waited for those who ran late. When we finally returned, there were fewer passengers than in the morning: some had to stay, others missed the boat and returned to the community in a different vessel. We left Leticia, but instead of heading immediately to the village, we crossed the Amazon River to Santa Rosa. This is an obliged detour every time someone travels back from Leticia.

Before leaving the tri-border urban hub, the boat docked at one of the multiple floating stores surrounding Santa Rosa Island. The main reason to stop there is to buy gasoline. Everybody knows the cheapest gasoline is found in Peru, even if only by a small amount, which makes it worth the stop if that means saving some money. Germán took the petrol tank and went to the counter. The rest of the passengers wandered around the store and bought things from the varied and bizarre selection of merchandise on display: tools, junk food, electronics, alcohol, bullets, candy, soft drinks, bread, clothes, shoes, seeds, and almost anything that Amazonian life requires. We arrived in Arara before sunset, and as usual, people headed home to rest and share anecdotes, goods or money acquired from their trip with their families.

This short description of the everyday life travels between the cities and the villages illustrates the profound integration of the urban and rural sectors of the tri-border region. All the bureaucratic, commercial and political activities are concentrated in the cities. However, the urban centres rely on the work of rural populations — many of them indigenous — to sustain them.

Those who live in the cities are fed thanks to the copious amounts of food produced in the surrounding communities. A minimal amount of food consumed comes from the air and river long distance trade with other productive centres in the country's interior, as food transportation costs are very high, not just because of the distance but also because of the difficulty of maintaining the cold chain in the tropical climate. In return, the rural populations benefit from these links to the city because it allows them to access manufactured goods, fuels, agricultural inputs and other tools that have become an indispensable part of their life.

Crossing borders

I have described the different social orders each sovereign nation instituted within its territories. Also, I have explained the influence these orders have had in articulating the region and the resulting dependency between the cities and the rural settlements. The cities are economic, political and bureaucratic centres, while the rural settlements provide food and labour. I now explain how the Ticuna people have constructed a cross-border territorialisation — a delimitation of territories by political communities that share a collective identity and have rights over their lands (Pacheco de Oliveira 2018) — that relies upon the connections the Ticuna maintain among themselves based on kinship. To address the everyday forms of Ticuna networking that communicate beyond international borders, I will present the results of a census I conducted on transnational family ties and travels to visit relatives. Afterwards, I

will describe the case of one Ticuna settler with two "official identities" –an example of the common practice of processing multiple identity papers to circumvent state control.

Commmunity celebrations are one of the most active socialisation spaces in Ticuna settlements. As we have seen in many of the ethnographic descriptions I have presented so far, I was constantly invited to visit other Ticuna communities across the borders for community anniversaries, football tournaments, or to celebrate coming-of-age rituals. On these occasions, the organising community invites other Ticuna settlements to visit and spend the celebration time as guests. This is often arranged months in advance through a formal invitation or by word-of-mouth.

Celebrations of this kind are significant for young people as an occasion to socialise, especially with people of the opposite sex. Courtship and dating are important reasons to travel. These visits usually last one to three days. Food and shelter are always provided by the hosting communities, sometimes in private houses or communal halls. Marriages know no nation-state boundaries, and Ticuna people often choose to form a family with a Ticuna partner from a different country, which builds connections between the Ticuna communities throughout the three nations.

The other main occasion for travelling abroad is to visit a family member and spend time hosted by attentive relatives. These visits can last weeks or months and even lead to the visitor changing their residency, as illustrated by the life trajectories vignettes in the introduction.

I conducted a census in my three field sites, developing an overall vision of these networks based on visits and physical displacements across the border lines. The first dimension I surveyed was the recognition of family ties across the border. To do this, I asked people if they had family members living in Ticuna communities in a different country. The second dimension refers to the effective renovation of these transnational links. Here, I asked people if they had visited any of these relatives living abroad in the last year.

I present the results as an illustration of how Ticuna mobility is supported by a web of family visits that imply transnational movements. The mapping of these travels contrasts with the state borders that have fragmented the Ticuna population, attempting to fix them in different nation-states. In Arara, 150 domestic units were surveyed, and 145 said they have relatives living in Peru or Brazil (97%). The communities in Brazil with more family ties to Arara are Belem do Solimoes (95), Umariaçu (70), Feijoal (32), Espiritual (14), and Piranha (13). Equally, people demonstrated family ties in the following

communities in Peru: Bellavista (35), Yahuma-Callaru (23), Cuchillo Cocha (20), Erené (20), and Caballococha (12).

Regarding visits made during the last year, in Arara, 120 households out of the 150 surveyed had visited relatives in Ticuna communities outside Colombia (80%). The most frequent destinations in Brazil are Umariaçu (37), Belem (35), Feijoal (11), Tabatinga (5), and Piranha (4). In the case of Peru, the localities with more mentions are Erené (11), Bella Vista (8), Caballococha (8), Yahuma-Callaru (8), and Cushillo Cocha (4).

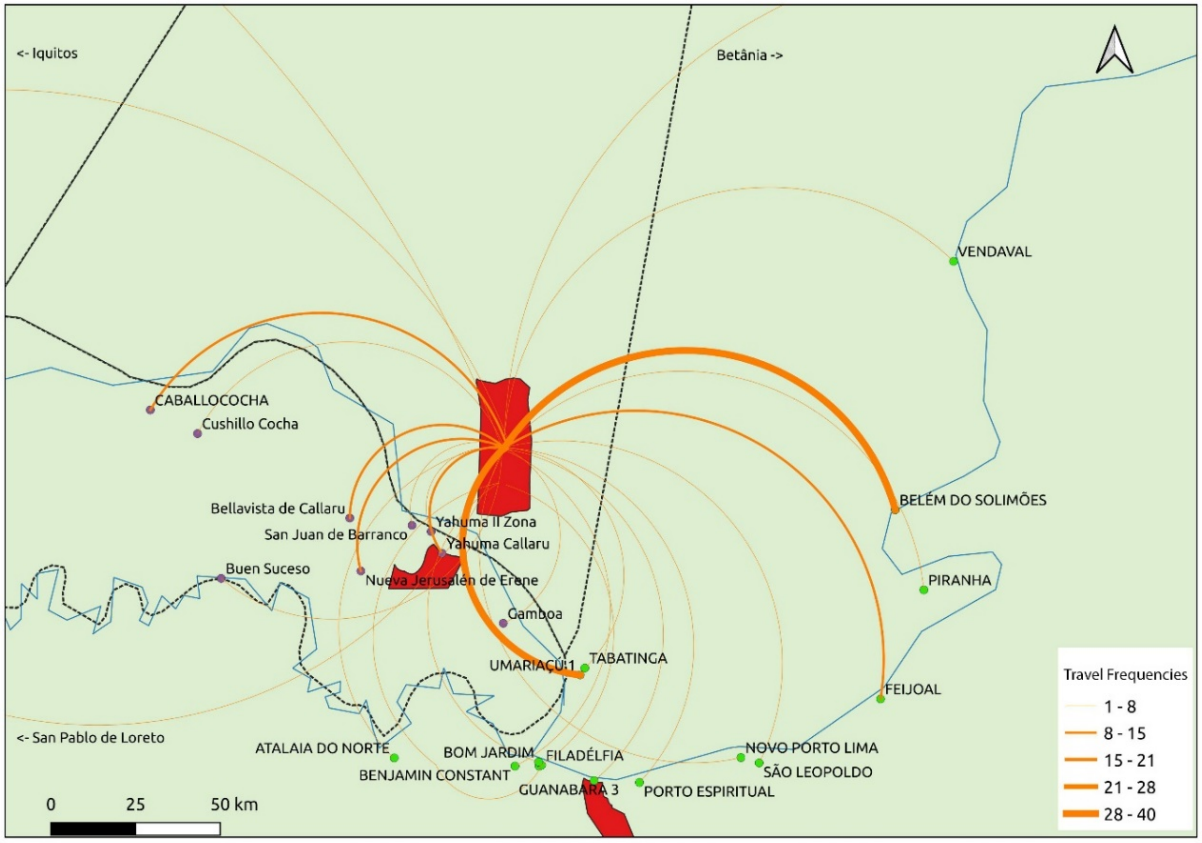

Figure 3 Arara map of visits to relatives across borders (Credits: Rodrigo Oliveira Braga Reis)

I carried out the same survey in the community of Yahuma-Callaru. The results also demonstrate an intense relationship between its inhabitants and other Ticuna communities beyond Peruvian borders. I surveyed 79 households, and the results show that 76 have relatives in Ticuna villages beyond the national borders (96%). The most mentioned communities with family members in Colombia are Puerto Nariño (15), Leticia (14), Macedonia (11), San Francisco (8), and Arara (7). In the case of family members living in

Brazil, the most frequent locations are Feijoal (21), Belem de Solimoes (20), Tabatinga (17), Umariaçu (17), and Filadelfia (16).

The number of households that had visited relatives abroad in the last year was 64 (81%). The most common destinations in Colombia were San Antonio de los Lagos (6), Leticia (5), Macedonia (5), Arara (4), and Zaragoza (4). In Brazil they were Tabatinga (15), Umariaçu (10), Feijoal (9), Filadelfia (9), and Belem de Solimoes (8).

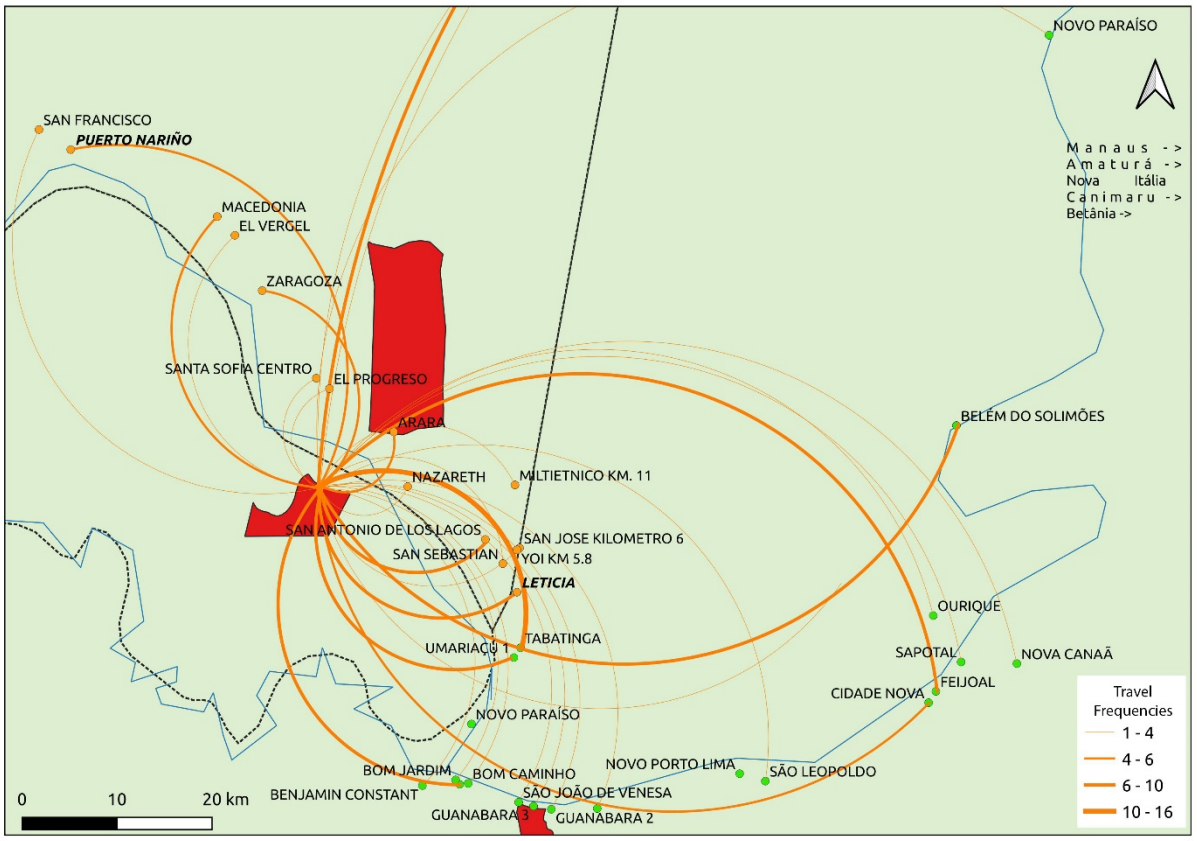

Figure 4 Yahuma-Callaru map of visits to relatives across borders (Credits: Rodrigo Oliveira Braga Reis)

Finally, in Lauro Sodré I surveyed 33 households, 22 of which mentioned having relatives living in communities abroad (67%). The most frequent communities in Colombia were Leticia (13), Arara (3), Puerto Nariño (2), Loma Linda (2), and Km. 6 (1). In the Peruvian territory, the communities with the most mentions were Iquitos (5), Bellavista (4), Erené (3), Cushillo Cocha (3), and Yahuma-Callaru (3).

The number of households crossing international borders during the last year to visit relatives registered in this Brazilian community was 10 (30%). The main destinations in Peru were Cushillo Cocha (2), Bellavista

(2), Chineria (1), Caballococha (1), and Yahuma-Callaru (1). The main destinations in Colombian territory were Leticia (2), Loma Linda (2), Km. 6 (1), and Nuevo Jardin (1).

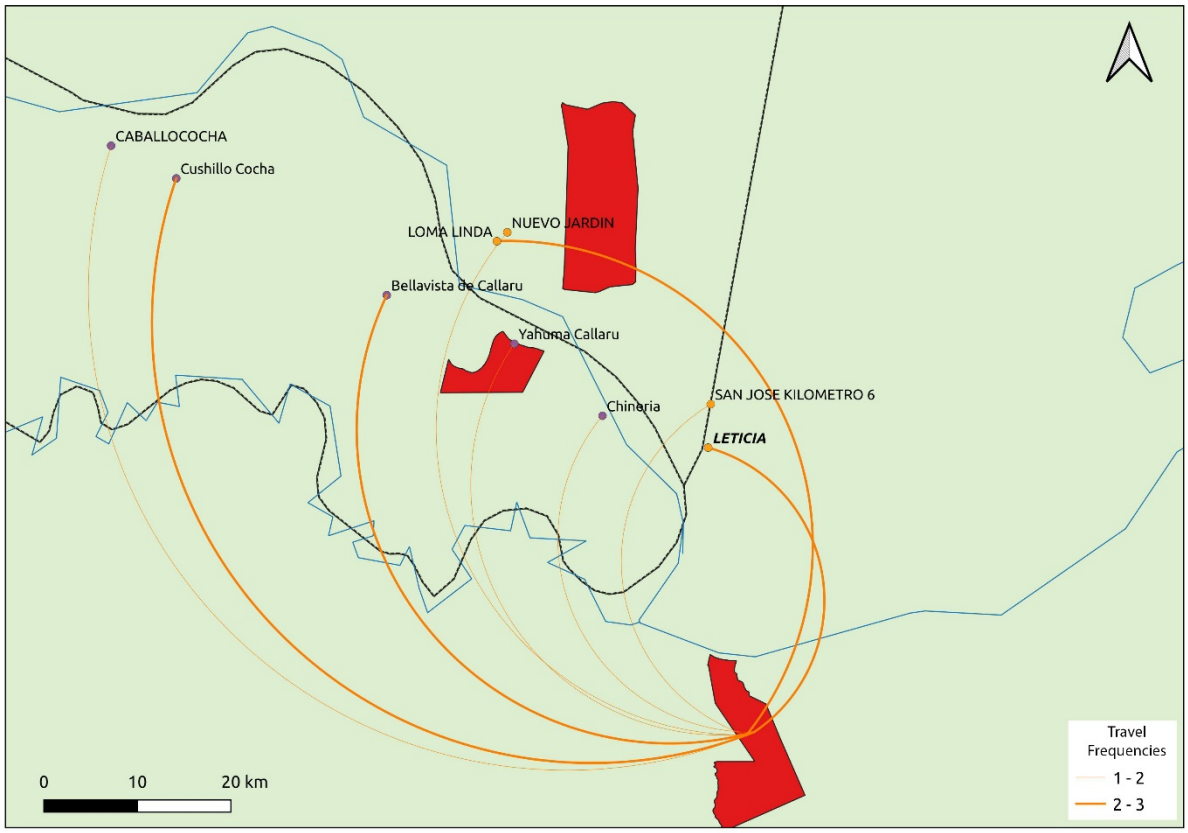

Figure 5 Lauro Sodré map of visits to relatives across borders (Credits: Rodrigo Oliveira Braga Reis)

These results illustrate the importance of family networks to maintain Ticuna settlements interconnected across different countries. They also express the importance of communitarian celebrations in courtship and marriage, which, combined with the practice of uxorilocal residence, reinforce the connections between Ticuna localities.

Evading the state's gaze

An order imposed from above determines limits between the sovereign bodies and reinforces these limits through administrative controls such as birth certificates, identity documents, school health and work records and marriage licenses. Nonetheless, there are many practices that people resort to circumvent or erode the surveillance capacity of the state.

Manuel Scorza, a Peruvian novelist and political activist, influenced by the indigenist movement in literature alongside authors such as José María Arguedas and Ciro Alegría, wrote a series of five novels or

ballads, known as *The Silent War,* where he portrays the struggles of indigenous peasants in Andean Peru. His narrative combines genres such as magical realism with social realism to insightfully address the political conflicts of the subaltern classes during the 20th century.

In the second book of the series, he introduces the main character named Garabombo, a commoner from the village of Chinche characterised by his invisibility. This invisible condition is explained at first as an illness, a curse, as the result of the incapacity of the administrative authorities of the state to attend his denouncements:

> I went down to complain to the Subprefecture — And? — They did not see me! — But I see you — Because you and I share the same blood, but white people do not see me. Seven days, I sat at the door of the office. The authorities came and went but did not look at me [...] In the beginning, I did not realise [...] I said, "They are still busy", but the second week, I began to suspect, and one day, when Subprefect Valerio was alone, I introduced myself. He did not see me! I talked for a long time. He did not even look up. I began to suspect [...] that I had become invisible! (Scorza 1988: 29-30)

In the Ticuna communities where I did my fieldwork, most of the problems that required the attention of the authorities to be solved had to be presented in a way that was comprehensible for the state bureaucracies. This implied at least two things: they had to be enunciated in the predominant language of the country (i.e., Spanish in Colombia and Peru, Portuguese in Brazil) and they had to be expressed in writing. This first requirement posed a challenge to a population whose first language is neither Spanish nor Portuguese, and the written expression of it requires mastering some elaborated forms of courtesy, which is difficult even for native speakers. I was involved in writing several of these requests.

In Lauro Sodré, both alleged caciques requested my help to write down requests and complaints to the Brazilian authorities. Porfirio asked me to write a request for a medical port for the community. I helped write a letter addressed to the Coordinator of the Indigenous Special Sanitary District of Alto Rio Solimões. Afterwards, I helped him write a letter to the Prefect of Benjamin Constant to request a new building for the community school. I even had to redact a denouncement to the police official describing a case of witchcraft against Porfirio's daughter.

Manuel Scorza's novel gives a twist after Garabombo learns to use his invisibility as a weapon against the same authorities who cannot see him:

> He had once been transparent to the authorities. Today, he would be invisible to all men! Protected by its glass armour, he would cross closed landmarks, penetrate sheltered villages, convince the shy, and seduce the prudent. The error of his ignorance would be the weapon of his lucidity. Chinche had believed him invisible for years. Why not accept transparency capable of annihilating all prohibitions? That force would overcome discouragement! He would be invisible! He would spread the superb imposture. He would be invisible to all landowners and overseers of the world, transparent, unreachable, untouchable, and invulnerable, which would help him prepare a great uprising! What commoner would not support a man who could never be captured? What danger could they run with a being that could dissolve at his own will? (Scorza 1988: 176-177)

This transition of invisibility is an allegory of ethnic marginalisation and the capacity to cheat the system, a transition from passivity to a form of agency. Here, we see the capacity of an active subject to trespass and organise a rebellion, all the while remaining invisible to the eyes of the state. Multiple practices of the Ticuna reminded me of this capacity of playing with the same rules the state uses to make them legible. The example of a commoner from Yahuma-Callaru illustrates this dimension of living across borders.

The first time I met Tesorio was months before I decided to do fieldwork in his community. It all started when the community of Arara received an invitation to a football tournament held in Yahuma-Callaru. This kind of invitation produces interest in people of all ages, and when the date arrived, several boats crossed the Amazon River early in the morning, filled with players of Arara's two challenging teams and their families. Upon our arrival, the local teams were already warming up, and the matches were already scheduled for the whole day.

While the sporting event was taking place, Plinio — Policarpa's brother-in-law — suggested that a small group of spectators visit his uncle Tesorio, who lived in the community and "surely would receive us in his house and offer us food and drinks". We accepted excitedly. Yahuma is predominantly an Evangelical community, and alcoholic beverages cannot be consumed in public spaces.

When we arrived at Tesorio's house, he greeted us from the inside with a loud invitation to come in. I saw him through the window, rocking gently in his hammock. At first sight, he looked small and old, barely moving while graciously petting a small anteater. When we entered his house, he had already gotten up and placed a table for us. Tesorio looked different to the man I saw a minute ago. Suddenly infused with

vital energy, I could recognise the figure of a very strong man: he is mature, but his agile movements made him look younger, concealing the fact that he is in his late 50s. He loved to receive visits and immediately asked his wife Juana to offer us some manioc beer and started talking.

His story is illustrative of life on the border. He was born in a community called Santa Lucia in Colombia. His parents, a Colombian man and a Peruvian woman, took him to live his first years in Yahuma-Callaru, but at age five, they all went to live in Arara. They decided to move because that year, Yahuma-Callaru flooded, and his father had a brother living in Arara. His uncle received them enthusiastically and made them feel very welcome.

He lived there until he was ten years old and remembers those years as formative. He cherishes that period of his life because it was when he attended school and learned to speak Spanish (although later, he confessed to resenting the fact that the teacher beat them if they spoke Ticuna). Furthermore, those years were when he learned to fish and plant, fundamental knowledge for a dweller of rural Amazonia.

When he was ten years old, his life took a sudden turn: his mother was bewitched and got sick. With her legs paralysed, she took him as a companion to look for the help of a witch doctor in Amaturá, Brazil –a village a few hours downstream of Sao Paulo de Olivença. He remembers these days as challenging times, which lasted the four years they remained there, far from his father and the rest of the family, until his mother regained strength in her legs and they could return to Yahuma-Callaru.

By then, he was already 14 years old and decided to go to Leticia, where he worked selling popsicles. At 17, he looked for a wife and met Juana, a young Ticuna woman from Peru. After a short period of courtship, they married and decided to live in Yahuma-Callaru.

All his life spent living in three different countries and constantly crossing the border gave him enough experience to navigate between the systems. Tesorio decided to apply for identity documents with different names. To move around in Colombia, he had a *cédula de identidad* under the name of Tesorio Ramos. He also possessed a *Documento Nacional de Identidad,* which he uses as identification in Peru, but under the name Eleuterio Vento.

Many Ticunas have double or triple nationality. They are entitled to them as they have parents from different countries than the one they were born. However, in this particular case, Tesorio/Eleuterio has two identities, which he uses alternatively to go unnoticed in specific contexts.

Tesorio's strategy is just one example of the many ways people navigate state bureaucracy and elude the gaze of the modern ruler. If the sovereign power of the state resides in the capacity to include or exclude the population from the body politic that is the nation, then the Ticuna people have learned to play hide and seek with three states.

Chapter Three. Moving Frontiers

Just as the notion of border is closely linked to the processual, historical and contested configuration of nation-states, the concept of frontier has been central to conceptualising the expansion of capitalism in peripheral areas (Grimson 2000). From the seminal work of Frederick Jackson Turner on the moving frontier line in American history towards the West (2018) to more recent analysis of capitalist accumulation (Harvey 2003; Li 2014; Patel & Moore 2017; Tsing 2003) national development has been conceptualised as incorporating geographical and social spaces into the nation-state and the capitalist economy[37].

Pelkmans (2021) develops a topological analysis of the frontier, interested in the spatiotemporal ordering of social fields to apprehend its dynamics. Although focused on missionary activity in Kyrgyzstan, he postulates that the frontier as a topological order is useful for analysing other political-economic asymmetric encounters, such as capitalist expansion, which is my focus in this chapter. This metaphor of the frontier as a tidal force is shared by many others because it portrays the essence of a forward-pushing figuration with its own directionality and intensity.

I will devote this chapter to addressing the complex articulations of the Ticuna population with the capitalist economy. Like the pulse of the Amazon River, the traditional logic of producing and reproducing their material life is articulated around the advances of the economic capitalist frontier over Ticuna territories and spheres of life. This advance incorporates physical and social spaces into the orbit of capitalism. At the same time, other forces push back, slowing, stopping or reversing the advance of the logic of production driven by profit and accumulation. I identify actions of resistance in preserving economic autonomy in certain spheres of life outside the logic of capitalism and under the logic of traditional production.

I focus on the struggles around this dimension of economic life, paying attention to the empirical details as the only way to capture the dynamics of the moving frontier, which advances and recedes according to its own spatiotemporal ordering (commodification of the labour force against a traditional Ticuna ethos that values personal autonomy over profit).

[37] The other paradigmatic example that impacted the notions of the frontier in Latin America was the Russian expansion towards Siberia and its process of capitalist development (Lenin 1964).

In the Amazonian region, the historical processes of nation-building and state formation are closely linked to and influenced by the expansion of capitalism as a regime of accumulation. This incorporation process has taken place at different speeds in the territories of all three countries that converge in the tri-border region[38]. Its specific articulation with world trade circuits has been historically linked to the valorisation of certain goods in international markets and, therefore, susceptible to being affected by external circumstances, with pronounced periods of boom and bust.

Especially in the last decades, all three countries implemented policies to incorporate the indigenous population within the national market economy. Nevertheless, as Cardoso de Oliveira (2014) noted when he studied the mechanisms of exploitation operating in the Brazilian Ticuna societies, these processes were not exclusively based on economic principles. They relied heavily upon the ethnic classification between indigenous and non-indigenous people[39]. Far from what frontier theory predicted (Cleary 1993), capitalism did not substitute non-capitalist economic relations, and the expansion of the market economy did not always imply the disappearance of tribal groups or the erosion of ethnic identity (Ribeiro 1979). For the sake of this research, here I understand the interconnection between capitalist and "traditional" economies as an articulation of different production logics in which capitalist economies subsume traditional ones. This subordination manifests spacially in the town-country divide, largely analysed by anthropologists[40] focusing on the peasantry.

Efforts to incorporate the Ticuna population into capitalist circuits of production have not been comprehensive processes, but more a heterogenic articulation of their traditional production systems with broader capitalist regimes of accumulation. Studies on peasant and indigenous societies highlight the fact that often the capitalist economy does not simply destroy and substitute traditional forms of social organising and economic life; instead, a more generative process entwines traditional and capitalist logics, creating new realities for indigenous groups, often entrenching difference (Li 2014; Tsing 2005).

This chapter will address how diverse logics of production are generated in a frontier region where Ticuna communities are partially articulated to the capitalist economy. The processes of this integration relies on the commodification of subsistence (Brenner 2001), where the Ticuna household depends progressively

[38] For analysis of the national Amazonian regions, consult for Brazil (Velho 2009), Peru (Santos Granero & Barclay 2002), and Colombia (Gómez López et al. 2015).

[39] Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1963) and Gonzalez Casanova (2009 [1963]) coined the term “internal colonialism” to address the ways class structures are crossed by ethnicity in Latin America.

[40] To expand on the nature of the town-country division, see Mintz (1953); Redfield (1989); Silverman (1979); and Wolf (1966).

on cash to buy consumption goods to secure their reproduction as a social unit. The consumption of clothing, home appliances, food, tools, public services, and transportation, among other elements, tends to integrate the Ticuna population into a cross-border economy where they are linked to the urban centres as petty commodity producers and seasonal wage workers.

I will present demographic and statistical data obtained from my field sites to explore the characteristics of this economic configuration. I underline the ambiguities and contradictions in the choices of people who value their traditional livelihood positively and who are also compelled to adopt new economic strategies to fulfil increasing consumption to satisfy their needs and desires. This tension is always present in how they decide to devote their labour to produce for self-consumption and to allocate certain products of their work as commodities in the market. Another way that the Ticuna population is connected to the capitalist economy is through wage labour. Looking for wage jobs compels them to migrate temporarily, as most paid positions are offered outside the community.

In the first part of this chapter, I describe the organisation of the main productive activities of the three Ticuna settlements. Using ethnographic vignettes and data from an economic census, I describe the main characteristics of the traditional economic activities in the villages. I include representations associated with these practices that reflect the Ticuna worldview associated with nature, the different non-human beings that live in it, and the implications of productive activities as interventions in the environment. I portray the multiple traits of the production and reproduction of life for the Ticuna. I focus not only on their utilitarian rationale but also what Gasché has called the aspects of sociability and motricity, where the pleasures of social interaction and autonomy play an important role in economic activities, such as the freedom to decide the intensity, rhythm, goals, and company of those involved in the labour process (Gasché 2007). I provide a community-level overview of the economic dynamics that shows how horticulture, fishing, hunting, gathering and handicraft for self-consumption are still the foundations of Ticuna livelihood. Nevertheless, the data reveals that they are also partially articulated with the capitalist economy of the region. The second part of the chapter addresses the main dimensions of productive life that articulate the Ticuna settlements with the capitalist economy. To conclude the chapter, I present an overview of the insertion of Ticuna people in this frontier economy and its implications for their lives. My main argument is that Ticuna control over the land and bodies of water in their territories allows them to decide how to better allocate labour. Their profound sense of personal autonomy constantly makes them reflect on what kind of a *good life* they should pursue and how they balance work for self-consumption and work directed to access cash through commodity production and wage labour.

Part one: Traditional economic activities

As we have seen, the three communities differ in population. Arara has a population of 921 people, Yahuma-Callaru 426, and Lauro Sodré 184 inhabitants. The information I present here takes the household as the basic economic unit of the settlements, not the individual or the family. A household is broadly considered as the group of people that contribute to and feed from a common table or pot, acting as a unit of production and consumption. Its particularity is the capacity to employ its members' labour force and access to a minimum of production means (Bartra 2006; Bernstein 2010; Chayanov 1986; Wolf 1966). According to my census, Arara comprises 150 households, Yahuma-Callaru 79, and Lauro Sodré 33. The average household in Lauro Sodré and Yahuma Cayarú is made up of five people. In Arara it is slightly higher, with households of six people. I will present the main activities in which the households are engaged.

Horticulture: managing the *naane* or swidden garden

The base of the Ticuna economy in the region is the shifting agriculture system rooted in gardens known as *naane*. The naane provides the material subsistence of the Ticuna people and the reproduction of the spiritual order of their universe. Known as *chagras* in Colombia, *roças* in Brazil and *chacras* in Peru, horticultural gardens are considered a traditional system of cultivation in which each household intervenes in sections of the tropical forest to cultivate crops for a short period. The plot is cultivated usually two or three years, and afterwards is left for a fallow period. These agriculture techniques are especially suitable for tropical soils because of their cyclical nature. This rotation permits the restoration of the soil once depleted of its nutrients (Acosta & Zoria 2012).

I registered through a census that in all three communities, most households cultivated at least one naane to produce food for self-consumption, and most also produced surpluses for commercialisation in the urban centres. Working the naane is considered the main economic activity of Ticuna households. People secure at least one sown garden, and only afterwards do they dedicate their time to other productive activities. Agricultural cycles are fundamental to allocating the workforce for all household members. Grown-up men and women work in the garden at least three to five days a week. They take their children with them as long as it does not interfere with school activities. During the most intensive periods of work (cleaning the sites and harvesting the crops), the household might require external help from extended family members or neighbours.

The cyclical cultivation period starts with selecting a plot of land, usually less than a hectare in size[41]. There is no primary forest left near any of the villages. Therefore, most of the "new" naane are in fact the continuation of a previous cycle after a fallow period that allowed the soil to replenish by growing trees and weeds[42].

After years of not working a naane because of her husband's handicap and her young children's constant refusal to do agricultural work, Policarpa had had enough and decided to start one. She frequently complained that despite having a regular cash income, it was hard to survive by buying all their food and producing nothing. She organised a *minga* to clear the land of all the big trees that had grown in an old plot that belonged to her deceased mother. Minga is the name given to a collective workday organised by a household that needs the help and assistance of many people during intensive periods of the agricultural cycle.

Policarpa invited some of her neighbours and most of her brothers and sisters to help clear the naane. In exchange, she prepared food to feed everyone willing to help and provided money to buy gasoline and oil for the use of chainsaws where required. A lot of big trees had grown in the abandoned naane because the space had been uncultivated for eight years. The use of chainsaws has dramatically changed the time required to clear a plot. Policarpa told me that clearing a garden used to require weeks of hard work with axes, but it took just one day with the collaboration of two people using chainsaws. About one hectare of land was cleared of all the large vegetation, apart from certain species of fruit trees and chambira palms that need several years of growth to reach their production stage, and so people tend to keep them.

According to Policarpa, every time you clear a plot of land, you must consider non-human entities such as enchanted people or the owners of the big trees that inhabit it. Enchanted people, or *üüne,* are humans that lived long ago and reached a state of purity that granted them immortality. They live in certain parts of the Ticuna territory. They cannot be seen but can be heard. A hill called Boegüne was well known for being home to enchanted people. I heard multiple testimonies of people who walked near Boegüne on their way to their gardens and heard conversations, laughs, whistles, tools being used, and even dogs

[41] There is no shortage of available land in any of the three communities, but people often complained that they have to choose sites in increasingly remote places, making the journeys harder as they have to walk longer distances from the villages.

[42] A study in the Colombian community of El Vergel found the average size of the gardens have reduced in the last decades from 3-5 ha. on average to less than 0.5 ha. The fallow period has reduced as well, suggesting increased pressure on the land (Fonseca-Cepeda et al. 2019).

barking and roosters crowing, but they could not locate the beings that produced these sounds. Big trees have owners known as *norüllora* that get upset when humans cut them. Policarpa asked the spirits for permission before clearing the plot to avoid trouble. Her uncle prayed and blew tobacco smoke. She said that if you do not do that, they might hurt you, giving you headaches or pain in the arm, and in some extreme cases, they can kill you.

The cleaning is followed by a period of drying. In this stage, all the cut trees are left *in situ* and logged over the following weeks to use as firewood. The wood is used by the plot's owner, neighbours and relatives willing to carry it from the naane to their houses. Nonetheless, they have to ask permission before taking it. In small communities, most gardens are located within a few hundred metres of the village, but in Arara, the available land is increasingly farther away due to the growing population.

After a few weeks, the owner of the garden proceeds to burn the remaining wood. This procedure prepares the soil for planting as the ashes act as a fertiliser. Two months after the first minga, Policarpa organised a second, smaller one to burn and clear her naane. In some communities, there is awareness of the ecological advantages of crop rotation without resorting to burning. Some people in Lauro Sodré considered not burning, but they were reluctant to change and felt there was no need as the usual fallow period was appropriate and the soil regenerated.

During the growing period, the garden owner usually builds a small shack next to it. They also build an oven to prepare manioc flour. The shack is useful for storing tools, resting under a roof from the sun or rain, and processing the raw manioc into manioc flour, known as *farinha*. The main staple of most of the swidden gardens is manioc. Both varieties — sweet and bitter — are processed into flour for consumption; therefore, an oven and a source of heat are always required[43]. Usually, shacks are erected near a water source. Large water tanks are placed to collect rainwater if no creeks are nearby. In any case, the shack is fundamental for managing the garden. In cases where the garden is far away from the village, people move and live for periods in the shacks. They are considered an extension of the house.

After the burning comes the sowing. All households in the three communities reported cultivating manioc and bananas, as well as a wide variety of plants, including cupuaçu, Amazonian grape, mango, pineapple,

[43] The long process required to transform the tuber into flour demands a lot of labour; it implies soaking, grating, dewatering, fermenting, and roasting the manioc. This procedure removes the poisonous cyanide of the bitter manioc, it also makes it easier to store and most importantly, transforms it into a highly sought after commodity in the city marketplaces.

cane, abiu, yam, lulo, watermelon, maize, peppers, guava, açai, coconut, peach palm, papaya, bacurí, arazá, inga, avocado, coriander, brazil nut, sorva, and umari, among others.

After these stages, labour requirements are reduced, and a few months of tending is necessary, depending on the crop and the variety. Arias et al. (2005) reports 38 varieties of manioc used by the Ticuna, 21 varieties of sweet manioc and 17 varieties of bitter manioc, while Zoria (2010) documents 42. In any case, the diversity of manioc responds and adapts to different soils. Most are ready to harvest after six months, but others might take one year or more. Cleaning the garden of weeds and ensuring no animal or plague affects the crops is less labour-intensive. Some people even use herbicides. Afterwards, the harvest is organised depending on the necessities of the household. It is possible to sow the same plot for two or more cycles, but the productivity of the soil tends to drop dramatically. After two or three years, the area is left for a fallow period, and a new piece of land is cleared.

Swidden gardens, as traditional expressions of indigenous adaptation to the lowland forest ecosystem, must not be considered static production systems. On the contrary, Fonseca-Cepeda et al. (2019) characterise them as a constantly evolving social-ecological system where adaptation and transformation are common phenomena. For example, Ticuna integration with the regional markets has changed the composition of the swidden gardens, and this is key to understanding the intertwined economy of the indigenous communities and the region's big cities. In the second part of the chapter, I will turn to how marketplaces and ecological factors influence the dynamics of the naane in the three villages where I conducted fieldwork, but in general, a greater integration tends to reduce the diversity of plants and trees.

There are two main types of land: várzea or floodplains, which are regularly enriched by the alluvial deposits from the river, and terra firme or highlands that have lower fertility and whose nutrients originate from the decay of existing vegetation, or in the case of slash and burn gardening, from the ashes.

In Arara, 141 households out of the 150 have one or more gardens (94%). The peculiarity of Arara is that its territory has both várzea and terra firme soils. Ninety-seven households have gardens in the higher soils, eight in the alluvial floodplains, and 36 households combine cultivation activities by planting both várzea and terra firme gardens.

In Yahuma-Callaru, the territory is primarily made up of floodplains. 78 out of 79 households cultivate at least one plot of land (99%). Only one household possessed a garden located on the high ground, but it was located outside the territories of the community. The rest of the community's gardens are cultivated in várzea.

In Lauro Sodré, 32 of the 33 households cultivate gardens (97%). Most are localised on high grounds, with 29 households having terra firme gardens. Only two households with access to a seasonal beach have várzea gardens, and one combines both.

Although there are differences in the kinds of gardens households cultivate, the main activity in all three communities is horticulture. The households that did not have gardens at the moment of the census can be understood in three possible ways. The first is related to health circumstances. During illness periods, people cannot work, and their households rely on extended family ties to survive. The second is related to temporary wage work that prevents household members caught up in seasonal wage work from cultivating. Some examples from the surveys are an elected representative — *consejal* —, a construction worker, and a worker for a health program. These are examples of non-permanent jobs, and these temporary workers expressed that they will cultivate gardens as soon as they leave their jobs. The last reason is that people work salaried jobs inside the communities, for example, state functionaries — teachers and healthcare workers. They are not Ticuna but are hired from outside the community and rely on their salary to live.

The Ticuna families that do not have gardens generally regret not having one because they must buy staple foods such as plantains and manioc, which they are used to obtaining as a product of their labour, and they have contradictory feelings about not having the time to cultivate the land. However, other regrets are linked to missing the joy of engaging in open-air activities and having control over their time and how to use it.

Policarpa in Arara and Cristina in Lauro Sodré had to devote most of their time to wage work, and they deeply regretted that they could not engage in activities such as horticulture, which they considered much more enjoyable than cooking and teaching. Policarpa was vocal in her admiration of her sisters and friends' gardens, and every time she visited them, she asked for seeds and cuttings to plant outside her house. Working in the garden was much more than just an economic activity for her. She praised being in the open air, caring for plants, and having fun working with family and eating together in the garden shack. Policarpa regretted that because she had not had a garden for many years, her sons never learned or cared for having one, and she was worried that when the time came for them to start a family, they would have a difficult time because every new family needs to have a garden for subsistence; it is part of being Ticuna, she said.

It does not matter in which country the community is located. Ticuna husbands are expected to maintain a big, clean garden for their families. In the Ticuna worldview, cultivating the land is closely connected to the reproduction of life and families.

Fishing

While I lived in Yahuma-Callaru, I accompanied Teófilo multiple times to fish in the rivers and lagoons near the terra indígena. I occasionally fished with other people in Arara and Lauro Sodré, but Teófilo was my most constant companion in this activity. Through these experiences, I found out that fishing not only had an economic function for most of the Ticuna. In addition to being a medium to provide food, it is also a leisure activity which appeals to people of all ages. It is also mainly oriented to self-consumption within the household, and in some exceptional cases, it is a market-oriented activity.

Ticuna people master diverse fishing techniques. The distinctive use of each of these techniques depends on the hydrological conditions in which the activity is performed. During our fishing trips, Teófilo talked about his younger days, which he remembered as times of abundance. He would also say that catching big fish was much easier back then. He explained that overexploitation caused by commercial fishing had depleted the rivers, and now catching fish was more complicated than ever. The pulse of the water over the course of the year determines the availability and types of fish found in the rivers. During winter, the water level rises and the fish swim into the flooded forest; during summer, the level of the river drops, and many fish stay trapped inland, confined to the lakes where they are easier to catch. Piracema is the name given to the season when fish travel upstream of the Amazon River to lay their eggs and reproduce. It is a word of Tupi origin that has been adopted by all the region's inhabitants. According to Teófilo, during the years of big floods, significant quantities of migrating fish can be observed; the last time he remembers that happening was in 2012.

Teófilo explained to me that according to the Ticuna conception of the world, the owner of the fish and the mother of the water is a giant boa known as Yewae[44]. Yewae dwells in the Amazon River and protects the region's fish, helped by other large snakes that live in the smaller streams and lakes. These *nanatü* (owners, fathers and mothers of creatures of nature) are generous with the humans and provide an abundance of fish for them to catch as long they do not practice wasteful fishing, because this might result

[44] Yewae is also the owner of the mud and ceramics, but since nobody in made pottery in the communities where I conducted fieldwork, I could not expand in the subject.

in punishment for those who do. It is always a good idea to ask permission from Yewae before embarking on a fishing trip. Yewae is also responsible for the river level and the seasonal migration of the fish. Yewae is rarely seen, but her presence can be detected by the agitated waters and the whirlpools formed in the currents. Cristina from Lauro Sodré told me she once saw Yewae in the Amazon River, just in front of her house. She noticed water splashing around the shore, and on approaching, saw hundreds of fish boiling, hopping in and out of the water. Then she saw Yewae partially emerging and swimming upstream. Days later, the piracema took place.

Teófilo uses a simple fishing rod for fishing in lakes or calm waters: a stick of one or two metres with a line and an angle. A successful catch depends on the ability of the fisherman to pull the fish out of the water as soon as they bite the bait; otherwise, they escape. The usual bait includes seeds, crickets, and worms or pieces of flesh from smaller fish such as sardines. Notably, the locality of Yahuma was very popular in the region for the proliferation of a massive kind of worm called *zapana*. Many fishermen from other villages travelled to this part of the Amazon River to capture zapana and use them as bait.

A spear can also be used in lakes and is usually crafted using a long pole and attaching spikes at one end. It is common to use everyday objects such as nails or steel bars and adapt them to build these instruments. These devices help catch fish and caimans, which are appreciated because of their flavourful meat. The ecological conditions for fishing are much better in Yahuma because it is home to three lakes (Lago Podre, Centrinho and San Sebastián). Arara has just one, and Lauro Sodré has none, although some people from Lauro cross the Amazon River to Aramazá Island, where they are allowed to fish in the lake of São Raymundo.

Teófilo prefers fishing in the slow-running waters of the Yahuma and Callaru rivers. He usually takes a small boat and uses the motor to reach places he identifies as good spots to fish. He explained how the accumulation of plants provides food for the fish, so these places have a good amount of fish to catch. If the river's depth is low, he uses a throw net — a circular net with weights distributed around its edges. The casting of the net is a challenging task. It must spread entirely in the air before sinking into the water to catch the fish at the bottom. Afterwards, it is just a matter of slowly pulling the net up with the fish trapped inside.

If the waters are deep, Teófilo fishes using a line. For this technique, the line is not attached to a pole but instead rolled into a reel made of wood that allows the line to travel further away from the person holding

it. The long line is useless when the river runs fast or if it has a lot of vegetable sediment. In these cases, the hook gets stuck.

Using static nets is the most common method of fishing in the region. The type of net and the layout also depend on the speed of the water current. If the waters are running slow, people use a stationary net that they leave set overnight and pull up in the morning. When waters run fast, using plastic nets with floaters is recommended. These nets are capable of drifting down the river.

Finally, the technique most associated with commercial fishing is longline fishing. This method is particularly suitable for fishing in the waters of the Amazon River, where big fish live. The procedure consists of fixing a mainline to the bank of the river. From the main line, several fishing hooks are attached and left near the surface with live bait to attract bigger animals.

Most people in the three communities where I conducted my fieldwork dislike fishing in the Amazon River because it is considered risky. Only people practising fishing as a commercial activity were inclined to fish in its dangerous waters. A journey to fish in the Amazon River takes two or more days using a large boat. An essential bit of equipment is a big polystyrene cooler filled with blocks of ice that can be bought in the tri-border urban hub. One block of ice lasts three days, enough to keep the fish cold until they are sold in the marketplace.

There is a secret to catching many fish. People call it *pusanga*. Pusanga is a charm fabricated from plants and parts of animals with a great power of attraction. It is most commonly known in the region as a way to attract love, but I heard it can also be used to attract game animals, fish or money. Its efficiency relies on its secrecy. Once you tell anyone you use or know how to create pusanga, it will stop working. One of Policarpa's uncles told me he used it a long time ago to catch fish, but he stopped because he exposed himself to the wrath of Yewae.

Fishing reflects the importance of an electricity supply. In Arara and Lauro Sodré, fish could be frozen and preserved for several days, while in Yahuma-Callaru, this was not possible unless people salted or smoked fish, which used to be the most common preservation technique throughout the region until a permanent energy supply and refrigerators became available in some communities.

Fishing and horticulture are the main productive activities in all three communities. Fish complements the diet of the average Ticuna household as it is available all year. In Arara, 131 out of the 150 households manifested that at least one member of the economic unit practised fishing (87%). The frequency of the activity varies. 21 households fish daily, 51 on alternate days, 31 fish twice a week, 23 once a week, and

two households fish less than once a week. Of the 131 households that fish, 58 (44%) fish for self-consumption only and 73 (56%) sell part of their catch.

In Yahuma-Callaru, 74 out of 79 households devote time to fishing (94%), with a frequency of 16 fishing daily, 51 on alternate days, 31 twice a week, 23 once a week and three less than once a week. Of the 74 households that fish, 37 (50%) sold part of their catch, while 37 (50%) declared fishing only for self-consumption.

In Lauro Sodré, 32 households practised fishing (97%), and only one did not. Six households said they practice the activity daily, eight alternate a day of fishing with a day of other activities, seven practice it twice a week, and 11 do it three times a week. Of the 32 households that fish regularly, 28 (87%) sell part of their catch, and four (13%) fish for self-consumption only.

In households where none of the members practice fishing, they still regularly include fish in their diet. They buy it from their neighbours or receive it from relatives. Buying fish locally is much cheaper than obtaining it from the city marketplaces. The transactions are often part of an intricate web of gifts. Policarpa never had the time to go fishing, but her brother Darío went daily. He usually gave her fish, and Policarpa gave him money "to buy cigarettes", but she never actually said she would pay for the fish. She also kept the fish Dario set apart to sell in Leticia's marketplace in her refrigerator.

Hunting, foraging and crafting

Hunting and gathering in the forest are subsidiary activities in most households. In Arara and Yahuma-Callaru, people often go on hunter-gathering excursions deep in the forest inside the indigenous territory. In the case of Lauro Sodré, people prefer to hunt in neighbouring territories. Few animals are left in their terra indígena because when it used to be a fazenda, the majority of the trees were cut down.

Policarpa constantly expressed frustration because her multiple occupations kept her from activities such as having a proper garden or fishing. What she missed the most was going to *el centro* to collect raw materials for her crafting[45]. In June 2018, Antonila, Policarpa's cousin and best friend, invited us for a few days on an excursion near the Calderon River. A craft fair was coming soon, and a group of women wanted to collect some raw materials for weaving baskets, sieves, strainers, and other crafts. *Támiche*, the material used for these crafts, is scarce because of the intensive exploitation of the plant in the village

[45] In the Ticuna ordering of the space, the Amazon River and its tributaries are considered “the edges” of the territory, while the inland is called “the centre”.

surroundings. Consequently, it is necessary to travel further inside the jungle to obtain it. Policarpa accepted the invitation and asked me to join her, but unfortunately at the last minute she found out she could not come with us because of work-related responsibilities.

On the first morning of the five-day trip, the expedition party meet at Antonila's house. Besides Antonila, the group was composed of Lucila and Martha, two of Policarpa's sisters; Jimmy and Jefferson, Policarpa's nephews; Simón and his son Cristian, the owners of a small shack nearby a river known as Tacana; Ana and Claudia, two very active artisans; and finally, Claudia's husband, Walter, an experienced hunter.

We started our journey early in the morning to avoid the sun. We packed our provisions: water, food, tools and some jute sacks to bring back the materials we collected. Policarpa was sad she could not travel with us, but her numerous responsibilities have prevented her from being part of these foraging expeditions for many years. Nonetheless, she instructed me to bring her as much raw material as possible, especially rattan vines to make brooms and baskets, and chambira fibres to weave bags and hammocks. She provided me with a substantial lunch of *casabe*, a flatbread made with manioc starch.

We headed to Campo Alegre and took a path towards the north. For the first two hours, we walked through familiar territory, where most people have swidden gardens or fallow plots reclaimed by nature, growing secondary forest. Surprised by the sudden rainfall, we sought refuge in a small shack in a swidden garden. There, we cut some sugar cane and ate it while we waited for the rain to clear. When it did, we continued our trip into a denser forest. After leaving behind the territories surrounding the village, we entered a part of the jungle with taller trees and narrower paths. We all walked in a row, with Walter taking the lead and walking a dozen meters ahead of us just in case he spotted any animal to hunt. He carried a loaded rifle on his shoulder, ready to use if the opportunity arose.

Around midday, we reached an open area, an ample corridor of clear land. "This is the limit of the resguardo", Simon informed us. "Last year, a group of commoners cleaned it to maintain a visible demarcation and prevent invasion from settlers". We decided to rest and have some food while Simon continued to tell us about how he decided to build a shack so far from the village. He said that he and Walter rescued a lost man in the forest a few years ago. He rewarded them with money and invited them to work on a cattle ranch near the Tacana River. Only Simon accepted, and after a few years working there, he decided to work on his own land inside the resguardo. His years working on the ranch allowed him to save money and build a slash-and-burn garden and a small shack. His son insisted on building another shack and promoting it as a place for tourism. After all, a large portion of the regional economy

is driven by foreign visitors looking for experiences in the forest, and the Tacana River provides beautiful scenery[46].

After hearing the story, we resumed our hike. Finally, at dusk, we arrived at the right bank of the Tacana River, where the shack was. Simon was mad because the agoutis had destroyed part of his garden. We hung our hammocks and decided to fish for something to eat. At night, Walter prepared the shotgun cartridges for hunting. Usually, the shots in the shell are suitable for small game but insufficient for larger animals, who would be hurt but not killed by the pellets. Walter melted some pieces of lead taken from fishing sinkers in a tuna can over a bonfire. After the lead fragments were cold, he fixed them to the tips of the shells using tar.

The next day, Walter headed deeper into the jungle towards the Calderon River to hunt. The rest of the group entered the jungle to collect támiche. Támiche is well appreciated for its durability and its flexible core that can be used for weaving. Although there are many manufactured alternatives made out of plastic for the products the Ticuna craft with, Támiche is still very appreciated, and everyone prefers it over its industrial equivalent. The amount of work required to collect it is considerable, though. It grows in particular kinds of trees, which requires a certain familiarity with the spots where they abound, and these spots are far from one another.

Before leaving the shack, Antonila crushed a clove of garlic and rubbed it against my face, hands and neck. "It is your first time, and the spirits (*naichi*) of the forest could trap you. They can make you lose your way and deceive you into wandering alone in the jungle and never leaving. The garlic will drive them away and protect you". She then rubbed herself and the others with garlic. Cristian was the only one that refused to do it. "The spirits know me well; I have walked around this forest so often that I do not need to do that".

The owners of the animals regulate life in the jungle. Therefore, every time someone goes to hunt or to forage, they have to pay respects, ask for permission and occasionally leave some presents. I noted Christian would light a cigarette every time we stopped to rest, smoke half of it and leave the other half

[46] Despite the fact that tourism is a source of income to some indigenous families in the region, to my knowledge, this was the only attempt at starting a business to attract visitors to Arara. It did not succeed, but remained a good spot for hunting and gathering raw materials.

in the place we were sitting. When I asked about it, he smiled and said that was why he never worried about the spirits harming him. He keeps them happy with presents.

Cristian walked ahead of the group. The rest followed him and deviated from the path whenever they spotted támiche, chambira palm[47] or any useful material to make ropes, wooden whisks, or fishing rods. Christian was more interested in searching for animals, which required all his senses. He spotted some signals that hunters had been there a few days ago. Invisible to me, Christian pointed to some remains of pelt and marks and scratches on the trees. He insisted on checking some salt licks where he thought we might encounter some animals. We had no luck, but we spotted the trails of a peccary from a few days ago.

I did not know where I was during this excursion, which made me very anxious. If I were left there alone, I would be lost in the middle of the forest. I stayed close to the group because I was afraid of getting lost. I noticed that they left signals to mark our trail. These were simple things like bending some tree branches pointing in the direction we were walking, leaving a machete mark in the bark of a tree, or even weaving some *caraná* leaves and leaving them to mark our path. One of the animal owners, the Curupira, a creature with his feet turned backwards, creates footprints that trick hunters who then get lost. It can also take the form of someone you know and lure you deep into the forest.

Following sinuous and almost imperceptible paths, we arrived to some areas where Antonila knew we could find támiche. We also collected some resin: one from a tree called copaiba, used as a remedy for flu, and another from a copal tree, cherished by the smell it gives off when burned. The atmosphere was joyful. The women were happy on the journey. They smoked and joked around. This kind of joyful and relaxed atmosphere among women is uncommon in everyday interactions in the community.

Cutting the támiche is no simple task. The liana hangs down to the ground from the top of the big trees. It is usually more than a dozen meters long. If it breaks from the lower parts when pulled, it is of little use since it is too short, and the rest of the vine would be unreachable from the ground. In order to ensure getting the most out of it, I was instructed by Antonila to cut in the lower part, then blow on that extreme "to convince the támiche to go with you. You could whisper some promises". Antonila said she usually whispered, "Come with me. I will take you to dance", and suggested I should tempt the támiche by telling it that I would take it on a fishing trip. Not all the lianas we located were adequate. The women explained

[47] Its fibres are used to weave products such as nets, hammocks, bags, and other textile products.

that the vine must not be too young or too old for crafting: "You can always tell by the flexibility it has". Most importantly, the heart of the vine must remain intact after cutting it. This will allow the támiche to grow again; therefore, there will be plenty of raw material in the future.

In the evening, back at the shack, we peeled the vines and then classified them according to the three different kinds of támiche: *chapure*, *tablacho* and *sangrijuela.* After selecting them, the women started to make baskets and brooms. Walter returned with empty hands, having hunted nothing, and the women started teasing him.

The next day, we all joined Walter on the hunt. On our way to a salt lick, Walter smelled the presence of peccaries in the surroundings and ordered us to stop and be quiet. Walter advanced slowly, spotted an animal, raised the loaded gun, aimed and fired. Unfortunately, the shell got stuck in the shotgun. Despite the fact no blast was heard, the loud click of the trigger being pulled filled the silent forest around us. The pack reacted chattering their teeth, making a loud, menacing noise, as they ran away. We split up and ran behind them, tracking them without any luck for the rest of the day. Claudia said the animals have an acute sense of smell, which is why they can identify the presence of humans. We rubbed soil and plants into our bodies to disguise our smell, but we never found them again. We walked in circles, following their tracks. After many hours of walking, exhausted and disoriented, I better understood the tales about Curupira misleading the hunters deeper into the wild.

Walter was not surprised by the day's outcome. He told us about his dream the night before: a man with two buckets full of açai refused to share them with him. It was a foretelling of failure. Last week, he had dreamt of the same man offering him masato, and he hunted two wild pigs the next day. Although he recognised that the shells were not always reliable, at the same time, he was convinced that hunting was a spiritually influenced activity. Dreams are a way to communicate with the forest spirits and foresee their disposition to provide prey. He spoke about a condition, a curse that might fall upon the hunter when they upset the spirits, called *tagü* or *panema*. There are many remedies, but an effective one, according to Walter, is to collect some yellow mombin leaves, grind them and leave them outside the house, exposed to the night dew, and use them to take a bath on a Friday. Others would instead recommend using *tucupí* — water from the manioc fermentation — to bathe. Other remedies include consuming the scrapings of a jaguar tooth or rubbing oneself with an agutí's whiskers. Many competing formulas are often discussed without reaching an agreement on which is the best remedy.

On the last day, we packed everything we had collected over the previous days and headed to Arara. About three hours later, on our way back, we heard a gunshot. We all ran towards Walter, who was walking ahead of the group. He had shot a brown woolly monkey. Walter was on the run, following the rest of the herd, but did not manage to hunt another one. When he returned, he took the monkey by the tail and announced with a smile that everyone was invited that afternoon to his house to eat.

Policarpa welcomed me back, happy to see us return. She was satisfied with the sacks of támiche and chambira I had brought home. She used the material over the following weeks to make baskets, brooms and bags for the household. She also sold a couple of baskets to neighbours she appreciated, receiving 20,000 pesos for each one. Antonila and the rest of the group did the same and destined some of their production for selling.

The number of domestic units engaged in hunting is lower than in horticulture or fishing. However, wild animals are still an essential complement in the diet of Ticuna families in the triple border region. Most importantly, they have a profound meaning as they are seen as an exchange mediated by the forest spirits. In Arara, out of the 150 households, 26 regularly hunt (17%). In Yahuma-Callaru, ten households out of 79 practice this activity (13%). Finally, in Lauro Sodré, 14 households out of 33 responded affirmatively when asked if they practice hunting (42%). Hunting is considered a masculine activity. Most men I interviewed mentioned that an obstacle to hunting was the fact that game animals are found far from the village, and they considered that devoting time to hunting is very demanding as they have to go on a several-day trip. Also, firearms are not very accessible. Most would have to borrow a rifle if they wanted to hunt. This activity is usually conducted once or twice a month in all three communities, and all the households practice it for self-consumption. Only on rare occasions, if the hunting is plentiful, do they sell some of the meat in their communities[48]. In the city markets, the commercialisation of wild game is illegal. Although it is an activity that can be done clandestinely, all the respondents agree that it is not worth the trouble. The most common animals people hunt include diverse types of monkeys, ducks, macaws, guans, curassows, capibara, pacas, agoutis, deers, armadillos, peris, tapirs, and caiman.

Hunting in Arara is a highly appreciated activity, especially when it comes to celebrating the coming-of-age rituals. The sponsors of the celebration commission renowned hunters to catch game for them. This is not a wage relationship. The arrangement usually consists of providing the rifle cartridges in exchange

[48] The prices within the community for game animals are lower than the prices of beef and pork meat in the cities.

for half of the prey the hunter captures. The animals are then smoked over several days to reward people who help the family with the celebrations. This exchange is also not considered a payment but a gift. In ritual contexts, monetary transactions do not take place. This is a sphere of social life that escapes monetisation. I even heard people criticise Policarpa when she could not gather enough smoked game meat and offered pieces of frozen chicken. Policarpa said the chicken was acceptable to reward minor tasks, but others frowned upon it.

Other complementary activities include gathering diverse plants, fruits and products from the forest. These products are usually for self-consumption and are sometimes used as raw materials for handicrafts. The raw materials most mentioned in the census were támiche vines, chambira fibres and caraná palm leaves. People also collect fruits that grow in the wild, such as copoaçu, umari, moriche palm fruit, Amazonian grape, peach palm, abiu, inga, cacao, mulungu bark, sorva, and turu palm fruits. In Arara, 129 households regularly gather some of these products (86%), usually on their way to the gardens or, less frequently, on expeditions that can last more than one day. In Yahuma-Callaru, 61 households out of the 79 practice foraging (77%), especially with the collaboration of the young members of the household who are always keen to climb trees and pick fruit. In Lauro Sodré, 27 households of the 33 (82%) fulfil part of their necessities by collecting resources from the tropical forest.

Finally, another of the main productive activities for the Ticuna is crafting diverse products. In Arara, 115 households have a member that produces some handicrafts (77%). In Yahuma-Callaru, the number of households is 68 (86%) and in Lauro Sodré, only 5 (15%). The most common products for local use are reed brooms, baskets, bags, hammocks, sieves, cast nets, masks, clothes made from decorated bark, earrings, knitted dolls, wooden figurines, earrings, paddles, arrows, arches, *tipití* — a strainer made of woven palm leaves —, headdresses and keychains. Domestic utensils are made for self-consumption and sometimes for local trade. The handicrafts destined for the market are usually sold to tourist stores in Leticia, Tabatinga or Benjamin Constant. Some people with families in villages considered tourist destinations, such as Nazareth in Colombia, Puerto Alegria in Peru or Bom Camino in Brazil, usually commission some of their products.

Although less prevalent than gardening and fishing, hunting, gathering and crafting are essential activities in Ticuna communities. They help satisfy economic necessities, are considered pleasurable activities, and are profoundly linked to reproducing their worldview. These kinds of activities are understood as an exchange with nature; people take from their environment what they need, but they have to establish a respectful relationship with the beings that inhabit the world, asking permission to access their territory,

presenting gifts or offerings, and above all not overexploiting the resources since this could incur the wrath of the owners of nature.

To conclude this section on traditional economic activities, I want to highlight that Ticuna conceptions of the world are not disjointed from their practical economic activities of subsistence. This was also noted by Descola (1994) in his work with the Shuar in Ecuador, who suggested avoiding detaching the ways the environment is used and the representations people have of nature. For the Ticuna, their economic activities and interventions in the environment are regulated by their broader relations with the non-human beings that also contribute to maintaining order in the universe and allow them to lead a tranquil, peaceful life[49].

Part two: Cash economy

The concept of the frontier is essential to understanding how traditional economies are linked with the prevalent capitalist economy. When we say that the frontier advances and incorporates territories, we should not only think of the incorporation of geographical space but also, and perhaps more importantly, social spaces and the varied dimensions of peoples' livelihoods that are subsumed into the logic of the market economy. In the next section, I will explore the contemporary forms of rural integration with urban centres, to show how the Ticuna people are engaged in the cross-border economy as petty commodity producers, temporary workers and consumers of manufactured goods. This integration is more profound as the commodification of subsistence (Brenner 2001) affects the Ticuna people. It is a progressive process in which the household depends on access to money to obtain essential commodities from the market to secure its subsistence and reproduction as a social unit. The families have to devote part of their labour to produce commercial crops, mainly manioc and banana, the food staples of the Amazonian diet. Other products they produce, such as vegetables, fruits, fish, and handicrafts, are also partially destined for the market.

The Ticuna communities are not self-sufficient; they have significant links with the market economy, but as we saw above, they also manage to retain a large portion of economic autonomy by relying on their own mediums to provide a large part of their subsistence. Both logics of production, capitalist and non-capitalist, coexist in a tense relationship where the desire to buy goods they do not have nor produce and

[49] In chapter five, I look more closely at the ritual exchanges the Ticuna have with these beings to secure prosperity for their communities.

the appreciation of autonomy are constantly weighed up against one another. The nature of these connections is what I call the frontier configuration[50]. Selling part of their production in the marketplaces is a common practice. Another critical form of relation is the possibility of working outside of the community in wage work. Wage-paid work inside the communities is uncommon, not always given to the locals, and is temporary.

Despite the increasing dependency on the market economy, class differentiation has not yet emerged within Ticuna communities. People with access to cash might accumulate wealth in the form of conspicuous consumption, but the money is not reinvested in a production of scale for a profit. Therefore, wage relations are not present in the communities as no one would accept to become an employee of their wealthier neighbours.

Across borders, the most common commodities people buy are home appliances such as televisions, stereos, and refrigerators. People also frequently buy motors or chainsaws as they help with the household's productive activities. In all cases, the buyers must save up to make the purchase as credit is not available in any of the three countries for people without a steady income, like most Ticunas living in the communities I studied.

Marketplaces

Marketplaces play an essential role in the economic life of the region. Every major city of the tri-border region is also a commercial hub for the neighbouring towns to sell the products of their labour and buy the goods they do not produce. They configure a regional cross-border system that demonstrates the mechanisms of production, distribution and consumption "like an ephemeral, dramatic museum of the day" (Malinowski & De la Fuente 2005). These marketplaces are located in the cities and integrated into their respective national markets through airports and fluvial ports, and serve as trade centres for small producers living in the neighbouring communities.

I will briefly describe the three main marketplaces the Ticuna people from the communities I conducted fieldwork in attended to sell their products, located in the border cities of Leticia, Tabatinga and Benjamin

[50] There is a considerable amount of literature analysing the nature of this articulation, focusing on local communities in the context of the expansion of capitalist relations that successfully diversify their economic activities and shift between different logics of production (Comas d´Argemir 1998; Godelier 1999; Stoler 1987).

Constant. All three marketplaces operate in a similar fashion: on the one hand, there is a designated building with covered areas near a port where permanent vendors offer their products. On the other hand, an informal marketplace operates open-air on the streets and the river shore where producers from the nearby communities sell their products.

The Ticuna from my field sites periodically attend any of these three marketplaces to sell in the street market. They only come when they have something to sell, usually once a week, and like many other producers from the vicinities, they exhibit their products on the floor or on improvised stalls. They must sell everything during the day because they cannot afford to stay in the city (payments in cash must be made for lodging, storing their products, docking their boat, and for meals). These producers' marketplaces are self-regulated. During the closed season, I never saw authorities checking or prohibiting the sale of any products, even the most sensitive ones such as wild game animals or certain fish during their reproductive season. Every vendor knows about these prohibitions and therefore do not trade any prohibited product openly in these spaces.

The vendors of the covered market live in the city. They have fixed stands with booths where they can store merchandise overnight. They are resellers, known as *marreteros* in Portuguese and *revendedores* in Spanish. They trade manufactured goods, but also — and most importantly — they resell many of the products farmers bring from the villages near the city. The reseller buys in bulk the merchandise the producer brings to the marketplace, packs it into smaller units, and resells it for a profit. They are professional merchants and pay a fee to the marketplace administrators for their permanent space.

Teófilo wakes me with a whisper, "Time to leave." I check my watch to confirm it is two in the morning. I spent the previous day with Teófilo and his family picking chives and tying up small bundles to sell in the market. We also picked a dozen papayas and a few bunches of plantains from his garden. I get up and help him to load everything into the boat where his family is waiting. We board, and immediately I snuggle in the corner. I doze intermittently during the three-hour trip from Yahuma-Callaru, Peru, to Tabatinga, Brazil, where an informal producer's marketplace is held in the morning every day for people of the neighbouring towns to sell their products.

We dock at the port at five in the morning. It is still dark. The city lights illuminate a sign in huge letters, "Welcome to Tabatinga. Brazil starts at this point". The riverbank is muddy. Thirty metres from our boat, the city's sewageworks discharges wastewater into the Amazon River. Every morning, many boats of all

sizes and shapes from the neighbouring communities slowly converge, carrying fresh produce to feed the cities. People from Yahuma-Callaru are among the first to arrive.

While Teófilo arranged the products on trays laid out on the floor, I took a stroll around the proximities. At night, the port is considered a dangerous spot. Most taxi drivers would refuse to take passengers there when it is dark. I often heard warnings about muggers and the occasional murder story of a drunk guy who adventured into the shady bars next to the port. Passengers start to arrive at the big floating docks that function as bases for boats with routes to the main riverine cities of Brazil and towns in between.

I walk along the riverbank and ask those arriving on the boats their precedence: Porto Corderinho, Bom Intento, Sao Gabriel, Isla de la Fantasia, Nazareth, Barranco, etc. Diverse communities from all three countries converge here every morning. Some are Ticuna communities, others are *riberiños* or *caboclos*, and some are *Israelitas* — a religious movement that originated in Peru's Coastal and Andean regions and promoted migration towards the lowlands to found agricultural colonies in the 1960s. With a great diversity of people and products, always lively and colourful, marketplaces are my favourite location in the tri-border region. Some people display their products on the decks of their boats, other people unload them and put them in big baskets or trays or sometimes directly on the ground. What you see is what you get.

The first customers arrive at dawn. They are resellers who come to buy in bulk from the producers and resell in the public market just a few blocks from the dock. They have the advantage of living in the city and possessing a permit for a stall in the public market, as opposed to the producers who have limited time to sell everything and return to their communities by the end of the day. The resellers have acquired significant experience in bargaining, and some have patiently cultivated personal links with the producers. Every day, they know exactly what kind of fruit is in season and from what part of the region: açai might mature a few days early in the communities down the river, or várzea products would need to be harvested early in the lower regions if the river levels start to raise, among other ecological considerations.

Producers like Teófilo know this and try to "read" the buyers' offers to know if their products are in demand. We discovered the day before that a large shipment of papayas had arrived in the city, and most of the resellers were stocked. Teófilo expected to sell them for one Brazilian real a piece, but after a couple of hours, he resigned to sell for half the price. He trusts that the bananas and the chives will help him to compensate for the circumstantial losses. When we returned home, he was satisfied with the overall result.

Another boat from Yahumma Callaru is docked next to us. I recognised Paulo and his family who came to sell chives and papayas. They unloaded the fruits and vegetables, and Paulo invited me to the marketplace in Leticia to sell some fish he had caught over the previous days. It took us 20 minutes to travel by boat from the marketplace in Tabatinga, Brazil, to the marketplace in Leticia, Colombia. Paulo decided not to pay the five thousand Colombian pesos to dock at La Pirañita dock, and instead, his wife stayed watching the boat. He had two big polystyrene coolers filled with ice and fish. He filled two big trays with fish and waved to one of the many porters who worked near the marketplace to carry the trays.

We located a spot inside the Colombian municipal marketplace where fishermen from outside communities can sell fish. We put the trays on the floor and started selling strings of six or seven fish, depending on their size. There were strings of bocachico at 15,000 pesos, very popular for frying; and wolf fish for 10,000 pesos, a variety less popular but great for soups. The first customers that approached us were vendors from inside the market who offered to buy everything for ten to twenty per cent off the asking price. Paulo refused to sell, and we spent the entire morning trading. When the trays emptied, Paulo filled them again from the cooler in the boat. Many other fishermen arrived with an impressive diversity of fish: a Ticuna fisherman from Nazareth, Colombia, with strings of suckermouth catfish; a young man from Rondiña, Peru, with an enormous tiger sorubin that he sold immediately for 25,000 pesos; two or three fishermen with strings of Amazon pellona and pacu; and a young boy from the Isla de la Fantasia with tamuatas he had just caught that morning.

The usual interactions include all kinds of clients. Early in the morning, the people from the restaurants buy the food they will cook during the day; they have the first pick and usually have little time for bargaining, so they pay full price. After that, the market receives domestic customers. They take their time, stroll around the market, asking for prices, examining the fish up close, checking the gills, feeling the fish bellies and looking into their eyes for freshness. If the product appeals to them, they offer a price that is always under the asking price. Paulo seemed to enjoy this, always giving discounts and acting affable. He also took the opportunity to flirt with the female clientele and even gave away fish to a woman he evidently knew, but when I tried to inquire, he just laughed and changed the subject[51].

[51] When I asked about marketplaces in Lauro Sodré, Cristina and her sister Deborah always remembered how their father used to sell farinha and fruits in the neighbouring cities of Benjamin Constant, Brazil and Islandia, Peru. They also remember that he used to have a girlfriend on the Peruvian side, and going to the marketplace was a good excuse to visit. This again reinforces the point that economic activities, even selling in marketplaces, are never exclusively economic activities.

At noon, Paulo had sold almost 30 strings of fish. The traffic in the market started to diminish, so he decided to pack and sell the rest of the fish to the market intermediaries who would spend the rest of the day reselling. He packed his trays and left. He wanted to buy some groceries in Colombian stores before returning to Tabatinga to pick up the rest of his family. I took a bus to Tabatinga to meet Teófilo. He was done selling his products and devoted the rest of the day to buying provisions until his next trip to the marketplace.

According to the census, the commoners of Arara tend to sell their products in the marketplace in Leticia. They find it more convenient as they can take time to run other errands in the city after selling their products. People from Yahuma-Callaru mostly prefer attending the Tabatinga marketplace. When I asked why, they told me that people who buy in Tabatinga's marketplace usually pay the asking price without bargaining, a widespread practice in Leticia. Finally, people from Lauro Sodré usually go to Benjamin Constant's marketplace to sell their products. However, all this is just a tendency which can be modified by specific circumstances. Selling products is only part of the activities the Ticuna carry out when travelling to the city. Depending on other circumstances, like buying specific provisions, collecting money from social programs, or even solving bureaucratic procedures, they decide where it is most convenient for them to sell their merchandise. These producers' marketplaces are well connected, as the movement from one city to another is free. None of the markets have customs offices or phytosanitary posts, common fixtures when moving merchandise across borders. The origins of the products are diverse, and the results of a survey I conducted regarding the origin of the traders (see table below) illustrate the confluence of direct producers in the city markets regardless of their country of origin.

Leticia Marketplace		Tabatinga Marketplace		Benjamin Constant Marketplace	
Community of origin	Number of vendors	Community of origin	Number of vendors	Community of origin	Number of vendors
Arara	12	Rondiña	5	Porto Espiritual	4
Santa Sofía	5	Yahuma-Callaru	5	Bom Intento	3
Km. 5	4	Chimbote	3	Guanabara 3	2
Isla de la Fantasia	3	Umariaçu	3	Santa Lucia	2
Canaan	3	Santa Rosa	3	Pesquera	2
Rondinha	2	San Antonio Peru	1	Benjamin	2
Puerto Alegria	2	Tabatinga	1	San Miguel	2
Amacuyacu	2	Belem de S.	1	Porto Corderinho	2
1 Zona	2	San Juan Ramón Castilla	1	Km. 9	2
Santa Rosa	2	Mario Rivera	1	Sao Gabriel	1
Km. 18	1	Gamboa	1	Lauro Sodré	1
Km. 6	1	Sao José	1	Nova Esperanza	1
Nazareth	1	Vila Nova	1	N	24
Nuevo Jardín	1	Km. 6	1		
Km. 9	1	1 Zona	1		
Chinería	1	N	29		
Zaragoza	1				
San José	1				
Jerusalem	1				
2 Zona	1				
Progreso	1				
Puerto Triunfo	1				
San Sebastián	1				
Santa Lucia	1				
Umariaçu	1				
N	52				

Figure 6 Marketplaces and origin of the sellers

The more integrated the household economies are to the cash economy, the more they tend to orientate their activities to acquire goods and services not produced in their localities. One of the primary sources of cash income is from selling products in the urban markets. Besides acquiring manufactured goods, people use cash to pay for public services such as electricity, water, and school fees.

The importance of commercial crops in all three communities can be appreciated by the fact that most of the households allocate part of their efforts to cultivate produce that can be sold in the markets. In Arara,

132 households out of the 141 that have gardens sell part of the products they cultivate (94%), and only nine households produce exclusively for self-consumption (6%). In Yahuma-Callaru, 74 households out of the 78 with gardens go to the market to sell their products (95%), and four households produce for self-consumption (5%). The results in Lauro Sodré are similar. Of the 32 households with gardens, 24 households sell in the markets (75%), and eight do not (25%).

Despite the ecological differences, plantains and bitter manioc are the two main crops for self-consumption and for selling in the market in all three communities. Plantains are sold in bulk, but manioc is most commonly sold processed as farinha, tapioca starch, or tapioca bread. The other plants most commonly commercialised change depending on the type of soil. In Lauro Sodré and Arara, located in terra firme, common crops are: abiu, cane, yam, Amazonian grape, açai, copoaçu, pineapple, peach palm, papaya, arazá, inga, mango, lulo, avocado, brazil nut, sorva, and umari. In Yahuma-Callaru, given the várzea soil, the Ticuna commercialise sweet manioc, maize, chives, tomatoes, cucumber, peppers, coriander, watermelon, cantaloupes and squash.

Wage labour

Wage labour jobs are considered a good option to access cash among the Ticuna. Unfortunately, there are only a few wage-paid jobs in the communities that people can aspire to. The most common situation is that people leave their villages for one to six months to work, save money, and return to their families for the rest of the year to work in the household garden and other economic activities. Those who work in wage labour are not detached from the household economy and its production logic. They strategically cross between market and household production logics.

The census results show the importance of family members engaging, at least temporarily, in wage labour to provide the household with cash. In Arara, 75 households reported that at least one member engages in wage labour (50%). In Yahuma-Callaru, 26 households reported at least one member participating in seasonal wage work (33%). In Lauro Sodré, the results show that eight households had members with wage employment (24%). The only examples in the three communities of people depending entirely on their wages were teachers or nurses, and none of them were Ticuna; all these people were from outside

the community[52]. I will now describe the characteristics of these temporary jobs and how wage labour is sought or avoided inside the communities depending on the circumstances of the household.

Meeting people from Ticuna communities in Leticia was very common. When staying in Leticia, I sometimes came across Oliveyo, one of Policarpa's neighbours in Arara. He worked on a construction site at the National University. He told me he was employed on a three-month contract for the minimum wage plus extra hours. Oliveyo accepted this work as they offered him social security and a place to sleep in the barracks where he could cook food. Later in the year, I found him again working near the port with a similar three-month contract, with payment a little over the minimum wage, but this time he had to pay for his social security.

It is not difficult for employers to find workers from neighbouring villages willing to work for low wages. They usually offer temporary jobs that, in the long term, do not have to cover the total cost of the worker's household reproduction, usually secured by horticulture and fishing. These temporary workers and their families would not survive living exclusively on their salary. They secure most of their immediate needs from traditional economic activities in their villages, and the wages are used to cover necessities that cannot be directly covered by household production.

Temporary wage labour is therefore a complement to the many other economic activities in which household members engage. Most of my interlocutors in the three villages did not consider working in the cities for minimum wage a good option given the higher costs of life in the urban areas. That is why having a place to sleep is considered an advantage that allows people to save money. Sometimes, the employer provides accommodation. On other occasions, they have the option of staying with family in the city. Rent is costly, considering the salary. The most common employment options are unskilled labour in construction, ranching, farming, cooking or domestic work in the city or the outskirts. As Oliveyo said, "In the city, everything costs. If you do not have money to buy food, you do not eat. Where else can you find food if you do not buy it?". Oliveyo received weekly packages of farinha and fruit that his wife sent him from Arara, which helped him reduce his expenses and save money.

The illegal drug trafficking economy has a strong presence in the region. The crops of coca leaves and the production of base paste and cocaine are strong economic activities that require large amounts of labour

[52] In some cases, the teachers have married inside the community and have started a family garden. During informal conversations, they described this decision as a logical step for a better life. The domestic labour is taken care of by the wife, and as members of the community, they gain access to land for agriculture.

power. Another way Ticuna people are incorporated into wage labour is by working as *raspachines* — coca leaves pickers. I met Henry when I was conducting fieldwork in Yahuma-Callaru, Peru. He is Teófilo and Alicia´s son. He lives in Erené, a Ticuna community a few hours upstream of the Callaru River. At one point he got sick and descended the river to the Puerto Alegría Health Post. Instead of returning home, he visited and stayed at his parent's house for a few weeks while making a full recovery. He was affable, and we talked a lot. He explained that in várzea territories like Yahuma-Callaru, you could not grow coca plants, but that large extensions of coca are cultivated on the higher grounds. He worked in the coca crops near his village. The previous days he had been applying gramoxone, a herbicide, to kill the weeds. He worked without any protection and felt sick afterwards. He felt weak, got nauseous, had a stomachache and vomited frequently. He decided to go to the doctor in Puerto Alegría, who prescribed him oral serum and magnesium for the next few weeks.

Henry explained that the owners of the coca crops usually hire coca leaf pickers during harvest season. It is intensive work, and they bring people from neighbouring communities to work in the harvest. They pay one real for every kilogram of picked leaves, providing food and a place to stay in improvised barracks. It is a good option for small townspeople, including those from Yahuma-Callaru, and many residents engage in this activity. It was usual for friends and acquaintances from Yahuma-Callaru to travel together and work on the fields located inland for a month or two. On one occasion, a large group of young men went to work on a big plantation near the Javari River. This became noticeable during the evening football matches when attendance dramatically dropped. Some people from Arara also worked as coca leaf pickers, but much less frequently. Most people in the Colombian community tended to look for jobs in Leticia. In Lauro Sodré, they also looked for jobs in the city of Benjamin Constant.

Among the Ticuna, the practice of hiring someone else to work for a salary is practically non-existent. People tend to cooperate with their neighbours and hire them to perform jobs they cannot do themselves, but this rarely takes the form of wage labour. I will present three examples of the many transactions I recorded during my fieldwork where my interlocutors found arrangements other than paying salaries to compensate for someone's work.

In Yahuma-Callaru, Teófilo was building a new room in his house. The wood planks used for construction can be obtained from the trees in the comunidad nativa, where everyone can dispose of the common resources as long as it is for self-consumption and not profit. Teófilo has no chainsaw to cut down the trees and chop the planks, so he went to his neighbour Santander. Teófilo provided the gasoline necessary for the chainsaw, and they agreed on a *mitad y mitad* system or half and half. With the gasoline, the

chainsaw operator cuts the trees and fabricates the planks. In the end, half of the planks are for the fuel provider, and the other half is for the chainsaw owner.

In Lauro Sodré, Cristina remembered that she had planted a small plot of land with manioc while still living with her first husband. She never returned to clean or take care of it, but we checked that a considerable part of it had survived. We harvested part of it and transformed it into farinha. But Cristina was too busy to complete the work. She talked with her brother-in-law, a hardworking man she calls Piranha because he usually fights and bites people when drunk. Piranha is well known for his skills in cooking farinha, which he always prepares in tasty, small, crisp flakes with a nice yellowy tone. They worked out a deal for Piranha to harvest the rest of the manioc, prepare Farinha with it and split the final product into halves.

In Arara, when Policarpa was preparing to participate in the *wepachinüe bue* ritual — a ritual to paint her daughter's body with genip juice, usually performed simultaneously with the woreküchiga celebration — She talked with two of her nephews renowned for their hunting skills. She explained to me that the usual deal in these cases is that the owner of the celebration provides shotgun shells for the hunters, and after a couple of days in the forest, they receive half of the animals hunted. I accompanied her to buy the shells in what I thought would be a discrete undercover operation, but it ended up being an over-the-counter transaction in one of the floating shops in Peru. A week later, we heard the news of her nephews returning from the forest with four wild pigs, of which we received two.

What all these transactions have in common is the way other people's labour, skills and time are exchanged within the community with a different logic to that of the capitalist rationale of wage work. This attitude towards labour is yet another element that has eroded the possibility of class differentiation inside the communities studied. There is a sharp contrast between labour exchanged as a commodity, as it is practised in capitalist societies, and labour as mutual aid and reciprocity, as we have seen in the last ethnographic vignettes. In the first case, the labour force is exchanged as any other commodity for its value — the cost of its own reproduction. In frontier economies, where capitalist economies are linked with traditional economies, the wages do not even cover the total cost of labour, as the household economy supports most of the family's needs. In the second case, labour is exchanged as favours where the two parts mutually benefit from the same proportion of the final products of their labour.

Social Programs

One of the most important economic transformations in Ticuna communities is the implementation by the three national governments of conditional cash transfer programs. These programs have appeared in

the last two decades as the result of more comprehensive state policies to help alleviate poverty. Despite the particularities of each program, their effects in the tri-border region have been similar as they respond to the same developmental reasoning. These consist of cash transfers to each family that fulfil certain obligations in areas considered critical to improving human capital, such as education and health. The Ticuna families had been historically excluded from social security systems based on the participation of beneficiaries in the circuits of capitalist economies via salaries or other types of waged labour. This new "universal" approach targets low-income families traditionally excluded from the "formal" economy. As an illustration, Policarpa received cash for sending her three children to school. Cristina was in a similar situation, receiving cash transfers as long as her three children continued their studies. Teófilo received money for making sure his son kept a good assistance to the school. Three families in different countries affiliated to similar programs.

Broadly, we can highlight two kinds of programs that integrate large numbers of Ticuna people in the communities where I conducted fieldwork. The first type is focused on children in their critical stages of development. The second focuses on older adults who might struggle to find a remunerated activity.

Regarding the first type of program, similar initiatives are implemented in each country of the tri-border region. In 2004 the Brazilian government launched the Bolsa Familia program, which provides cash transfers to members of poor households under eighteen years old, in exchange for school attendance and regular health checkups. In Colombia, a program called Familias en Accion, instituted in 2000, transfers money to poor families with children attending school. In Peru, the program Juntos grants a certain amount of money in cash to members of low-income families depending on their fulfilling specific responsibilities in education, health and nutrition.

The second type of program includes a subsidy in cash to people over 65 years old. Similar policies exist in all three countries: in Colombia, it is called Colombia Mayor, in Peru Pension 65, and in Brazil Benefício de Prestação Continuada. These non-contributive pensions guarantee a cash income in case the beneficiaries do not have a retirement fund as a result of their contributions linked to salaries paid during their working life.

The cash transfers of all programs are considered a complement to the family income. In all cases, the amounts transferred are less than 50 dollars per month. For most Ticuna families, that amount makes a considerable difference, providing an important source of cash and reinforcing people's links with the monetary economy.

During my fieldwork, it was easy to tell when the cash transfers occurred. Especially in Arara, every two months when the older adults' pensions were going to be handed out, the community boat filled with the elder beneficiaries travelling to Leticia. They received the transfers and used the money to buy necessary household goods. During the journey to the city, I had time to talk about the programs, and something that caught my attention was how the recipients perceived these transfers. When I asked people in the communities about the transfer programs, they always referred to these transactions as something they had earned, as salaries or payments. Despite the neoliberal discourse reproduced in governmental rhetoric that insists on calling these types of transactions aid, the Ticuna resignified them as compensations for their contribution to society.

Once they received the transfers in the cities, they would spend some of the cash buying groceries. Shops and businesses in all three countries accept all three national currencies of the tri-border region. Also, there are many exchange houses near the ports or the borderline. Nonetheless, there is always a slight loss in the exchange rates. The Ticuna are aware of this. They are used to transact in the three currencies. In the communities, though, they have a system called "one for one", in which they equate one sol, one real and one thousand pesos as equal in their exchanges because they use money as a medium of exchange rather than a source of profit[53].

Conclusions

The most crucial aspect that determines the dynamics of contemporary Ticuna livelihood, regardless of the country they live in, is their access to land and other resources of the rainforest environment[54]. The members of all three communities have access to land as recognised members of an indigenous group. Nonetheless, they are not self-sufficient communities. They have developed important ties to the market economy but have managed to retain a large amount of economic autonomy by providing most of their subsistence by their own means.

Both non-capitalist and capitalist logics of production are present in Ticuna communities, and residents navigate both worlds. This case also gives powerful insights into how capitalism produces heterogeneity

[53] As an example, according to the official exchange rate in January 2019 1 USD dollar equated to 3.7 Brazilian Real, 3,200 Colombian Pesos and 3.3 Peruvian Soles.

[54] The Ticuna people secured that access through a long struggle for territorial rights and against land dispossession, organised around ethnic identity in the three converging nation-states. The “national” characteristics of this struggle will be the topic of the next chapter.

and diversity rather than uniformity by mobilising key elements of capitalist production across the world: money, labour-power and raw materials. The traditional economies based on self-subsistence production are organised around the household. Indigenous domestic production is not driven by the same capitalist logic of expanded reproduction. It only tries to ensure the reproduction of its own production conditions, not to expand them to accumulate capital (Bartra 2006).

Despite the Ticuna's increased access to the market, the research shows that class differentiation has not emerged. People with access to more significant cash flows might accumulate wealth, investing it in consumption goods such as televisions, houses made of more permanent materials, sound systems, motorboats, and other luxury items. The fact that the money is not reinvested in productive activities to generate profits is an indication that the conditions for exploitative relations inside the communities have not developed. The main reason for this is that land is available to any community member to secure subsistence and that Ticuna sociality is built around an assumption of personal autonomy. Ticuna people prefer to work in their own gardens rather than become employees of one of their neighbours.

This reality, thoroughly backed with empirical facts in this chapter, resonates with the ideas that Joanna Overing (2003) observed regarding native peoples of lowland South America. She proposed the following four principles of proprietorship that I contrast with my findings in Ticuna societies:

(1) *No one can own basic resources, neither of the forest nor of the rivers*. In the Ticuna Case, the territories in the jurisdiction of all three countries are collective property. The only entities considered owners of nature are non-human creatures.

(2) *Everyone has access to these resources for the purpose of providing for self and others*. It is remarkable that the possibility of using the land to cultivate is extended to all community members by the simple fact of belonging to the collectivity.

(3) *It is open to everyone to acquire the skills for transforming the earth's resources for use*. Nonetheless, for most Ticuna, there is the necessity to negotiate with the non-human entities and owners of the resources to avoid overexploitation associated with the pursuit of profit

(4) *The individual, and not the group, possesses the products of his or her labour*. Ticuna people place an extraordinary value on personal autonomy, which, unlike capitalist individualism, is rooted in a sociality that values social interaction and intimacy through the everyday activities

The discussion around the articulation of modes of production helps analyse the particularities of capitalism in the tri-border region. From Rosa Luxemburg's (2003 [1913]) critique of classical Marxist models to recent theorisations on the nature of neoliberalism (Harvey 2003), the impossibility of analysing capitalism as a closed system has heightened the need for a better understanding of its connections with traditional economies (Fisher 2000; Godelier 1999; Godoy et al. 2005; Stoler 1987; Walker 2013). The concept of autonomy as a force opposing capitalist incorporation in various aspects of life is helpful for understanding the contradictory and oscillating contours of the economic frontier.

My results coincide with Gómez Soto (2011), who analysed the nature of these connections in the Ticuna village of Macedonia in Colombia, in the sense that the increasing dependency on the cash economy plays an important role in the economic choices of the community. Nonetheless, the economic survey results in my field sites show that most of the reproduction of household livelihoods still falls on traditional activities for self-consumption. Cash income is important but is considered a medium to fulfil the needs of a good life, not as an end in itself. Ticuna people obtain it through commercialising produce in marketplaces, temporary wage labour and government cash transfer programs. For my interlocutors, this articulation of traditional and capitalist economies is experienced as unproblematic. However, they do express their preference for working autonomously and in contact with the environment, contrasting this with the disciplined, urban work they are hired to do in the city in construction or domestic jobs.

Chapter Four. Caciques, Apus and Curacas: Indigenous Political Organisation in a Cross-border Region

In this chapter, I will discuss the transformations in political organisation in Ticuna communities and their different configurations as a result of the interplay between changes in their structural conditions of existence — economic transformation and state intervention — and their political mobilization to obtain political autonomy and land rights.

I argue that although state intervention has inscribed in their constitution the structure of the indigenous political organisation, it was not the result of mere imposition over passive subjects. It was the outcome of a contentious process by which the indigenous movement established alternative ways of making collective decisions. I will stress the importance of the political struggle and pan-indigenous organisational experiences to interpret the conformation of multiple forms of political autonomy on local, regional and national levels that incorporate native notions of authority and the political. I use the category of territorialisation as proposed by Pacheco de Oliveira (2018) to analyse the ongoing constitution of sociopolitical subjects within nation-states in a process that involves the delimitation of political communities, the constitution of ethnic identity and the struggle to gain the right to self-government.

In the following pages, I will describe the different paths through which the Ticuna people have come to be political subjects *vis a vis* the Brazilian, Colombian, and Peruvian states. I will analyse the struggle for the recognition of their territories and forms of autonomous organisation that have crystallised in chieftaincies at the local level under the figures of the cacique, curaca and apu. Later, I will reflect on this process, engaging in a broader discussion of the political sphere regarding the ways of organising life in Ticuna communities. I will follow Clastres' (2020) brilliant insight in suggesting an analysis of the nature of political power beyond the theoretical equivalence of political power and coercion. I will explain the exercise of chieftaincy in these communities by discussing power as composed of two dimensions: *potestas,* related to sovereignty, and *potentia,* associated with autonomy.

The chapter is organised in the following form. First, I describe the structural transformations in the region, followed by the classical anthropological characterization of Amazonian authority in the literature. In the next section, I present a recent history of the political formation of the three villages where I conducted fieldwork. Based on the memories of some of the community's inhabitants I draw attention to the conditions before the formation of the settlements, when Ticuna families lived scattered in single-

family residences that relocated periodically around territories owned by large private estates. I also describe the struggle for territorial recognition and land titling as part of a broader indigenous mobilisation that grouped diverse ethnic groups within each country. In the final section, I discuss the transformations in the new communities' local-level political organisation and its central institutions: the communal assemblies and the community chiefs.

Structural transformations and social mobilization

The consolidation of the political borders in the decade of 1930 allowed a more direct intervention of the states in their corresponding territories. New institutional actors intervened in the Ticuna populations following different indigenist policies: the Catholic Church in Colombia, the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru, and the governmental protection agencies in Brazil (Serviço de Proteção ao Indio first, and after 1967, the Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas). These organisations helped establish a more permanent state presence via schools, health posts and other public services. Additionally, the economic frontier transformed due to a decline in demand for rubber after World War II[55]. A large number of extractivist estates decayed, and only a number survived thanks to the demand for rubber in national markets for industrial processes or they shifted to focus on other extractive commodities such as wood, animal skins, and barbasco (Pacheco de Oliveira 2015; Santos Granero & Barclay 2002). Simultaneously, the population growth in the border cities increased the importance of local markets and presented the opportunity for the rural population in the surrounding area to sell part of their agricultural production in the city markets.

Amid these structural transformations, in the second half of the 20th century, a large population of Ticuna people resettled to new localities on the riverbanks of the Amazon River, constituting nucleated permanent villages. Nonetheless, these new villages had no official recognition of the territories they occupied, usually titled as the private property of the extractivist estates that monopolised the land along the river banks of the Amazon. In the 1970s, these new Ticuna settlements engaged in political

[55] The first rubber cycle (1870-1920) ended when the Amazonian monopoly of rubber production was broken by the competence of new rubber plantations in South East Asia. The invasion of Malasya by Japan during the Second World War iniciated a brief new cycle of demand and price increments for natural latex produced in South America.

mobilisation based on their ethnic identities within the three national contexts to obtain territorial recognition and political autonomy from their respective nation-states[56].

After a long struggle that articulated Ticuna people with a broader network of ethnic groups with similar demands, the new settlements eventually became recognised as indigenous communities, that is, social bodies with legal, administrative and political rights within each nation-state. During this process, new realities of collective life emerged, and new modalities of authority and political leadership formed. I will focus on the figure of the chief that emerged in every country — caciques in Brazil, curacas in Colombia and apus in Peru — as a way to analyse the new forms of political organisation that, while still largely shaped by the state legal orders, also reflect Ticuna notions of political authority. Analysing the similarities and differences in the three different national contexts will shed light on the multiple forms in which political autonomy is produced.

Two ways of describing authority and power in classic anthropological literature

The classical approaches to understanding indigenous chieftaincy in lowland South American societies have focused on these authority figures by emphasising their internal or external nature (Calavia 2010). The first body of works highlights how political power can be embedded in other dimensions of life that do not necessarily correspond to the Western political tradition, describing forms of leadership characterised by their fragility and lack of coercion (Clastres 2020; Descola 1988; Lévi-Strauss 1944; Lowie 1948; Turner 1979; Veber & Virtanen 2017). Another group of authors focus on how the chieftaincies result from the contact with economic, political or religious actors belonging to the encompassing national society in which the native groups became historically embedded (Barletti 2017; Brown 1993; Chaumeil 2017; Costa 2017). Rather than opposing views, these approximations responded to the particular circumstances of the studied groups, whose historical conditions varied considerably at the moment of the description.

For Ticuna societies, we can locate anthropological descriptions traversed by the aforementioned internal/external framing. Curt Nimuendajú, in one of the first ethnographic accounts of the Ticuna, describes the absence of any discernible political structure in the groups he observed during the years 1941 and 1942. Nonetheless, he registers the testimonies of Ticuna interlocutors who still have memories

[56] For a balance of these struggles, see the collective work edited by Alberto Chirif (2021) reflecting on the 50 years commemoration of the Barbados Declaration, a milestone in the struggle for self-determination of the indigenous peoples of America.

of communal houses called Malocas[57]. The malocas were the dwelling of social units based on kinship and residence, inhabited by various extended families associated with the head of a clan, and they were relatively isolated and autonomous[58]. In that context, the Ticuna chieftaincies were deprived of authority; chiefs were unable to force the obedience of other members of the local group but were able to mobilise them in case of war or confrontation. Further investigations focused on the memory of the group revealed the existence of two specialised roles: the warrior chief and the shaman. The first exercised temporary authority in moments of confrontation, while the second was not a political chief but exercised healing services as a private affair (1952).

The malocas' disappearance resulted from the consolidation of a particular economic system of extractivist enterprises called *barracões* in Brazil and *barracones* in Peru and Colombia. These companies exploited the natural resources of large segments of the tropical forest, mainly rubber, using the debt-bonded labour of the indigenous people[59]. As a result of forced relocation, the Ticuna families changed their dwellings from malocas to small groups of houses where nuclear families lived and worked for the rubber boss, selling the rubber they collected and cultivating their gardens. As a result, the prevalent social unit of Ticuna society consisted of small settlements of scattered houses around the rubber house. In the context of the subjection of the Ticuna people under the barracões and the formation of new settlements of dispersed nuclear houses that replaced the malocas, an external form of authority emerged to control the Ticuna population. The rubber bosses appointed a person from the group as a representative of their authority. This form of authority was only a vehicle of domination for the rubber boss. This figure of authority was called *tuxawa* or *capitão* in Brazil and curaca in Peru and Colombia, but only represented

[57] This type of dwelling can be found all over the region. The missionaries named these houses Malocas in reference to the demon, or Moloch, to whom they associated such a sinful mode of cohabitation and banned it inside their missions. In Ticuna, they are called *Impata*, “big house”.

[58] Nimuendajú reflects on the implications of the disappearance of the malocas and concludes that if the testimonies are correct and malocas used to be the dwelling of patrilineal clans, the residence must have been patrilocal in the old days, contrary to the uxorilocal residence he observed in the 1940s (1952: 11). I find his reflection useful to point out how Ticuna people have a long history of contact and adaptation to external forces in the region.

[59] This system, which relied on debt peonage known as *aviamiento* in Brazil and *habilitamiento* in Peru and Colombia, was characteristic of the economy in the region during the rubber boom.

an externally appointed authority, not backed by the internal social dynamics of the Ticuna social organisation[60] (Cardoso de Oliveira 2014; Pacheco de Oliveira 1988).

This form of external chieftaincy persisted and was later instrumentalised by the indigenist institutions to appoint a liaison between them and the Ticuna population. Some anthropologists have interpreted these changes in Ticuna societies as mainly driven by external forces: processes of nationalisation (López Garcés 2014) or state engineering (Ullán 2004), thus emphasising the external nature of the chieftaincies that emerged in every national context in the second half of the 20th century. The following section will present the case that in all three countries, the chieftaincies that emerged from the indigenous political mobilisation are intentionally devoided of any coercive power as a refusal to delegate decision power to any member of the community, an attribute that remains in the assembly.

Demarcação Já!: The struggle for land and political autonomy in Brazil

In the 1970s, the Ticuna people dwelling in Brazil, dispossessed of their homeland, started to mobilise for the recognition of land rights. The history of Lauro Sodré illustrates that although the claim for recognition originated at a local level, their demands joined a nationwide pan-indigenous exigency for territorial recognition synthesised in the political slogan "Demarcation Now!". During this process that lasted several decades — and is still today at threat of being reversed by the government — the fragmented territoriality and political organisation of the Ticuna became temporarily articulated in one voice, incarnated in the figure of Pedro Inácio as the spokesperson of the Conselho Geral da Tribu Ticuna (CGTT). Eventually, after obtaining the demarcation of the territories reclaimed by the Ticuna and the recognition of indigenous peoples as full citizens under a multicultural constitution in 1988, this impulse of coordinated struggle gave way to the multiplication of indigenous organisations, diverse and fragmented.

What do you want land for? You are not earthworms!

The memory of the struggle for land is still fresh and cherished by the inhabitants of the Brazilian Ticuna communities. Lidio Gregorio de Lima, an elder from Lauro Sodré, reminisced how he and his brother Leonilio and started a struggle for the titling of the terra indígena that lasted three decades. Sat on the

[60] Calavia (2010) traces the word tuxawa and concludes it is a Tupi term subsequently integrated into Brazilian Portuguese and applied by the colonial agents to indigenous chiefs; Chaumeil (2017) does something similar to demonstrate how the Quechua term curaca was a term imported by the catholic missionaries and rubber bosses to delegate responsibilities onto specific amazonian individuals.

wooden floor of his house, next to a motor still warm from his recent travels, he patiently untangled his fishing net and the memories of his participation in the demarcation.

"I was born in 1938 in this land. Back then, there was no village like today. People lived scattered around. My family had a garden on the shore of the Amazon River and another on an island that no longer exists called Guariba — Monkey Island, famous for the large population of howler monkeys that used to live there. When I was 16 years old, I remember a new *patrão* arrived to these lands and tried to evict us. His name was Vitor Magalhães, a rich, powerful man from Benjamin Constant. He claimed the property of a huge parcel of land, from the Crajari Ravine up to Sabonete," — Lido explained while he extended his arms to point in opposite directions, upstream and downstream the Amazon River — "He insisted that the people living here had no documents to prove they owned their property and he, on the contrary, had the titles to prove he was the legal owner. He raised cattle, tore down the rubber trees, filled these lands with grass and left the cattle free to feed on it. Many of us suffered when the cattle broke into our gardens and damaged our crops. When we claimed that those were our lands, the fazenda foreman told us, `What do you want land for? You are not earthworms!' and laughed."

Lidio leaned forward and continued his story with a fiery voice, "We went to Atalaia do Norte paddling with my brother Leonilo and four other family members. We did not have motors like today; we left early, and it took us one day and a half to get there. We carried a fishing net and stopped to catch and roast some *curimbatá* fish. We spoke with Giovanne [an official from the FUNAI]. He asked us to return a week later, and from that moment on, Leonilio and I became a team. We did not stop until we got the titles of our land. The following week, we travelled to Tabatinga. We spent three days there, just eating coffee and bread. Afterwards, we boarded a big military aeroplane, a Buffalo model, bigger than this house, that took us to Manaus. There, we met Officer Kawamoto. He was the chief of FUNAI there. A few days later, we met the president of FUNAI, Ismar. He told us to stay put in Manaus while he travelled to Brasilia to meet the president. We waited 90 days, living in the *Casa do Indio* [House of Indigenous People], where we met many other indigenous people struggling for their land. We travelled to Brasilia, we spent four days there, and they were surprised, they told us that no Ticuna had complained before, they had no idea of our suffering! They informed us that one important paper was needed, so we returned to Manaus. During that period, my mother died. We took a steamboat and arrived home after 14 days of travelling up the river. It was 1972. That was the year we started the struggle."

Lidio was excited at that point. He stood walked back and forth, trying to remember all the details, the people he met, the days he spent in every city. He found it especially relevant to give an exact account of

the state functionaries he met. He reflected out loud about the logic of these meetings, "The white man has his own leaders. Every city is the seat of a leader and the power it embodies. We went all the way to Brasilia, where the president lives! I always travelled with my brother. He was the capitão because he was the oldest. I always entered the meeting with him, but since he was older, he took care of everything. I remained in silence. I did not speak."

The figure of capitão originated in the intervention of the state organ in charge of the indigenous people, formed in 1910 as Serviço de Proteção aos Índios e Localização dos Trabalhadores Nacionais[61], and after 1918 known as Serviço de Proteção aos Índios (SPI). The Brazilian state considered all indigenous people incapable of conducting their own affairs and created an office in charge of the tutelage of the native population. This paternalism materialised in *postos indígenas* — indigenous posts — villages where the indigenous people were relocated and encouraged to organise as a community. The capitão emerged as an intermediary between the indigenist administration and the rest of the community. The authority granted to this figure emanated from the administrative apparatus, but during the mobilisations to reclaim the lands, the role was re-signified, and all of the organised villages named capitães as spokesmen of their communities (Cardoso de Oliveira 2014; Lima 2010; Pacheco de Oliveira 1988, 2015).

The conversations with Lidio were often long and we talked until very late. He always concluded with, "Why don't you come tomorrow? I can tell you more". On one of my visits, Lidio showed me a hand-drawn map. He explained to me that it was the result of decades of effort and suffering. He read out loud very proudly a note on the margins of the chart: "Leonilio Clemente Lima, Lidio Gregorio Lima, Santo Cruz Mariano fought 38 years for demarcation". The third name in the inscription corresponds to Leonilio's son, Santo Cruz, who acted as secretary for his father, the capitão.

In numerous conversations, I asked Santo about his experience during the struggle for land. He reminisced: "I was born in 1960. By the time Magalhães tried to evict us from our lands, I was eleven or twelve years old. I had learned to speak and write in Portuguese with a certain level of proficiency, so I accompanied my father and uncle in many bureaucratic procedures."

Lauro Sodré was an important point of access to extract rubber from the multiple ravines that penetrated the terra firme. Santos remembered the barracão, one of many big houses that acted as the commercial

[61] This reference to “National Workers” shows the class perspective of the assimilation that the Brazilian state wanted for the native people: as peasants or small rural producers.

and administrative centres of the large extractive estates that dominated the region's economic activities. "A steamship called Lauro Sodré[62] travelled regularly between Benjamin Constant and Belem do Pará. It always stopped here at the barracão. A man called Wenceslao was the foreman. He supplied the vessel with rubber, wood, salted fish and alligator skins. When the rubber price fell, Magalhães, the owner, tried to expand the ranch for cattle, affecting the many people who had gardens, my father among them."

The struggle of the people of Lauro Sodré went on for decades. The economic and political power of Magalhães in Benjamin Constant made the demarcation more complicated than it was for other terras indígenas. Santos pondered, "My father died shortly after the victory but was finally happy to see the results". I was able to confirm the intensity of the struggle by reviewing the file of the demarcation: the bureaucracy of the process, the interference of local political powers, and the division among the indigenous people made it very difficult to define the territory. Much effort was required from 1978, when a commission to identify the indigenous lands was first appointed, until 2006, when the terra indígena was finally declared (Erthal & Almeida 2004; Ministerio da Justiça-FUNAI 2007).

Growing movement and constitutional recognition

Santo and many young Ticunas from his generation were raised in the heat of the conflict. They developed a sense of political unity among all the different communities that shared the demand for demarcation, "I got involved in the struggle, not just demanding the demarcation of our terra indígena, but many of the Ticuna territories. I participated in the CGTT, an organisation created by the capitães to struggle together."

By the time the mobilisations for territorial recognition began, Brazil was under a dictatorship (1964-1985), and the military regime approved law 6001 of 1973, better known as the *Estatuto do Indio* — Indian Statute. This law continued and reinforced the tutelage regime that characterised indigenous people as incapable of exercising full citizenship. Another controversial point of this law was regarding political representation. It denied indigenous people legal personality to exercise their own rights, appointing the Fundação Nacional do Índio[63] (FUNAI) as the institution in charge of representing the indigenous people *vis a vis* the state.

[62] Named after Lauro Nina Sodré e Silva, an important politician and the first governor of Pará following the proclamation of the Republic of Brazil.

[63] FUNAI was created to replace the extremely discredited SPI in 1967.

As the demand for demarcation continued to grow, the Ticuna communities started coming together through celebrating assemblies in which the numerous capitães gained experience and started to build a broader social movement. In 1982, the first regional organisation was created during the Second General Assembly of Ticuna people at the village of Campo Alegre. It was called the General Council of the Ticuna Tribe (CGTT) and elected one of the most active leaders, Pedro Inácio Pinheiro, as *Capitão Geral* — General Captain — of all the villages struggling for their rights. Pedro Inácio[64] did not only have a knowledge of the Portuguese language but also about Brazilian society. He was raised in a barracão in Vendaval after his parents died. After witnessing all the injustices his people suffered, he devoted his life to the struggle for land, like many other leaders. His skills led him to act as spokesman for the communities and coordinate the joint actions to defend their territory[65]. At that time, the capitão figure was emerging as the spokesperson of the new villages, but it did not hold any other effective power inside the community.

Santo Cruz continued his studies and worked as a bilingual monitor, teaching in the Ticuna communities. According to Santos, the struggle was now regional. The CGTT had numerous allies: academics, officials of the indigenous agencies within the state, segments of the Catholic Church linked with liberation theology[66], NGOs, etc. The CGTT pushed to demarcate all the territories, but as the processes required external funding, the organisation prioritised six territories that had a more concentrated population and conveyed special meaning for the Ticuna. Because the Ticuna territories are located near Brazil's political borders, they faced fierce opposition from the local economic and political forces and the whole military regime that regarded the adjacent lands of the borderlines as a strategic part of national security.

The political tension grew in the region as a result of the organisation that framed the emerging collective actor in ethnic terms, challenging racism even in spaces where the control of the white oligarchy was tighter. Santo commented, "The city looks at us as inferior. They used to say that Ticuna people knew nothing, understood nothing, that we were illiterates, that we had no soul, no intelligence, the discrimination was immense". In these conditions, the impulse of the CGTT to create an indigenous museum in the city of Benjamin Constant in 1991 was a political victory. Santos, who acts as the museum director nowadays, remembered the significance of the initiative, "We were threatened. People here in

[64] Pedro Inácio passed away on July 25th, 2018 while I was conducting fieldwork in Peru.

[65] Translations from one context to another are very telling. To illustrate the kind of authority people invested in him, Pedro was often compared with a Minister of Foreign Affairs instead of a President of the Ticuna people.

[66] Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) and Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN)

the city reacted violently. But we persisted and maintained this space, which became even more important because it was the meeting point for the capitães of all the villages. They stayed here if they needed it."

Racism against indigenous people was expressed in the urban-rural opposition. A significant population of mestizo people worked in the barracões alongside the Ticunas. They were known as *ribeirinhos* or *caboclos* — a category that designates the historical Amazonian peasantry (Nugent 2021) — and maintained a respectful relationship with the Ticunas. "It was awful, the racism in the cities. But ribeirinhos did not discriminate against us. Most of them were descendants of migrants from Ceará who arrived here to work in rubber extraction. The rural population worked just like us. The Ticuna worked and had close ties to the ribeirinhos. Every time we had a celebration or organised *uajuri* [communal work], they participated, drank manioc beer and manioc wine, and did not discriminate against us. The racist people lived in the city: merchants, proprietors, and bureaucrats. They had a vision of the Ticuna as inferior, which is why the idea of organising a movement to defend ourselves began". The height of the violence was the Capacete massacre, where 14 Ticunas were killed just because they attended a meeting. "I was there, you know. I saved my life by hiding under the floor of a house."[67]

In this testimony, we can see how the indigenous movement played a significant role in the living conditions of the rural population. The ribeirinhos or caboclos lived in similar conditions of exploitation to those of the Ticuna. However, as they did not participate in the struggle articulated around ethnic identity, that segment of the region's population has not achieved the same access to land and political recognition as the indigenous communities.

In 1988, a new Brazilian constitution was instituted. The indigenous movement was stronger than ever, and had a nationwide presence. Ticuna capitães participated in the meetings of the União das Nações Indígenas — Indigenous Nations Union — (UNI), and together with many other indigenous peoples from Brazil, had enough political leverage to participate in the drafting of the new constitution in 1988 (Almeida 2011; Deparis 2007; Lopes 2011). As a result, they finally toppled the tutelage regime. Articles 231 and 232 recognised indigenous people's organisation and their traditionally occupied land, granted indigenous

[67] On March 28 of 1988, an assembly of Ticuna people reunited in the locality of Boca do Capacete. They were attacked by armed loggers who opposed their struggle for land rights. The event was denounced nationally, drawing attention to the violence that indigenous peoples suffered for fighting for their rights (Rolla et al. 1988).

communities and their organisation's legal attributions, and constituted them as political subjects; a legal framework for indigenous political organisations was opened up.

Consolidating constitutional reforms was perhaps the highest point for the indigenous movement in the Amazon River region. The CGTT pushed and achieved the demarcation of six indigenous lands, recognised in 1993. These six terras indígenas were Eware I and Eware II[68], Lago Beruri, Porto Espiritual, Betânia and Vui-Uata-In. All of them were officially declared in 1993 after a long struggle. The remaining lands, Lauro Sodré among them, had to wait over a decade more.

Overall, for the Ticuna political organisation, the struggle for land titling signified the consolidation of the figure of the capitão as the representative of the interests of the newly born communities. This denomination changed, and the heads of the villages are now called caciques. The transition from capitão — a title that originated in the long history of external subordination — to cacique — an appellation that became popular in the joint struggle with other indigenous peoples in a national movement — reflects the appropriation and active reshaping of the figures of political representation among the Ticuna communities of Brazil.

During the years of the struggle for demarcation, the CGTT helped to create new organisations that reflected the new demands of the indigenous people in fields such as education and health. These new organisations allowed different forms of articulation and created novel spaces of political representation (youth, women, elders, artisans, etc.) that were not communal but specific to certain fields of public life. Other organisations proliferated rapidly as a number of Ticuna professionals started to work for the state. Other organisations emerged, reflecting the existence of competing networks and political alliances. Paradoxically, the fact that indigenous political organisations were recognised in the 1988 constitution fueled the proliferation and fragmentation that would occur in the following years.

The political organisation of Ticuna communities in Brazil in the 21st century is characterised by fragmentation. In 2018, I was looking to attend a meeting of the CGTT, as it was the oldest organisation of the Ticuna people in Brazil, and the one that conducted most of the demands for demarcation and

[68] The terras indígenas in Eware have a powerful symbolic meaning. As we saw in the origin myth in chapter one, the Ticuna people were born when Yoi and Ipi fished them out of the Eware Ravine. Therefore, obtaining recognition over these territories was a priority for the Ticuna social movement.

helped create other sectorial organisations[69]. A division was unfolding inside the CGTT during my fieldwork. There were two contending factions disputing representation, and both realized assemblies. I attended both. Ticuna leader Paulino Nunez argued that the caciques were the only legitimate authorities to elect a head of the organization. He organized an assembly in the community of São Domingo I, in the municipality of São Paulo de Olivença, ten hours from the triple border downstream of the Amazon River, in December 2018. After two days of deliberation, the assembly decided to rename CGTT as Conselho Geral do Povo Tikuna Magüta (CGPTM) and elected Paulino as head of the organization. However, a different assembly of the CGTT in Umariaçu in January 2019 also appointed a new leader and renamed the organization Conselho Geral da Etnia Magüta do Alto Rio Solimões (CGEM – ARS). This was a bigger event than the one I attended in December. Sebastião Nogueira was elected with the support of some caciques, but also with the votes of an extended array of *lideranças* –leaders that have emerged in different contexts such as education, health, religion, etc. Ultimately, the divisions within the CGTT show the challenges of a movement that has not yet consolidated a national structure capable of functioning beyond the reactive aspects of confrontation and political struggle.

Resguardo and cabildo, dialectics of domination and resistance in Colombia

The conformation of indigenous communities as sociopolitical entities in Colombia was a process that occurred around the same time as the rest of the tri-border region, around the decade of the 1970s. The memory of many inhabitants in Arara contests the idea that the community was formed as a result of state intervention; instead, they see the founding of their community as the result of the political initiative of local leaders who convinced dispersed families to relocate to the territories of a cattle ranch and demand land titling. The struggle that followed for the recognition of their territory was articulated with the national indigenous movement that achieved the constitutional forms of territoriality and political organisation under the figures of resguardo and cabildo indígena in the 1991 constituent assembly.

The foundation of Arara was our making

One warm afternoon in Ara, I visited Angel Silva Ramos. Angel is Policarpa's uncle and a very active member of the community. After a journey cleaning the chagra, he was happy to receive me in his new concrete home, in the village's outside perimeter. Angel sat, grabbed some *aguaje* fruits and started

[69] Principally the Organização Geral dos Professores Ticuna Bilingue (OGPTB) in 1986 and the Organização dos Monitores de Saúde do Povo Ticuna (OMSPT) in 1990.

talking. "I was born on August 10th, 1956, on the island of Arara. Back then, this area was completely different. What is now the mouth of the Paraná Ravine used to be the bank of the Amazon River, but over the years, sediments have accumulated, moving the shoreline further away. The Ticunas did not use to live in houses close to each other, and residence was not fixed either. My grandfather lived here, in this area, at the river mouth of the Paraná, when it used to discharge its waters directly into the Amazon River. Families used to build a house, cultivate a garden and move away three or four years later to another place to start all over."

Angel's memory is tied to the intricate history of old gardens and residences. He grabbed a piece of coal and sketched while he spoke, "My grandpa used to live where they are building the hotel now. My grandfather's name was Manuel Silva Ramos, and my mother's was Florinda Pedro Angarita. They were both born on the Brazilian side but did not usually spend much time in one place. They were always moving. Two of my brothers live in Brazil now. They found their wives there, in Belem de Solimões. I remember we had a garden first where the hotel is located. Then we moved to what are now lands owned by Carlos Sanchez. Then we moved again over to the Paraná Ravine[70]. We used to live like that, close to the rivers but on high ground, in the terra firme, always changing."

I tried unsuccessfully to decipher his scribbles but could not follow them. He traced landscapes long gone, "When I was around twelve years old, I was studying second grade in a school located at the mouth of the Paraná. The Paraná used to be a big ravine, and big boats could navigate it. Gunner boats used to pass there, but now you can barely go through it. Sometimes, I go there in my canoe, but only during the rainy season. That is normal. The world grows, the land grows, the Paraná is almost gone, and the Amazon River is further and further away now"[71]. He continued, "In the brook near the mouth of the Arara Ravine, there was a ranch, there was a Catholic chapel, we used it as a school. It was a traditional construction. The roof was made with caraná palm, the walls were made of *açai* wood, and a wooden floor was made of *pona*. It was our only classroom. The land was owned by Gabriela Marin and her husband, Mr. Cardenas, both mestizos. Gabrielita, as we used to call her, was our teacher. She was very strict and demanding. Although

[70] Note that the first two places are now privately owned, they fall outside of the indigenous territory despite having been occupied by Ticuna families in the past. The third one was finally incorporated to the resguardo, but only after the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (Incora) bought it from the previous owner.

[71] This notion of a live landscape, growing and changing, is present in many accounts of the past. It will be addressed in the next chapter regarding ritual dances that foment the enlarging of the territory.

all the Ticuna families lived scattered, we all had to attend church and school or be punished. The Catholic Church administered the school."

I asked Angel if there were any Ticuna authorities back then, and he explained, "There was a curaca appointed by the priests. The first curaca was Victor Angarita, and he had to make sure all children attended school from Monday to Friday. The adults helped in communal work on Saturday, and everyone attended mass on Sunday. Children who missed school were beaten; if any adult missed the mass, they were fined. The school was the only option within kilometres, and children from all over the area attended, even from communities such as San José, Nazareth, Santa Sofía and Ronda. I remember leaving my house to go to school at five in the morning to start our studies at eight. Classes lasted the whole day. There was no health post, but Gabrielita's husband always had a first aid kit."

He paused. Over the last few weeks he had been teasing me about "the real story of the origins of Arara". Recently, the village celebrated its anniversary, and the school teachers presented the history of the community centred on the building of the school, the church and the health post as major events in the founding of the village. "The foundation of Arara was our making. It was not the governor, the bishop, the mayor or the deputy. It was a secret at first. Around 1964, Florencio Angarita, a medicine man, was working when he was possessed[72], and a spirit encouraged the Ticuna to organise, to form a community."

Angel continued, "Florencio was a healer. He worked with booze and tobacco, cured people and was the brother of Victor, the curaca. They all lived here in the Arara Ravine. One day, he was possessed [a common form of communication of medicine men with healer spirits: the medicine man's spirit leaves his body, and the other spirit occupies it] and a spirit spoke through him. His voice changed, and his eyes transformed as well. 'This land, this place, will be better for all of you if you gather and form a village here. You will receive visits from many people'. He marked this place as a holy place. Teodoro Angarita [Florencio and Victor's father] agreed to invite other Ticunas to form a community. Only Teodoro and his family lived there. All the Ticunas lived scattered. The spirit said that if we build here, the community people from outside would come and help us, rational people, mestizos."

Angel and his family accepted the invitation. "We all came and started cleaning, cutting down trees, burning. Fifteen days later, we were building houses, and by the end of the first month, we were finished.

[72] The Spanish word *incorporarse* is used to describe a kind of spirit possession. It also can be translated as "embodiment".

All this was directed by Victor Angarita, who was elected as the first curaca of the community by its inhabitants. From that moment on, it was not just Monseñor who appointed him but the original settlers' election. That is how we chose to live together in unity. We started with 70 people, organised the spaces, and measured everything, and it all was done discreetly. The mestizos found out more than a year later. We worked in secret, without telling anyone, and we kept going to school there at the mouth of the Paraná, but it was the year Gabrielita retired, and her husband died from cancer. They left, and the school did not function anymore. We decided to start a new school here, in the house of my uncle Domingo Pedro, who built a big house and lent one of the rooms for us to use as a classroom. After a year, someone informed people in Leticia about us, and a priest came. He proposed to have an official inauguration, which is the date we celebrate now, but all the people involved know it all began a year before."

Angel smiled. The version of the origin of Arara that he prefers is not the one with the indigenous people gathered like herds around the state institutions, but one in which the founders of the community decided to get together and build the village. He continued, "The same happened with the church. Our first curaca blew a cow's horn to invite us to an assembly. We decided where to build the church and a new building for the school. We all collaborated. The students went to the jungle to collect caraná, and we were all weaving the next day to make the roof. After the news arrived in Leticia that Arara was now an organised community, they came here and organised the Junta de Acción Comunal[73], so we organised a directive board and elected all the members in an assembly. The curaca was still the head of the Junta. We got the school and afterwards a health post.

Official recognition of the village's existence did not grant the community any rights over the land. "When Federico Huaines was elected curaca, he struggled for the recognition of our territory. This land was not titled. We were using the land of Gabrielita, but it was borrowed. Federico travelled to Bogotá. He pushed to obtain the title. He obtained the status of 'reserve' in 1979, but still, there was no land title. My *compadre* continued with the struggle. He was very stubborn. He spoke with the Incora, 'We want titling. We want the property'. I remember how hard it was. That struggle took time. We had to knock on many doors. We finally got the recognition of the resguardos in 1982."

A national social movement

[73] An structure of social organization at a local level that the Colombian government promoted in all villages across the country. It does not have any ethnic connotation, and their members are considered citizens.

Soon after the nucleation into a fixed settlement, Arara obtained recognition as a *vereda* or peasant community. Nonetheless, the people's determination in a highly politicised context prompted them to join a national indigenous movement to gain recognition as an indigenous community. To understand the emergence of the political organisation of the Ticunas in Colombia, we have to consider the national scenario, where a powerful indigenous social movement had emerged in the Andean region in the 1970s, and it grew into a national movement that today has one of the most articulated political processes on the continent. In 1971, after decades of experience in social mobilisations with a predominantly class vision, indigenous people of the Cauca Department created an organisation emphasising their ethnic identity. This organisation, the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC), was born as a multiethnic organisation that brought together Nasa and Misak people in an organisation that had as its primary objective the struggle for land and the elimination of bonded labour, known in the south-east region of Colombia as *terraje* (Archila 2009; Castillo 2007; Friede 1976; González 2016; Vega Cantor 2002).

That was the origin of an extended wave of activism nationwide and a period of struggle that contributed to the formation of indigenous peoples as political subjects. The articulation of a broad social movement based on ethnic identity led to the demand for recognition of territorial and political autonomy under the banner "Unity, Land and Culture". This process was decisive because the social movement articulated its demands around two colonial institutions: the resguardo and the cabildo. The resguardo was the figure the Spaniards used to concentrate indigenous populations under the assignation of collective territories. As an independent republic, the constitution of 1886, which governed the nation's relations with the indigenous peoples until 1991, incorporated law 89 of 1890 that guaranteed a special jurisdiction protecting the resguardo from being sold or extinguished. The law also recognised and regulated the cabildos, a local form of government that guaranteed the election of their own leaders.

The spark of the indigenous mobilisation in Cauca soon extended all over the country. Combining legal and direct action, the indigenous organisation expanded, creating numerous regional organisations and a national coordination body called the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC) in 1982. Given that law 89 of 1890 declared all contracts regarding the lands of the resguardos illegal, this was used by the social movement to reclaim the lands the colonial authorities had already recognised as indigenous territories; similarly, the figure of the cabildo was used as a framework to demand recognition of local indigenous governments. Although the figures of resguardo and cabildo did not exist in the Amazonian context, where the indigenous population was forcibly relocated to missions rather than Indian republics,

as a result of the national indigenous movement unification, these became the legal figures under which the struggle for land and self-government was constructed all across the country.

The appropriation of these institutions in the Amazonian context illustrates how national dynamics shaped the demands of the Ticuna people in Colombia. Arara was the first territory in the region recognised as a resguardo in 1982. With that recognition, their lands were titled, and they formed a cabildo to organise life in the community. An assembly elected a curaca as the head of the cabildo, which was the first time such a figure was recognised by the Colombian state as a traditional authority.

In a meeting on April 8th and 9th of 2018 in the neighbouring village of Nazareth, Celestino, an old leader, spoke about the origins of the regional organisation that brought together all the indigenous cabildos in the zone. That articulation started with the Ticuna cabildos, but the Cocama and Yagua communities soon joined them. Celestino recalled how Sister Magdalena, a nun working in the boarding school the Catholic Church administered in Nazareth, spoke and provided information about the national indigenous organisation to the people in Nazareth. "She was the one who brought the news about the existence of the ONIC. Grimaldo Bautista was the curaca of Nazareth. He read a paper called Unidad Indígena — Indigenous Unity — edited by the people of Cauca. We all started to organise because of the numerous problems we faced back then, especially the problems with narcotraffickers. They not only used our territory for their illegal activities, but they also employed our youth in precarious conditions. We worked with Arara, Progreso and Nuevo Jardin communities and founded the Consejo Indígena Ticuna de Nazareth Amazonas (CITNA) in 1985. After four years of constant organisation and inviting other communities to join, especially the ones located in Puerto Nariño, the lakes and los kilómetros, we formed the Cabildo Indígena Mayor del Trapecio Amazónico (CIMTRA) in 1989, comprised of 27 cabildos. CIMTRA existed from 1989 to 1993 when decree 1088 of 1993 regulated the creation of Indigenous Traditional Authorities (ATI) and Cabildos Associations based on the constitution of 1991."

The constitution of 1991 was an important milestone in the indigenous peoples' struggle for their rights in Colombia. At the beginning of the 1990s, amid a national crisis, a Constituent Assembly was summoned to elaborate a new constitution. Two indigenous people were elected by popular vote as legislators (one backed by the ONIC and the other by a rival association, the AICO), and another one was granted a seat as a member of the Quintin Lame organisation, an indigenous guerrilla that operated in the Andean region and reached a peace accord with the government along with other insurgent forces in the country. The new constitution reflected many of the demands of the indigenous movement. The recognition of the indigenous people as legal entities was essential, as it allowed them to elect their own authorities at a

local, regional and national level. The decree opened up the option for the authorities of the cabildos to form Associations and, therefore, constitute another level of coordination among the indigenous authorities. These Associations are special entities of Public Law with legal status, patrimony and administrative autonomy.

Successive transformations and reorganisations among the ATIs in the region led to the creation of three different Associations: AZCAITA[74] formed as a result of a secession from ACITAM, provoked by political differences in 1993. AZCAITA nowadays represents the cabildos located inland, the Amazonian Trapeze, a zone known as los kilómetros because these communities are identified according to the kilometres of the Route 85 highway. Another ATI originated in the process of decentralisation in 1997, ATICOYA[75], grouping the resguardos of Puerto Nariño municipality, leaving ACITAM to represent the resguardos in the municipality of Leticia (ACITAM 2000; López Garcés 2014).

Arara is nowadays a member of ACITAM and held an Assembly on 19-20 December 2018. I had the opportunity to participate in the debates and to get to know firsthand the most urgent problems of the indigenous movement. According to the collective assessment, the most pressing matter was the need to re-politicise indigenous governments' role. Many participants felt that in recent years, they had become managers that compete with private organisations in administrating the resources transferred from the central government to the cabildos.

Configuration of a regional Amazonian indigenous movement in Peru

Yahuma-Callaru was originally a Brazilian rubber worker settlement. The barracão or barracón — as these enterprises were known in Portuguese and Spanish — was installed at the confluence of the Yahuma and Callaru streams. The installation of a school attracted numerous Ticunas to settle in that territory, and they demanded a bilingual professor for their children. The leadership of Ticuna bilingual teachers led to the claim of recognition as comunidad nativa, a political and territorial entity recognised by the Peruvian state. The origins and transition of Yahuma-Callaru can be traced to the memory of its inhabitants, and the community is characterised by its low levels of political articulation with other Ticuna communities in

[74] Asociación Zonal de Cabildos Indígenas de Tradición Autóctona.

[75] Originally Cabildo Mayor del Resguardo Ticuna, Cocama Yagua de Puerto Nariño (TICOYA) but renamed in 2007 as the Asociacion de Autoridades Indígenas del Resguardo Ticuna, Cocama, Yagua de Puerto Nariño-Amazonas (ATICOYA).

Peru and low degree of conflict. Nevertheless, this Ticuna territory and its political organisation have been reconfigured, and new structures have been consolidated in recent decades.

The Ticuna population grew, and the Brazilians gradually left

The eldest person living in the community was João Mafra, a Brazilian caboclo born in 1939 in Peru. His father, a Brazilian rubber tapper, and his mother, a Peruvian mestiza, worked at the rubber houses that bought the product from tappers and then sold it to the big companies in Manaus and Iquitos. João grew up on the rubber patches accessible through the Callaru River, significant extensions of land with dispersed wild rubber trees that provided the base of the extractive economy of the region during the first half of the 20th century. José da Costa, a rubber boss, owned this area. When he died, it was inherited by his offspring and administered by the eldest of his sons, Antonio da Costa.

When I did my fieldwork in Yahuma-Callaru, João had recently moved to Tabatinga but kept visiting the village frequently because he had friends there and loved to spend time in the place where he had lived in his younger years. He recalled the time he started working with his brothers in the barracão, "I never worked alone. We always worked with someone, at least in pairs, because the jungle is dangerous, and you can have an accident or die, and no one will ever find out. Antonio had more than 200 workers, most of them Brazilian. The barracão controlled territories with rubber trees and entrusted portions of these territories to *habilitadores*, controllers in charge of hooking up workers and assigning them routes to collect the rubber. In da Costa's barracks, there were six habilitadores. Each one controlled 50 to 60 bonded workers."

While João spoke, his nephews listened attentively from a distance, and their young children sat around to hear family stories from a time that sounded distant, "I used to work with my brother. The habilitador would assign you a path where you could tap 120 to 130 siringa trees. The trees should be at least 20 years old. The rubber trees have straight trunks, but you can read the branches. The branches will always tell you where the next tree is. The distance between them is considerable, so you must walk fast and work faster. You have a path and start very early in the morning, visiting all the trees to cut them and leave them bleeding into a can. Afterwards, you must visit all the trees again to collect all the rubber milk. The next step is to slowly smoke the rubber milk so it coagulates to form big rubber balls, 60 to 80 kilos each. You will usually work for three weeks to collect that much rubber."

João switched from Portuguese to Spanish frequently, but surprisingly, he never mixed the languages and always ensured his audience followed the narration, "Every three weeks, we would carry the rubber from

our camp through the jungle to a stream and take it by boat to the *barracão*. There, the controllers would weigh the collected rubber. They would take 25% of the product as part of the agreement to let peons work in these territories. This was not the only profit extracted from us. They always cheated, altered the scales to pay less for the rubber, and in addition, would claim that when the rubber was transported to Iquitos, it would dry, reducing even more the final weight they paid for. We never saw any money. We usually got some products from the barracão: coffee, sugar, salt, gasoline and now and then, some trousers or shirts. At the time, the boss had the workers captive with debt. If you were indebted by 400 soles, after many months, the balance would still be in his favour. What for? He died and left all the money here. People say he buried millions in pound sterling[76], the currency he received for all the rubber."

Just like many people after the decline of the rubber boom, João was suddenly disconnected from his main economic activity. However, I heard countless testimonies from people who lived during the years after the burst of an extractive boom in the Amazon region returning to a combination of agriculture and fishing, which provided a viable option for securing a livelihood. "I started working in 1952, and by 1966, the rubber business decayed, no more siringa. I worked for the next years for Otavio da Costa, Antonio's brother. He started selling wood, and we worked chopping trees, only *canela muena* (*Aniba canelilla*). We did not have chainsaws like nowadays. We did it all with axes. Overall, it was a sad life; we worked so much and earned so little. All the workers left the Callaru Ravine in 1966 when the siringa was no longer profitable. Many of us came here to this riverside of the Yahuma Ravine and built houses and gardens. Don Joaquin Batista and Dona Lorenza built the first house in the village, and afterwards, many other Brazilians unemployed from the siringa came to live here. It was a small settlement with just one street. After four years and many people joining a sergeant came. He was in charge of the military post in Puerto Alegría. He saw all the children living here and organised a meeting with the settlers on a Sunday. He offered us a deal: if we built a house for a teacher, he promised to bring someone to care for our kids' education. We built the house in 1968, and a teacher arrived one week after we finished, and that is how the village was founded."

João considered the teacher's arrival as the community's foundational event, and later on, the demand of the indigenous settlers to receive bilingual education marked a turning point in the life of the community.

[76] In Yahuma-Callaru I heard many stories about mysterious fires that signaled the location of treasures from the rubber boom era, treasures of pound sterling. This highlights that the people of the region were aware of the the trade route between the South American Lowlands and London, the world´s financial capital, where the prices were set at the stock market.

He described the arrival of the first Ticuna settlers, "Around 1970, the first Ticunas arrived: the first family to come and live here was the Haydé family. Manuel Haydé built his house, and the Ahué family arrived after him. From that moment, many others came and stayed. We all were happy to see the community grow. We did not have any problem. I never learned the Ticuna language. There was no need. We either speak in Spanish or Portuguese. Many Brazilians who originally lived here have moved away to Brazil since then, usually to live closer to their relatives. All my brothers moved to Tabatinga in the 1970s. In 1986, this village became comunidad nativa. My nephew Danilo Mafra Carbajal was president of the community, and Magno Ahué, my compadre, was the teacher. They both did all the paperwork, and since then, we have elected a Lieutenant Governor, a President and a Municipal Agent."

During my fieldwork, I stayed with Alicia Haydé and Teófilo Ahué, a marriage formed by the two Ticuna families that João mentioned were the first Ticuna settlers. When I did my fieldwork, Teófilo was the apu — the community chief. Although he was born in Colombia, he still remembers the community's origins and underlines the fact that the second half of the century witnessed a profound transformation in Ticuna dwelling: Ticunas created new settlements near the shores of the Amazon River in the three countries.

Teófilo told me, "I was born in Colombia in 1954 in a ravine called Loretoyacu. At the time, there were no more than five scattered houses. I went to a catholic boarding school in Puerto Nariño. I studied up to the fifth year. I finished when I was 17 years old. I suffered through my studies. The school was rigorous. Only Spanish was allowed, and you were severely punished if you spoke your own language." Teófilo's life illustrates that mobility is essential for the Ticuna. International borders do not have a significant impact on their life trajectories. "I did not stay in Colombia for long. I came here to Yahuma around 1974, and it was the same situation: people lived apart, and no one had told them, 'Let's build a community, let's live together so the government could help us'. Before they lived disaggregated, they lived according to custom. I came here to Yahuma with a cousin. When we arrived, what you see now as houses was mostly jungle. There were some gardens and only two houses here in the centre of the village: my uncle's home and my father-in-law's house. Back then, there were only two authorities: the Lieutenant Governor and Municipal Agent[77]. I met my wife here, so I stayed, first living with my father-in-law, and later I built this house. After my third child was born, I arranged my documents. Because of politics, it was not complicated. In election times, they always want new people to register to vote. I went to Caballococha for my electoral notebook. They just asked me my birth date and my birthplace. I told them I was born

[77] The corresponding authorities of any Peruvian mestizo community.

here in Yahuma, and that was all. Few Ticunas were living here when I arrived, barely five houses. Most of the people living here were Brazilians. As the years passed, the Ticuna population grew, and the Brazilians left gradually. We slowly built this community, and it became a comunidad nativa in 1986."

He explained to me that the community leader from 1964 to 1984 was Natalio Haydé Lozano, his father-in-law, but the official charge he held was that of Lieutenant Governor. That changed with the recognition of the village as a native community, which allowed for the election of a traditional authority, initially known as the President of the Community[78], elected by the assembly. In the last years, the residents of Yahuma-Callaru have been instructed by their regional indigenous federation, FECOTYBA, to use the title apu for the position of chief. Teófilo confessed he did not know the reason for this change.

The use of the term apu to designate the Amazonian indigenous leaders has an unclear origin. The word is undoubtedly Quechua. In the Andean region, it is the name given to a spirit or divinity associated with the mountains. Dourojeanni (2017) traces its use as a synonym of authority for the peoples in the north region of the Amazon in Peru, and underlines that this is evidence that the relationship between Andean and Lowland societies was established long before the Spanish conquest. Despite its origin, the generalised use of the word is a result of integrating Amazonian indigenous communities into regional and national political organisations and the social mobilisations carried out by the Achuar in 2006 and the Bagua protests in 2009. If the Law of Native Communities established the nomination of President of the Community, the social mobilisations dispersed the term apu as a pan-Amazonian denomination of chieftaincy, even in places where there is no intense social mobilisation, like the peruvian Lower Amazonia where Yahuma-Callaru is located.

Subnational indigenous movement

The community of Yahuma-Callaru was recognised as a native community thanks to the initiative of a professor who led the efforts and fulfilled the state's bureaucratic procedures. However, it did not immediately incorporate into a larger indigenous movement of regional or national scope. Ticuna communities of the region formed a federation in 1998, the Federación de Comunidades Ticuna y Yagua del Bajo Amazonas, FECOTYBA. The lack of integration into more extensive political networks is symptomatic of the fragility of the indigenous people in Peru as a collective political actor and the absence of a national indigenous movement in the country.

[78] Term translated directly from the similar legislation regarding peasant communities.

The trajectory of the indigenous movement in Peru has its particularities. The most salient is that the majority of the indigenous population inhabit the Andean zone of the country and have historically organised around peasant identity and not their ethnic belonging. This development can only be understood by looking closer at the diverging state policies directed at the indigenous population of the Andean and the Amazonian regions. The pervasive idea that the Andean native people — Quechua and Aymara population — were closer to the mestizo ideal of civilisation than the Amazonian native communities played an essential role in the state intervention during the 20th century. The military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado, president of Peru from 1968 to 1975, carried out an agrarian reform to eliminate the special statute of the indigenous people of the country granted by the 1920 constitution.

He focused on the indigenous populations of the Andean region and the coast. The land reform was announced on June 24th, 1969, a symbolic date as it marked in Peru the "Day of the Indian" but redesignated from that day on as the "Day of the Peasant". This action was significant because it indicated an effort to incorporate the indigenous population of the Andes as citizens, removing their ethnic classification and incorporating them along with a class-based identity as peasants. It created a new territorial legal figure to acknowledge the possession of the land: comunidades campesinas — peasant communities. This legal form acknowledged certain territorial rights and regulated its organisation in the Andean and coastal regions.

President Velasco took a different approach for the lowland territories — where the native people usually lived scattered — maintaining the ethnic category for native communities of the Amazonian regions of Peru. The Law Decree 20.653 of 1974 created the figure of comunidad nativa — native community for the collective territories of Amazonian peoples. Although more flexible, it was still modelled around a Western notion of fixed settlement patterns and centralised political authority. The decree recognised communal land and protected it, making it inalienable, unmortgageable and imprescriptible. According to Alberto Chirif and Pedro Gracía (2007), this legislation preceded most Amazonian indigenous political organisations and their demands for land rights.

The decree had a double intention since it implied that the lands of the Amazonian lowlands could be considered *baldías*, property of the state, unless they were registered as native communities and requested political recognition from the government. The intention was to promote colonisation by granting non-occupied land to settlers. The law impacted the Amazonian native population, forcing them to form fixed settlements to request land titling. Nonetheless, in the decade of 1980, the government's political orientation changed, and many reforms were passed restricting the protection of the lands of

Comunidades Nativas following neoliberal principles. This shift culminated in the 1993 constitution that reversed inalienability, non-mortgageability and prescriptibility.

This indigenous social movement in the Amazon organised to defend their already granted rights against state reforms. Deborah Yashar explains that instead of a national indigenous movement, Peru witnessed the articulation of regional movements. The strongest was in the Amazon region, where ethnic federations originated defending their recognised land and eventually integrated a regional Association called Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana, AIDESEP (2005).

The early creation of a figure that recognised indigenous territories in 1974, followed by a constitutional regression that obliged the native communities to organise and defend their collective rights, contrasts with the Colombian and Brazilian experiences where the building up for the indigenous movement was precisely to obtain land rights and constitutional recognition.

The role of communal leaders was crucial for obtaining legal recognition. In Yahuma-Callaru, as in many other Ticuna communities of the region, the bilingual teachers formed by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) were more prepared to act as intermediaries with the state bureaucracy effectively. Lisenia, a bilingual teacher in Yahuma-Callaru, recalled that bilingual education started in the Peruvian region before Colombia and Brazil, and it greatly impacted the ways Ticuna people organised to demand differentiated education. "I spoke only Ticuna since I was a little girl. I studied Initial education, and my first teacher was my aunt, who had some instruction after the arrival of linguist Lambert Anderson from the SIL. They prepared some teachers who travelled to Yarinacocha in Pucallpa. I attended a public school, but the teachers were trained in Yarinacocha, thanks to Anderson. Back then, there was no other way to train teachers; they formed bilingual teachers there, so we all could study in Ticuna for at least initial and elementary education. They did teach us Spanish, and they were very violent. They had the notion of spare the rod and spoil the child."

The Summer Institute of Linguistics, an evangelical protestant organisation, arrived in Peru in the 1950s and partnered with the government to install schools in the Peruvian lowlands. In 1953 reached a Ticuna settlement called Cushillo Cocha and sent some Ticunas to take three-month courses in its facilities of Yarinacocha, to work as bilingual professors upon their return (Stoll 1985). Lisenia's aunt was a bilingual professor, and afterwards, when the universities started to offer the career of bilingual teacher, she studied the same career.

The consolidation of the indigenous movement as a political subject is incipient in the Peruvian side of the cross-border region. Land titling has been a less contentious process, and the first steps towards active political participation at the local level are only being taken. I spoke with the leader of the Federation of Ticuna and Yahua Communities of the Low Amazonas (FECOTYBA), the regional Federation formed in 1998 to agglutinate the demands of the indigenous people. He expressed, "Our most important challenge is to teach the authorities their responsibilities and powers". This seemed an accurate assessment because when I asked Teófilo, the apu of Yahuma-Callaru, his opinion of the efforts to organise higher levels of coordination among the Amazonian natives, he was vehement in his answer, "I know nothing about FECOTYBA. I have heard the name, and people say they work with our neighbouring community of Bellavista, but they have never set foot here in Yahuma. They say they represent us, maybe, but in a veiled way. I know nothing. They never come. They receive money and sign documents, but we are never informed or invited to their meetings."

New forms of local-level political organisation and non-sovereign leadership

In the preceding ethnographic and historical account, I presented the configuration of Ticuna territorialities in the three adjacent countries. Based on the memories of the actors, I described the constitution of the studied localities as the result of the efforts of their first settlers to found nucleated villages and their struggle to reverse the territorial dispossession, economic subordination and political subjugation imposed on them in the context of the consolidation of their respective nation-states. Every country followed different paths to impose internal legal orders under national sovereignty and state rule. Consequently, the Ticuna, organised in a broader indigenous mobilisation, framed according to the national arenas, resulting in different outcomes: a strong but fragmented national movement in Brazil, a solid, nationally articulated organisation in Colombia and subnational regional efforts in Peru.

The formation of settlements, struggles for collective recognition as indigenous communities, and land titling greatly influenced the indigenous societies, reshaping their sociopolitical organisation, culture and identity (see Jackson 1994; Killick 2008; Pacheco de Oliveira 2018). I want to call attention to the reflexive dimension of the process, based on the local level forms of organisation, to show how notions of personal and collective autonomy persist and play an essential role in how political authority is exercised in these new state-recognised indigenous communities.

The Ticuna settlements I described were created as such in the last 50 or so years. In this process, new realities of collective life emerged from the creation of terras indígenas, resguardos, and comunidades

nativas: sociopolitical bodies that congregate numerous households, imposing more intensive forms of communal interactions, and therefore required new forms of political coordination to organise the day-to-day life. The formation of nucleated villages and the respective changes in territorialisation that resulted from the struggles for land also posed the question of a collective project of life in the newly formed communities. The dwellers of these settlements had to figure out how to manage the everyday aspects of co-living.

Nowadays, the community assembly is the maximum instance of decision-making in all three villages. It did not exist before the creation of the localities that changed the type of dwelling from scattered temporal homesteads to circumscribed, permanent villages. Assemblies elect the heads of the villages by direct vote of all adult community members. The chief figure is known by different names: cacique, curaca, and apu[79]. In Peru and Colombia, these traditional authorities have a body of auxiliaries, while in Brazil, it varies depending on the local context. The Ticuna case is a good example of how the so-called traditional political systems result from multiple processes of reformulation and adaptation.

In this final section, I will address how, within this diversity, important shared notions of political authority based on Ticuna principles of autonomy impact the functions of the community chieftaincy. During my fieldwork, whether it is called apu, cacique or curaca, I always got a similar answer when I asked what it is to be a Ticuna chief. In the words of Teófilo, "A chief is that person that works for the community". I will explore the meaning of that sort of statement in the local dynamics of power. This means chiefs are elected not to make decisions in the name of the community but to enact these decisions taken in assembly. I argue these contemporary notions of what is to be a chief bridge to the classical literature of Amazonian societies that describe political authority from a negative perspective — as lacking coercive power (Clastres 2020; Lévi-Strauss 1944) with the new approaches that highlight forms of sociability grounded in notions of relational personhood that embrace difference and independence rather than equivalence of abstract subjects (Buitron & Steinmüller 2020; Walker 2020).

The definition of a political dimension of social life requires a positive conceptualisation that does not rely on the notion of domination (and, ultimately, the use of coercion) to identify the political field. Our focus will turn instead to the production and reproduction of everyday life. Enrique Dussel redefines the realm of politics as "an activity that organises and promotes the production, reproduction, and enhancement of

[79] All three nomenclatures originated outside the Amazonian region, the term cacique is Caribbean, curaca and apu derive from Quechua.

the lives of the members of that community" (Dussel 2008: 14). This convergence of wills towards a common good is in the heart of some of the indigenous definitions of the good life or *Buen Vivir* (Acosta 2015) a plurality of proposals that draw experiences of communitarian life to expand the political imagination beyond Modern notions of development. I propose delineating the communities' political field as the mechanisms in which these decisions are taken and enacted.

Drawing from the work of Terence Turner, David Graeber proposed to analyse social worlds as a project of mutual creation "as something collectively made and remade". The implications are that our values, or ideas of what is ultimately important in life reside in the centre of politics, and these different values have to be negotiated (confronted) to be incorporated into projects of common life and, therefore, the production of the kinds of people that shape the worlds we consider good (Graeber 2013). This is ultimately about social creativity and the shaping of the social world through politics as the sphere of coordinating social action. I propose that these conceptions of society and politics might be better understood if we shift focus from ideas of sovereignty to the notions of autonomy, from power conceived as potestas to power as potentia.

This displacement is based on the antagonistic definition of power inspired by Spinoza, reintroduced in modern analysis to think outside the state as the centre of politics. John Holloway defines that power is, in its origins, capacity-to-do: potentia. It is the fundamental dimension of sociability, expressed as possibility, to-be-able, can-ness that enables the social flow of doing. Breaking that social flow by separating decision-making and execution displaces power dynamics from power-to into its opposite: power-over. The institution of command breaks the collective "we" into those who command and those who obey, the ruler from the ruled (2002).

The exercise of domination through the conversion of power-to into power-over is inherent in separating the done from the doing. Grounding the analysis of social life, these two dimensions of power, potentia (power-to) and potestas (power-over), allow us to understand the dynamics of social institutions in which the leader does not hold sovereign power concerning the rest of the collective[80]. The ultimate power to make political decisions is not in the hands of the chief. It resides in the collectivity, in this case, the assembly. This will help us analyse how decision-making does not depend on a centralised rule.

[80] This approach opens the possibility to reflect on a multiplicity of practices and notions of democracy in different societies that might illustrate different democratic methods to designate people in office, such as selection by sortition (Shah 2021) or systems of compulsory service to the community (Alvarado 2015).

Before continuing, I would like to clarify that these political institutions are not exclusive to small-scale societies or small populations and can perfectly coexist with other forms of political organisation. Hardt and Negri (2017) propose that sovereignty does not define the political field and that non-sovereign forms of organisation and institutions exist and can be powerful and lasting. They criticise the modern conceptions of democracy based on the notion of sovereignty (including many revolutionary conceptions that confuse it with independence and self-determination). According to them, the sovereign power always entails a relationship of domination, the existence of a transcendent power above and outside the social life[81].

In the communities where I conducted fieldwork, the chief's primary responsibility is to summon the people to an assembly whenever an important decision is made. Using loudspeakers to inform of the date and time of the meeting, ensuring the communal room is clean and properly arranged, and making sure the respective record of the meeting is taken; all these tasks that facilitate the deliberation are regarded as a demonstration of good leadership. All the communities had a common room for the assembly, and there were numerous initiatives to convert these big rooms into malocas, originally houses for extended family dwellings, but now redefined as meeting places for communal deliberations.

Organising common work is the other essential dimension of exerting the chief's authority. Named uajurí in Brazil, minga in Colombia and *trabajo comunitario* in Peru, it is regarded as a central responsibility of the head of the community. In chapter three, I have addressed the economic importance of collective work, but I want to draw attention to its political dimension and centrality for this positive notion of power[82].

Teófilo, the apu of Yahuma-Callaru, organised a day of communal work every week. One person from each family is required to participate. Every time, Teófilo rushed to be the first to arrive at the meeting point and was usually the last to leave. When we spoke about politics in the community, he usually referred to the organisation of these weekly communal workdays. He was always worried about the number of assistants and regarded the high participation as a sign of good leadership. He constantly compared

[81] Graeber and Wengrow make a compelling argument about pre-Columbian American policies that were governed by democratic authorities organized around assemblies, usually overlooked by historians and archaeologists precisely by the emphasis in sovereign figures of power and rule (2021)

[82] Evan Killick describes this dimension of leadership as the capacity to summon large-scale groups of people cooperating towards a common goal among the Ashéninka in Peru (2007).

himself to the previous apus, whose invitations to participate were constantly turned down by many community members. When I asked what would happen to people who did not attend, he explained that they should pay a penalty, do some chores or give some money. When asked how he could enforce these penalties, he confessed the only way — apart from exhortations — was to turn to the police stationed outside the community. He immediately discarded this possibility, arguing it would be considered an unnecessary scalation of an internal issue, "after all — he concluded — no one can force the other to do anything if that is their thinking."

In Arara, this radical refusal to impose or force actions on the rest of the inhabitants was also considered common sense. Rusben, the curaca, frequently organised communal work, but rather than a weekly calendar, he focused on punctual activities depending on the community's necessities. He only demanded help from the directly involved: to build a bridge, he invited only the nearby households to put an electric post, only summoned the benefited neighbourhood. It was only in organising the village celebrations that everyone was invited. He also led the example of being the first to work, just like Teófilo. He excelled in making the chores more enjoyable: playing music in the loudspeakers and providing beverages such as water, juices and sometimes alcoholic drinks.

Lauro Sodré, on the other hand, was an example of the dynamics generated by the weakening of the chief's ability to summon the will of the community's inhabitants. As I explained, two people were claiming to be the cacique of the community, neither of which could use their position as cacique to call either for a community assembly or a communal workday. They could only summon some families close to them; therefore, their claimed position as head of the community was merely nominal[83]. This was a reflection of an authority that is not openly contested but ignored and constantly criticised by its pretensions to direct a collectivity that has not granted the mandate to do it.

The curaca, the cacique and the apu are also liaisons with the state structure and some government instances, but they cannot force any community member to act in specific ways. When more severe conflicts emerge, they are taken to external state authorities, such as the police. This happened in Arara with a stabbing case, in Lauro Sodré with a witchcraft denouncement derived to gunpoint threats and in Yahuma-Callaru with some *comuneros* extracting wood from the forest for selling without authorisation.

[83] It does not mean that the charge was meaningless to them. Despite being ignored by the members of the community, they sought recognition from the state representatives, which would invest them with a certain degree of authority outside the community.

A strong sense of personal and collective autonomy characterises the sociality of many South American lowland societies, and they reject the possibility of investing the head of the community with the sort of power that could allow him to subject any community member to their command.

This autonomy is cultivated since childhood in all areas of life, and parents cultivate a strong sense of independence. Policarpa's daughter, Danexi, a girl eight years old, often decided she would not attend school. To my surprise, her mother tried to convince her but never forced her to attend. To Policarpa's distress, Danexi ultimately failed the year. Even in these circumstances, neither I nor the kid's teacher could convince her to take severe measures. Young people are also expected to make decisions under their own responsibility. An example, perhaps more tragic, occurred when a 16-year-old girl tried to commit suicide, surviving the attempt. I spoke to the heartbroken father about prevention, but he insisted he could do nothing to change her daughter's mind if she had already decided to take her own life. Another example of these notions of self-determination in adult life is the stubborn rejection of work under the command of other community members, which as I explained in chapter three, contributes to explaining the absence of salaried labour among the ticuna.

Just as the individuals refuse to yield their political autonomy to any community chief, they retain their right to decide and do their own will accordingly. Equally, most of the region's indigenous communities articulated at higher levels — regional or national — constantly struggle to preserve their autonomy from these new instances of indigenous authority. They support and participate in the initiatives they collectively agree with in the assembly, but more than once, I witnessed opposition to decisions that were not consulted with them. I want to conclude that shifting our attention towards a positive definition of power, based on the capacity to guide collective efforts toward common goals, can better perceive the local-level political dynamics of societies that infuse values of self-sufficiency and political autonomy in the practices that guide their collective life.

Chapter Five. Tradition and the production of people, society, and the world

This chapter is an ethnographic exploration of the woreküchiga, a coming-of-age ritual for young girls after their first menstruation. The Ticuna regard this celebration as their most significant cultural practice, despite the fact that nowadays it is only observed in a few villages. The celebration of the woreküchiga has been demonised and opposed by many religious, economic, and political powers of the encompassing national societies of the border region. Nonetheless, some Ticuna villages still practice the ritual, and many others consider it an essential element of their identity. In this last chapter, I analyse how its realisation constitutes an affirmation of Ticuna worldview that allows them to make sense of their reality and act upon it.

My approach follows Terence Turner's efforts to apply Marxist analysis beyond the narrow margins of economic theory. Based on extensive ethnographic work among the Kayapo people of Central Brazil, Turner asserted that the production of material subsistence is intertwined with the production and reproduction of human beings, the family, and other forms of cooperation (Turner 1984). His notion of social production as a totality includes representational schemes constituting cosmologies and stabilising certain values that specific societies see as central to reproducing their society (Turner 2008). I propose that an analysis of the woreküchiga and the values it brings forth reveals Ticuna understandings on the nature of persons, society and, ultimately, the world. I analyse how these ontological claims contrast with the claims of the nation states and capitalist societies that subsume their territories, allowing the Ticuna to maintain a collective identity and a sense of social and political unity across national borders[84].

The uneven influence of religious organisations in the region has impacted Ticuna cultural practices in the three countries to different degrees. As part of the Peruvian assimilationist policies, the Summer Institute of Linguistics intervention procured the integration of the Ticuna population into national culture by abandoning their ritual practices. The SIL promoted conversion to Evangelic Protestantism, which prohibits the practice of any traditional ceremonies and rituals considered contrary to Christian values. As a result, only a few Ticuna communities located in Peru still celebrate the woreküchiga (Junyi 2019). In

[84] David Graeber (2013, 2015) claims that contradictory definitions of the world and competing claims of value to define reality are often central in political disputes, which has been proven key to understanding contemporary indigenous cosmopolitics (Cepek 2016; De la Cadena 2010).

Yahuma-Callaru, a community greatly influenced by evangelism, people no longer celebrate the coming-of-age ritual. Even secular celebrations, such as the anniversary of the community, are characterized by a rejection of drinking alcohol and dancing.

In Brazil, many communities abandoned the woreküchiga celebrations after the expansion in 1970 of a messianic cult known as Irmandade da Santa Cruz — the Saint Cross Brotherhood — that similarly prohibited smoking, drinking, dancing and any other celebration considered pagan. The cult, inspired by a heterodox interpretation of the bible, was supported by the economic elites that reinforced their control over the population by building chapels next to the barracões, allowing the patrões to act as the directors of the brotherhoods. The Brazilian indigenist agency, FUNAI, also supported the Irmandade, as they considered it a civilising influence that would help modernise the Ticuna population (Pacheco de Oliveira 2015). In Lauro Sodré, most of the population participated in the religious movement; nowadays, there is also a protestant presence. Due to the influence of these religious organisations, the village has not hosted a woreküchiga celebration for many years.

In Colombia, Catholic orders acted prominently as state agents in charge of education, and they rejected many cultural elements of the Ticuna people, such as language and ritual practices. The Catholic Church discouraged the practice of woreküchiga but did not explicitly prohibit it. Therefore, the celebration persisted in various villages. This chapter describes one of the celebrations I witnessed during my fieldwork in Arara. Nonetheless, even when a Ticuna village does not celebrate the ritual, it is still linked to those communities that do, as many people travel to attend these festivities and share the beliefs that incarnate. For example, people from Yahuma-Callaru and Lauro Sodré attended the celebrations in Arara and discussed with me the meaning of many aspects of the ritual.

It is not only religious institutions that have promoted the disappearance of such traditions. For many years, the Ticuna and other ethnic groups' manifestations of culture have been considered superstitious and backwards by their respective national societies. Discrimination against Ticuna people preserving their own culture (language, beliefs, celebrations, mythology) permeated regional societies, urging native people to embrace the national hegemonic culture. Even today, when the constitutions of all three countries uphold multiculturalism as state policy, people in the tri-border commonly use the terms ‘civilised’ and ‘indigenous’ as opposites to describe the region's population. In recent years, the indigenous movements and their vindication of native cultures have countered these tendencies, and some segments of the borderland population now actively embrace indigenous culture.

During my fieldwork, I constantly asked my interlocutors why this coming-of-age celebration was important. I received varied answers, but they all underlined some positive effects: casting protection over the young girls' bodies, taming reproductive forces, bringing abundance in fishing and hunting, and expanding the territory. Ticuna people agree that it is desirable to continue this tradition for its capacity to produce well-being for young women, their families, the community, and the world. It is also a way to cast protection against the perils of the universe. Policarpa explained that the Ticuna tradition originated in the teachings of Yoi, the mythical hero that fished Ticuna people. The ways the Ticuna live in harmony with other humans and non-humans are revealed through stories embedded in this celebration. The woreküchiga is a ritual space where many of these elements are socialised through performances and chants, or through stories told by the elders.

I was told that the ritual was created when the universe was still in formation, and its celebration regenerates the order of the universe. In that sense, the woreküchiga deals ultimately with the reproduction and continuity of life. I was interested in this ritual because it allowed me to have meaningful conversations with my interlocutors about the human and non-human forces that shape their world, the ways they can be influenced, and how to avoid perils and achieve a good, harmonious life.

The woreküchiga I attended was celebrated in Arara and lasted three days, from December 15th to 17th, 2017. Its realisation involved ritual actions aimed to act upon the world at different levels: on the body, to introduce the young women to adult life, manage their reproductive capacities, and protect them from the perils of other non-human beings; on the classificatory system, to reinforce a sense of belonging to a clan and the exogamic moieties of the community, and to reaffirm marriage prescriptions and prohibitions; and finally, on the territory, to expand the world and attract abundance, as well to strengthen relationships with other Ticuna communities.

Ticuna social structure is organised around belonging to a patrilineal clan that is grouped into two exogamic moieties — beings with feathers and beings without feathers. Marriages are organised around the prohibition of marrying a person of the same moiety. Interethnic marriages are common. If one of the partners belongs to another indigenous group, they already have a clan designation within their respective ethnic group, which is recognised by the Ticuna and subject to the same rule for exogamic moieties. In the case of mestizos, they are assigned a clan, usually represented by a cow — an animal that is not native to the region. The cow clan is the only exception to the exogamic moieties, as they can marry people belonging to both feather and non-feather moieties. The exogamic moieties system is a rule observed in all three field sites, even though the woreküchiga is only celebrated in Arara. The absence of the ritual

does not entail the rejection of the conceptions that sustain it, just a reluctance to continue with that particular form cultural expression.

Formalising a marriage is considered desirable, but the Ticuna usually get together with their partners and cohabit for an extended time before officially marrying. Divorces are common and do not have a negative connotation, as a separation is preferred over a conflictive union. In this regard, Ticuna women have relatively more decision-making power than other women in most South American societies, which is rooted in the profound sense of personal autonomy the Ticuna uphold. Many of these ritualistic actions addressed over the young girl's body are precisely meant to avoid early pregnancy, as it is usual to start a sexual life at a young age, and mothers do not want their daughters to bear the responsibility of a child too early in their lives[85].

Previous studies of woreküchiga have analysed the celebration of the ritual in a number of communities in the tri-border region: Belaunde (2016) in Peru, Ramos Valenzuela (2010) in Colombia and Matarezio (2015) in Brazil are among the most complete descriptions. From this body of literature, we can conclude that though there are minor variations on the ritual, the structure and the meanings attributed to woreküchiga by the people celebrating it are the same across national borders. João Bento (2017) conducted comparative research in communities located in the three different national territories, revealing the coincidences in the attributed meanings of the celebration across the national borders.

The ritual is based on numerous myths and stories that circulate in the communities thanks to oral tradition. Some publications have collected numerous versions of the stories (Camacho 1995; Chetanükü et al. 2016; Cruz et al. 2022; Gruber 1997). Equally relevant are accounts of Ticuna cosmology that refer to the importance of this celebration (Goulard 2015; Santos Angarita 2013). I focus on the importance of the celebration as an intervention in the world that contests the limits established by the states (territorial borders and administrative orders) and the capitalist economy (commodification of life), proposing an alternative order based on the Ticuna's shared culture.

[85] Contraceptives are available, and their use is openly discussed. Policarpa talked on several occasions with her youngest son of 17 and his girlfriend, urging them to attend the local clinic and ask for a hormonal implant.

I delve into how this ritual puts Ticuna notions of personhood, social structure, and the world[86] at the centre of collective action. Along with these celebrations, there are actions directed to collectively produce bodies, reproduce the clan structure, and expand territory. I will focus on these elements as Ticuna ways of thinking and acting that seek to transcend a reality where limits and boundaries are constantly produced.

I discuss how these Ticuna conceptions overlap and coexist with the realities instituted by the national borderlines, the economic frontier, and the sociocultural boundaries to illustrate the cross-border reality in which Ticuna people live. The woreküchiga ritual promotes cross-border visits and strengthens a network of transnational links based on kinship, challenging the territorial division of countries. Contrary to the tendency to commodify social life promoted by capitalistic relations, the ritual reveals spheres of existence where reciprocity reigns (exchanges with the spirits, mutual aid to organise the celebration). Finally, the ritual highlights that Ticuna ethnic identity is based on shared values and notions of what it means to be Ticuna.

Woreküchiga in Arara, Colombia

The sound of drums confirmed what everyone in Arara had known for many weeks: a coming of age ritual was about to take place. Families carry out this festivity on the occasion of the first menstrual cycle of every young woman in the community. It is also known as the Festa da moça nova (young girl celebration) in Portuguese, or Pelazón (hair plucking) in Spanish. Menarche marks a personal and collective period of danger that has to be countered by enacting a series of activities related to the production and reproduction of the social world of the communities.

Commonly, these rituals involve an extensive kinship network. The households where a young girl has experienced menarche reach out to their extended families for help and organise a large celebration that sometimes includes other girls of the same cohort. During the celebration, most community members get involved.

Word travels fast among the communities, and invitations are passed on from mouth to mouth (and nowadays increasingly via social media). Ticuna communities have a vivid social life and participate in a

[86] In a conference that greatly influenced Amazonian anthropology, Seeger, Da Matta, and Viveiros de Castro (2019) postulated that in order to understand lowland South American societies, special attention has to be paid to the interlinked notions these societies have about the person, social organisation and cosmology.

circuit of celebrations that encourage a series of social visits between inhabitants of the tri-border region regardless of the political borders and national identities that seek to divide them. The central elements of the woreküchiga celebration include dances, masquerades, singing, and sharing food and beverages during a three-day festival to which everyone is invited.

During my fieldwork, I attended several woreküchiga[87]. I was particularly close to those who organised the one celebrated in December 2017, given that Policarpa, my host in Arara, was involved. Her niece went through this ritual when I was living at her house. Her daughter Danexi, eight years old, also participated in a series of rituals known as *wepachinüe bue* — usually performed alongside the woreküchiga — aimed at protecting young children from the perils of the world. These circumstances allowed me to observe firsthand the numerous activities the families undertake to organise the celebration.

After a young girl experiences her first menstrual cycle, her parents confine her to an isolated part of the house where she can only have contact with the female members of the family. This period of reclusion protects her from spirits of the forest that may be attracted by her odour and would try to take her. This period of reclusion lasts until the celebration takes place. The confinement time tends to vary, usually between a couple of weeks and up to several months. During the three-day celebration, the young girl — *worekü* — is smeared with different plants, bathed in the river, and her hair is cut to remove her odour and protect her from the spirits. According to Policarpa, the principal consideration for the family of the young women is to collect enough food and drink to host the hundreds of attendants expected at the celebration. Unlike other celebrations in the community, woreküchiga is sponsored by the young girls' families and requires enormous amounts of work.

Families cultivate manioc gardens in preparation for when one of their daughters approaches the age of menarche. Policarpa told me about her own experience when she was a young girl. Her father was prepared when she had her first period, and her confinement only lasted one week. Other families require more time and decide to seclude their daughters for months. Nowadays, state institutions like schools pose a challenge, as the absence of students for more than a week could cause them to fail the year, and

[87] I attended rituals in the Colombian villages of Arara and Nazareth and in the Brazilian village of São Domingo. I was invited to one in the Peruvian village of San Juan de Barranco but could not attend. The celebrations to which I was invited are testimony of the vitality of the celebration and its cross-border reach to invite transnational visitors

I came across many examples of girls who did. The cash economy also influences these decisions. People can now buy food for the celebration in the city's markets, although wild game meat is still considered irreplaceable to reward people who help the family with the celebration.

The fathers of the young girls and the children undergoing the rituals are considered the "owners" of the celebration[88]. Their responsibility is to provide all the elements necessary for the festivity, but they do not engage directly in the tasks and organisation. They ask someone, usually the father's brother and sister, to take charge of these responsibilities. The person in charge is also called *copero* or *padrino*, and plays a significant role in the rituals. The coperos must belong to the same clan moiety as the young girl. The same criteria apply to the children's rituals. Danexi belongs to the cow clan (the clan assigned to any non-indigenous person), and as her paternal uncles were not in town for the celebration, Policarpa asked me to play the role of padrino alongside Danexi's paternal aunt.

When I arrived in Arara, Policarpa's niece –otherwise fondly known as "Chiquita"– had been confined in her house for a month. She had been observing a special diet low in salt and sugar, eating only certain scaled fish. Her mother, Martha, was teaching her to knit and advising her on adulthood. Another four young girls were also in confinement waiting for the same ritual, and their parents were all considered owners of the celebration. Also, six children were going through a different body painting ritual, and their parents were considered owners of the celebration as well, although to a lesser degree. With anticipation, every household prepared for the event and mobilised an extended network of collaborators, propelling the village into a frenzy.

Policarpa told me the story of the first people who celebrated the woreküchiga, who, as a result, achieved immortality: "They became immortal in a celebration in which they were offered manioc beer. Some people refused to drink because they were told the beverage was full of worms, but those who drank the beer elevated to the sky. They now live in Eware, a place where they never grow old. They are like cockroaches. When their bodies decay, they grow new ones. The enchanted people living there are invisible, but you can hear them talking and even hear the sound of their animals, such as dogs and

[88] An extense literature about ownership in the Amazonian region exists. Generally, ownership is considered a key form of relationship between humans, non-humans and objects. Fausto (2008) reveals that equivalents of the term “owner” or “master” appear in Amazonian societies in many contexts but usually to describe an assymetrial relation that implies control and care, as well as a responsibility for the well-being and continuity of the cosmological order. For the Ticuna, the “owners” of the celebration are responsible for feeding the attendants and ensuring the success of the celebration.

chickens. The people that refused to drink manioc beer are our ancestors. That is why we grow old and die". The idea of continuity of life is constantly evoked in many parts of the ritual. As I explain in the following sections, there are references to reproduction on many levels for many reasons: the fertility of young women, the continuation of the clan structure, and the perpetuation of the Ticuna world.

Preparations

The ethnographic account of the days leading up to the celebration is necessary because it reveals the considerable amount of work that the families devote to a successful festivity. Numerous collaboration networks are set in motion during the arrangements conducing to the woreküchiga. On the one hand, the kin-based solidarity in the village is summoned to contribute to the organization; on the other hand, more extensive social ties outside the community and the national borders are called upon to attend the celebration. Also, non-human actors are notified through numerous interactions between the human owners of the celebration and the spiritual owners of the jungle´s creatures to acquire food and raw materials necessary for the ceremony.

The main food offered during the celebration is wild game meat. It is used to feed the attendants and to reward people who craft costumes and wear them during the woreküchiga[89]. Policarpa talked with family and friends known for their hunting skills and asked them to help her. She provided them with shells for their rifles and asked them to capture as many animals as they could.

A few days later, one of her nephews suddenly appeared, yelling, "Hurry up, Policarpa! Come fast to the docks! My brother ran into a pack of wild pigs! He killed four of them; come and see!". The excitement took over all members of the family. Policarpa, her husband Augusto and I hurried to see the dead animals. We ran to the dock, took a boat to cross the Arara stream and joined the hunter, resting proudly with the pigs on his feet. He had already gutted the animals by the time we arrived. We all gathered around, and he offered us half of the hunt. Policarpa ordered, "You take one, Arturo, the biggest and the fattest; me and Augusto will take the other to the canoe".

It was a joyful procession. Kids ran around us screaming and poking the corpses of the pigs with sticks. The adults came to the windows and doors of their houses to watch us pass by. When we arrived at the

[89] The smoked game meat is considered a gift in exchange for the crafting of the masquerades. No other form of payment is considered acceptable. Money is excluded in these type of exchanges (see chapter three). Frozen chicken, adquired at the market, might be acceptable to reward minor help, but not to reward the masquerades.

house, Policarpa's sister was waiting for us. She put banana leaves on the wooden floor and prepared the machetes and knives for her brother to cut the prey. The animal was quickly divided into six pieces. Each of the pieces was simmered in hot water to remove the hairs. Family and neighbours arrived to help, or at least give their own opinions on how every task should be performed.

Each part of the animal was cooked on an open fire and then placed over the embers, where they remained for days, slowly smoking and drying. Over the following days, other animals were brought to Policarpa's house, and the meat went through the same cooking and smoking process for preservation: armadillos, monkeys, lowland pacas, tortoises, etc. All these creatures ended up hanging over the smoking ashes outside our house. "We have to collect as many meat pieces as we can," she explained, "because we have to use them to reward the people masquerading for the celebration. I have already spoken with my uncle, brother, and sister's husband. They all agreed to make beautiful costumes and dance during the ceremony". When I asked the total number of people she had asked to wear costumes, Policarpa was evasive, "That is a secret, you will see".

While the pigs were being butchered, people gathered and spoke about the owners of the forest creatures. They explained to me the Ticuna belief in the existence of the Curupira, a creature that owns all the animals of the forest and the Madremonte, another being that owns all the jungle plants. These owners, powerful beings that control and care for all the living creatures, also referred to as "parents", have a relationship of mastery and nurture with the jungle's creatures. They care for and protect their creatures and allow some of them to be consumed by humans. People who have seen the Curupira describe him as a giant, hairy, ape-like creature whose most salient feature is his backward feet. People describe the Madremonte as a small creature the size of a child but with the features of a fully grown person.

Nonetheless, there are many other owners of every species of plant and animal (the owner of wild pigs, the owner of fish, the owner of chambira, etc.). They are considered owners in the same way that a regular person would own livestock in a paddock. They ensure the reproduction of wild creatures and mediate their relationship with humans. The owner allows people to kill their animals as long as they are used to satisfy a necessity, but it gets upset if people waste or misuse the lives of the beings under its protection. Sometimes, the owner can punish people if they abuse the exploitation of plants or animals.

Alcoholic beverages are an considered very important for the woreküchiga. There was constant speculation in the days before the ritual about how much food and drinks the owners of the celebration

would offer the attendants. One week before the ritual started, Policarpa's brother-in-law, Plinio, invited us to help prepare manioc beer (*chaxü)*, a fermented beverage made of sweet manioc.

The transportation of the manioc, as with all the collective work in the context of the celebration, was always accompanied by the music of two traditional instruments, a tambourine (*tutu*) and a rattle stick (*aru*). The music announced to the people in town and the non-human entities of the world (*üüne*) that the woreküchiga was coming. A group of six people gathered outside Plinio's house and headed towards his garden, where we pulled out the tubers that the family had been growing for this occasion. We filled six sacks of manioc and a couple of baskets.

We all took a sack or a basket to help bring back the manioc, and even the children helped to carry one or two pieces of manioc, "No one should go back to the village empty-handed," said Policarpa. We marched into town and walked around the streets, making sure people got a glimpse of the amount of manioc we would use to prepare the beverages. We finally proceeded to Alejo Angarita's house, the grandfather of one child and two young ladies going through the ritual. We all gathered inside and waited for the indication from the musicians. We put down the manioc when we heard the thump of the rhythm stick upon the ground.

As we rested, we could hear the rattling and drumming sounds of other groups of people walking around town involved in different tasks for the celebration. I asked about the musical accompaniment. Policarpa told me that drums have different functions. They are used to announce the coming celebration. However, they are not just used to establish communication with other humans. Non-human beings living in the jungle (üüne) hear the music and take it as an invitation for them as well. The music also informs Yoi, the mythical hero of the Ticunas, that his people continue the tradition and follow his advice. This keeps him happy.

Relatives of the other girls in confinement arrived from their gardens, bringing more manioc and putting it together in a big pile. Policarpa continued her explanation. She said that playing the instruments at the celebration affects animals living in the jungle. On the one hand, the music keeps dangerous animals away. On the other hand, it attracts edible animals to come close to the village, thus providing an abundance of game.

I was repeatedly told about a past celebration in which a large pack of wild pigs appeared in the village. The animals were so tame and calm that people could hunt them using sticks and machetes. Twelve wild pigs were killed and served that day. The woreküchiga food fest propitiated abundance, as the rest of that

year was great for hunting. The idea of attraction by music is used to describe the force that compels game animals to approach humans, and the abundance is attributed to the favour of the non-human entities that own the animals.

The next day, once all the manioc was collected, the preparation continued. We woke up around three in the morning and gathered at Alejo's house, who was already playing the tambourine. We all sat on the wooden floor and started peeling the manioc with our machetes. The house was buzzing with people helping. The task was organised autonomously. Everyone decided for themselves what to do and for how long they would contribute to the common tasks. People worked, took breaks, napped on the floor or left after a few hours. New volunteers would arrive and take on a job. As daylight approached, some volunteers chopped wood and started a fire outside the house.

At dawn, a group of women started to chop the peeled manioc into smaller pieces. It was later washed and put into big pans of boiling water to cook. This kept going for the entire morning. Batches of sweet manioc were peeled, cut and cooked. Policarpa brought a small basket of sweet potatoes and threw them into the pile of manioc, "This should be enough to give the beer a nice flavour", she explained to me.

After being cooked, all the ingredients were smashed into a pulp with big wooden pestles. The pulp was then drained in artisanal strainers made out of palm fibres. When the cooked casava accumulated, a mechanical grater was brought to speed up the process. The resulting pulp was mixed with a small amount of water in big containers. Some of the eldest women took pieces of cooked cassava, chewed them, and spit them back into the tanks. This is a traditional method to speed up fermentation. By the end of the day, more than a thousand litres of manioc pulp were obtained. We left the manioc resting and fermenting in two enormous water tanks for the rest of the week. Policarpa was very happy with the result. She explained that the fermented manioc paste would double its volume when mixed with water to prepare manioc beer.

Manioc beer was not the only alcoholic beverage prepared for the celebration. Policarpa told me proudly that two months ago she had prepared a couple of containers of *guarapo* by mixing water with big pieces of unrefined sugarcane and leaving it to ferment for a couple of months. Other traditional beverages, not prepared for that occasion, include maize beer (*chicha*) and manioc wine (*pajawaru*). Cachaça — a cheap industrial spirit distilled from sugarcane — is also consumed, but the celebration owner does not provide it, as it is not considered traditional. Nonetheless, it is available in the village's stores, and many who attend the celebration buy it.

During the rest of the week, every night, Policarpa would visit her sister's house to prepare the rest of the artefacts for the celebration. Her niece, one of the newly menstruating girls –or worekü– was confined at her house, so I could not join them. It depends entirely on the family for how long young women are secluded. I always heard references to the "old days" when the isolation would extend for many months.

There are practical considerations nowadays that influence the duration of the seclusion. For example, many parents are unwilling to let their daughter fail the entire school grade because they could not attend, so with the cooperation of the professors, arrangements are made to ensure the girls keep doing their lessons from home. Usually, friends bring homework for them to do. Nevertheless, the teachers only allow them to be absent for a week or two without significantly affecting their grades[90].

Another factor that has reduced the time people have to wait to meet the required amount of food and drink for the celebration is the possibility of buying significant amounts of food from the marketplaces in the cities. The cash economy allows people like Policarpa, with access to money and credit, to obtain enough food at short notice. Nevertheless, industrialised food such as frozen chicken or bags of rice is considered less valuable as a reward, while crafted products such as smoked meat, farinha, woven bags and beer manioc are highly appreciated and considered more appropriate for the celebration.

According to Policarpa, "If you do not organise a celebration for your daughters, they will suffer Yoi's punishments. They will hear voices and see spirits while they walk alone in the forest. Painting the girl's body with the extract of plants, such as anatto and genip, gives off an odour that protects the women until they get married. The protection takes the form of an invisible garment of protection. When they die, Yoi will see them clothed[91]".

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[90] Peter Gow (2001) analyses *kigimawlo*, a girl´s initiation ritual among the Piro of Peru. He links the abandonment of the ritual in the decade of 1980 to the appearing of the celebrations of the *Comunidad Nativa*. He proposes that this could be interpreted as a transformation in the schemes of action of Piro society that would ultimately address the same dimensions of life in the new festivals: to have a good time and drunkenness as forms of establishing contact with other humans. In the Ticuna case, although there are other festivities, all of them very important to maintain a circuit of visits with people outside the community (see chapter two), the woreküchiga is linked to the ordering principles of the Ticuna conception of the world.

[91] Months later, during my fieldwork in Lauro Sodré, I found out that Deborah — Cristina´s sister — had not gone through the ceremony. When Deborah was young and had her first menstrual cycle, she got scared and ran from her house and hid in the jungle. When she returned home, it was considered too late for her to receive the protection ritual. Deborah –then 40 years old– is considered by the community as someone who is prone to see and hear the different immortals that inhabit the world.

A considerable amount of time is allocated by the families to manufacture ornaments that the young girls use during the ceremony. Policarpa visited her sisters over the following days to make a feathered headdress and shells-and-feather necklace for Danexi. She had already gathered the material for the artefacts the week before. According to Policarpa, parrot feathers can be obtained in the surroundings of Arara, but water duck and macaw feathers are very difficult to come by, so she had to get them from a friend that lives in Peru.

On Thursday morning, we met at the worekü's house and prepared to collect the genip fruit. As Danexi's padrino, I was asked to fill one basket of genip fruits. Our group of six people walked towards the river, accompanied by the sound of the tambourine and the rattle stick. These instruments accompany the tasks and help to coordinate the work, marking with thumps on the ground the key moments to perform some of the actions.

We took a canoe and paddled half an hour towards Martha's — Policarpa's sister — garden, where a group of genip trees were located. We walked for a while and found a tall tree. We checked the ground in case any ripe fruits were on the floor. We picked up a few and tried them. Genip is not usually eaten raw due to its pungent flavour, but it is used to prepare infusions to treat intestinal diseases.

We cleared the ground with our machetes. Martha's son climbed the tree and cut the branches laden with fruit. Below, covered in the falling twigs and enjoying the bitter taste of the ripe fruits, we waited to pick up the fallen genip. I was advised to leave the stem to tie the fruit together afterwards. We filled all of our baskets. Before returning to the village, we collected lulo and inga fruits, both in season. "You guys behave just like monkeys", complained Martha's husband, Plinio, "We still have to collect many other materials for the celebration tomorrow".

On our way back, we gathered other materials, such as sticks from the yellow mombin tree to craft more rattle sticks; we also carried a long stick to build a support for the shell of the Yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle — known as *tracajá* or *taricaya* — used as a percussion instrument. When we arrived back at the village with our baskets filled, we walked in a row, accompanied by the drums and rattle stick music. We headed to Plinio's house, and at the sound of a thump of the rhythm stick, we simultaneously put all the materials down in the backyard.

After a rest and some refreshments, we continued our task. We headed towards a bamboo grove just outside the village. We walked into dense growth and selected several bamboo stems to craft horns. The choice was not just based on size and strength; we picked the ones containing water inside their hollow

sections. The reasoning was that it would play an important role the next day in the ceremony, "It will be fun", said Plinio. We carried the bamboo back to the house, stored it with the rest of the materials, and covered everything with leaves.

We were done for the day. We rested while listening to the drumming and rattling of other groups collecting materials for their daughters' rituals. All the groups stored the materials provisionally in their houses (genip fruits, chambira palm stems, trunks of the naichi tree for the barkcloth).

At night, we moved all the materials to the health post, next to the communal hall, and placed them under a yellow mombin tree. Danexi's aunt and I were responsible for transporting the genip fruit. We kept a basket for the ceremony and took the rest to invite people to the woreküchiga. That night, small groups of people playing the tambourine headed to the houses to invite them to join us in the celebration. We marched about the streets shouting, inviting people to come outside, and when they did, we handed them some genip fruits tied by the stem.

Our group mainly visited houses in Campo Alegre, a part of the village that did not have electricity. We marched in the dark, making a noise. People came to their doors and jokingly faked surprise when receiving the genip. "What is this for?" People asked, "Do you want me to eat this?" But the copero invited them on behalf of the owner to attend the communal hall the next day at three in the morning. We also told them to use the genip we gave them to paint their faces with their clan's motifs. Some pretended not to know their clan or argued that they did not have a clan for the amusement of the people present. Not having a clan is absurd under the Ticuna logic. Everyone has one, even the mestizo people. This form of classification organises the world and puts people into a legible category.

The announcement of and invitations to the celebration were also made by other means. Alejo — Policarpa's father — crafted a big trumpet out of the bark of a tree. This instrument is called *iburi*. Without any help, he played it a few times during the evening, making sure people would not see him. He told me that the sound could be heard in the nearby communities, and by the beings that inhabit the jungle – he was making sure they all attended the celebration. After a few loud blows, he took the trumpet away and placed it in a nearby ravine under the water. The water would preserve the bark and the integrity of the musical instrument.

That night, when we finally stopped to rest, four boxes of frozen chicken arrived at Policarpa's house. We were all set: we had gathered the materials necessary to craft the musical instruments, all the elements

to perform the rituals on the bodies of the young girls and children, and the food and drink to share with all the guests, humans and non-humans that might attend the ceremony.

Day one of the celebration: Painting the children

The start of the celebration inaugurates a space in the public sphere for collective action in which numerous performances take place. These ritual performances are fundamentally organised around clan belonging — the classificatory rules that categorise humans into opposite moieties that assume complementary roles during the celebration. The ceremonial roles, the types of chants, musical instruments, and dances that people perform depend on the moiety to which they belong, which puts the social structure of ticuna society at the centre of the celebration.

In Arara, the woreküchiga ritual usually lasts three days, starting on a Friday and concluding on a Sunday. Holding the celebration over the weekend fits with the everyday activities organised around workdays, school, and the markets in the city. The woreküchiga is often used as an occasion to perform another ritual — wepachinüe bue — focused on young male and female children from 2 to 8 years old. They are painted with genip juice and thus protected during this stage of development against the world's perils. This was the ritual Policarpa was organising for Danexi. On the first day of the celebration, the children and their families were at the centre of the public performances. In the first ritual, the children's ear lobes are pierced if they are girls, and the boys are adorned with a tail made of yanchama fibres.

At three in the morning, we heard the drums. We woke Danexi and met with her other relatives at Martha's house. The first day is considered a celebration for the children; therefore, my responsibilities as Danexi's padrino officially commenced. I was assigned a rattle stick during the ceremony and was asked to play it (by rattling and stomping). All the other children were being prepared for the ritual. Danexi's mom and aunt tied two small chambira fibre bracelets to her leg and ankle. After finishing, we picked up some graters, bowls, two buckets of manioc beer, and a couple of gourds and marched, accompanied by music, to the communal hall.

We stopped at the health post and grabbed the materials we had hidden the day before under the yellow mombin three. We marched in a row towards the hall. Inside, we walked in circles counterclockwise until a sonorous stomp indicated that we should put all the materials down at the centre of the room. We arranged the materials in different spots across the hall: the genip fruit, the buckets of manioc beer, the *naichi* trunks, the bamboo stems, the shell of a yellow-spotted Amazon turtle, and the moriche palm sprouts.

A medicine man blew tobacco smoke over the materials. He prepared a long cigar and lit it. Then he took a few puffs, approached the genip fruit laid on the floor, kneeled down and blew smoke over his open, extended hands. He quickly closed his hands, trapping part of the smoke, and then he passed his hands over his flexed legs, simulating tying invisible knots. Afterwards, he repeated the smoke blowing and catching; he waved some of the smoke over the genip fruit, doing the same with the naichi trunks and the bamboo. Finally, he called the six girls and the boy and repeated the smoke blowing and tying knot gestures over their faces.

Afterwards, a period of frenzied activity began. People formed small groups and simultaneously prepared the materials for the ceremony. Some people focused on preparing the musical instruments: the bamboo horns (*coiri*) and the turtleshell drum (*tori*). Other groups prepared the ornaments and substances to perform the ritual over the children's bodies: genip juice, naichi barkcloth, and the moriche leaf scarfs.

Some participants took a saw and cut the bamboo stems on one side of the room, carefully collecting the water inside them in a gourd. The wider pieces were used to manufacture bamboo horns, puncturing a small hole at one end to form a mouthpiece and opening the other end for the amplified sound to escape. There are two types of bamboo horns: the male horn, with a serrated zigzag end, resembling the mouth and teeth of the peccary, and the female horn, without the zigzag pattern, thus without teeth. According to Policarpa, these instruments can only be played by the people belonging to a clan from the non-feathered moiety. A few panpipes were also crafted with thinner pieces of bamboo.

Another group prepared the turtleshell drum on the other side of the room. They cleaned and adorned the shell using annatto paste and stuck feathers to it. Then they attached it to a long stick so two people could carry it, putting each end over their shoulder, and then beating the shell rhythmically with a wood stick. Policarpa told me that only people whose clan belongs to the feather moiety can play this musical instrument. Afterwards, this instrument was raised to the ceiling using ropes. It was kept there when it was not being played during the festivity.

Meanwhile, other people prepared the ornaments for the children. A couple of people extracted the leaves from the moriche palm sprouts. This was done by slamming the sprout against the floor, causing the separation of the leaves. The long, flexible leaves are then used to craft an ornament similar to a scarf. Two sets of leaves are tied together by their ends, forming a long open garland. The moriche palm ornaments are distributed among the attendants to be worn around the neck, with the leaves falling on the back.

Some volunteers extracted the genip fruit juice to paint the children's bodies. They started by cutting and shredding the genip fruits using a metal grater. Afterwards, they took the genip and squeezed all the juice out of the zest. The juice was collected in a vessel and reserved for later. They also saved some of the stems of the fruit to use as brushes to draw designs on the children's and guests' faces.

Finally, the padrinos were in charge of preparing the barkcloth piece. We took the naichi trunk and started hitting the bark using a wooden baton with a sharp edge to separate it from the trunk. This operation is extremely delicate. It is crucial to perform it carefully enough not to break the bark, maintaining it in just one piece. This is achieved by starting at the top of the trunk and slowly hitting all the way down the pole. People take turns to help. The peeling must be slow-paced and careful. This was the last task to be completed.

While all the groups were working, the copero of the celebration offered manioc beer to the participants. The tambourines and rattle batons were played continuously. After all the groups finished their work, they stood by, waiting for the naichi to be ready. The padrinos took the naichi, still hanging by a thread to the trunk, and stood facing the hall entrance. They pulled it at the sound of the rattle stick thumping on the floor exclaiming "Yeee!". There was still a thin peel attached to the resulting barkcloth. It was carefully peeled away. A couple of strings of barkcloth were detached and tied around the heads of the padrinos; another strip was used to tie the children's hair.

Afterwards, the bamboo horns were placed at the entrance. A gourd containing the water extracted from the bamboo stems was placed there next. The healer blew tobacco smoke over the instruments, and an imitation game commenced. We were asked to take turns and mimic an animal of our preference. People put all their effort and imagination into portraying the behaviour of monkeys, wild pigs, tapirs, armadillos, and other wild animals. After circling the instruments and inciting laughter from the public, we all drank from the gourd containing the bamboo water. Policarpa told me this is made to "open the way" for the animals and bring abundant game to the village[92]. Afterwards, the padrinos handed the bamboo horns to the participants, and everyone took a turn playing them.

[92] Ramos Valenzuela (2010) describes this practice as the imitation of a “salado” –a place where animals drink water in the jungle. He describes how at the end of the scene, people pretend to shoot the person imitating the animal. I participated in three different woreküchiga and never saw this part of the representation, but there is a great degree of variation in every celebration.

Next, the turtleshell drum was lowered down from the ceiling and played by two participants. Amidst all the music, we all headed to the river. The padrinos washed the naichi, which retained a yellow hue from the tree sap. I was instructed to leave it as white as possible without tearing it. While I was washing the barkcloth, some people approached to collect some water running off the fabric. They used it to wash their faces and recommended I did the same, "It is a secret to avoid your skin ageing. Do it, and you will look young longer". We marched back to the communal hall, stopped at the basketball court and hung the fabric on a goalpost to dry. There were as many naichi barkcloths as children undergoing the ritual.

We returned to the communal hall and took the genip juice outside the building. The children removed their clothes, and the elderly women painted their bodies. First, they painted some patterns on the children's back, chest, and face using the genip stems that were saved earlier. Finally, their bodies were covered using the genip juice from the neck down. Genip does not dye the skin immediately. It takes around 30 minutes to react with the skin and stain it black. This reaction continues for hours until it reaches a black tone that lasts for a couple of days.

After painting the children, people approached the elderly women and asked them to paint their faces with the genip juice. We all got our faces painted with the pattern that identifies our clan. Even people who were not Ticuna, like me, got assigned a clan. "You must get your nose painted like a cow because you are *cori*, a mestizo", said Policarpa. This was a moment of playfulness and relaxation after a busy morning. All the residual materials were kept next to the hall to be thrown into the river later in the evening.

The organisers and their collaborators took a break and ate at the owners of the celebration houses, where family members had been cooking the whole morning. While we ate, we heard Alejo playing the iburi, announcing that the celebration was taking place. I inquired about the three meter long bark trumpet. Policarpa informed me that it is forbidden for the celebration owners to see it. That is why Alejo played it when no one was around. Crispin told me about another even more powerful trumpet, called *to'cu'*, which is not used anymore. His father used to play it and keep it hidden under the water, but it became enchanted, turned into a snake and fled[93].

[93] About the importance of these trumpets or aerophones see Goulard (2015); Matarezio (2015); Nimuendajú (1952) and Ramos Valenzuela (2010).

In the afternoon, we proceeded to build a corral (*turi*). The turi is a structure inside the communal house measuring roughly three by three metres, made of yellow mombin wood and moriche stems. This corral serves as an enclosure for the worekü during the first days of the celebration before they are released from their isolation. I joined a group of men, directed by the uncles of the worekü, and we headed towards a moriche growth outside the village. We cut several long stems, carried them to the hall and cut them into slats. The core of the stems is a soft, flexible material. They were divided into three or four pieces lengthwise using a tense metal wire. The resulting pieces were flexible slats two metres long by ten centimetres wide. These pickets were placed next to each other and tied together to some of the slats placed horizontally, acting as backing rails. The resulting panels were later placed over a wood structure made of mombin sticks, serving as walls of the corral.

The moriche palm walls were adorned with motifs that alluded to the clans of the worekü, their parents' names or any other drawing inspired by the collaborators' creativity. A doorway was built on one side of the structure to allow the organisers easy access and keep the worekü away from other people's gaze. A couple of planks were removed from the communal hall wall to allow the worekü to go to the bathroom using that backdoor without being seen. Finally, in the evening, the confinement corral was ready to receive the girls.

A characteristic of the celebration is the simultaneousness of actions. The padrinos of the worekü acted as masters of ceremonies, ensuring everything happened smoothly. While the men concentrated on building and painting the corral, the women bathed the children with a mixture of water and mombin leaves. After the bath, they dressed them with a red cloth tied around the waist with a yellow cord, forming a skirt. In parallel, the whole morning and evening, an incessant hauling of manioc beer took place from Alejo's house to the communal hall. A group of elderly women incessantly prepared batches of beer using the fermented manioc stored in the containers. This merry group of women drank and sang while mixing the fermented pulp with water and adding sugar to adjust the beverage's taste.

After building the turi, the participants gathered the leftover materials and carried them to the river to be discarded. We marched to the river, accompanied by the music of the turtleshell drum and the bamboo horns. We threw the materials into the river and returned to the hall to start dancing. We took a brief break to eat; afterwards, the music and dancing resumed.

During the ceremony, the uncles of the worekü took most of the practical decisions. They dictated the pace of the events, deciding, for example, when to start a dance. They indicated when to lower the turtleshell drum and distribute the bamboo horns to start a period of dancing.

The dances represented and reinforced the Ticuna classification of clans into two moieties. Each instrument of the moiety was played by its respective group. The non-feather clans played the bamboo horns, and people belonging to the feathers clans played the turtleshell drum. Inside the hall, the attendants engaged in a particular dance where the two groups facing each other danced back and forward, stomping their feet to the rhythm of the turtleshell drum. The children are always in the first line, carried by their padrinos and accompanied by their fathers. This dance is supposed to enhance the world, harmonize Ticuna territory and promote the abundance of animals and plants.

For specific dances, the groups playing different instruments are separated. The group playing the bamboo horns exited the hall and danced outside during certain moments of the celebration, while the turtleshell group stayed inside with people dancing there. Buckets of manioc beer are brought outside, and their content is poured into the bamboo horns. They are later used to throw manioc beer to the participants. In the middle of the agitation, the worekü are moved from their houses to the enclosure in the hall. This is done discretely, and the girls are covered with blankets to ensure nobody sees them. A group of men drinking and joking inside the corral were expelled by the women that accompanied the worekü. These elderly women controlled who entered and left the enclosure from that moment on.

During the evening, the children were adorned. All the children were placed in the centre of the hall. The padrinos are in charge of preparing their garments before cutting their hair and piercing their ears. We sat Danexi inside the hall over barkcloth. With the help of friends and family, we prepared the feather headdress, painted it with natural dyes and arranged the feathers. I was told to take the naichi barkcloth that had been drying the entire evening and rip it into thin strips. When I had finished, we used the strips to craft a long collar that covers the chest and back of the person wearing it; we also made bracelets for their arms and ankles. All these garments, made out of the naichi barkcloth, are called *champa*. We painted the champa and set them aside with the rest of the ornaments.

The paternal aunt was in charge of piercing Danexi's ears. It was a fast procedure. She used a needle soaked in alcohol. All the other children got their ears pierced[94]. Afterwards, we cut Danexi's hair. We used scissors, cutting as close to the scalp as we could. People commented that it used to be different. In the old times, an aunt would pluck the children´s hair out. We took turns, and while performing this task, Policarpa gave every participant a prize for their help. As a padrino, I was given a chambira fibre woven bag filled with sugar, rice, smoked meat, and guarapo. Other collaborators received smaller prizes, such as raw pieces of chicken. When we were about to finish cutting Danexi's hair, we were instructed to leave just one last strand of hair at the top of her head and wait for the others to finish. When all the six children were ready, their aunts pulled the last piece of hair simultaneously at the sound of the rattle stick. According to Policarpa's cousin, Crispin, this ritual is aimed to protect children from evil spirits and make them good hunters. As a child, he went through the ritual, which helped him establish a good relationship with the spirits of the immortals inhabiting the world[95].

Finally, we dressed the children in festive attire. First, we smeared a sticky paste of annatto seeds on Danexi's body. We attached heron feathers to her body using the paste. We also applied the paste and feathers to her face and to the red fabric around her waist. We put the rest of the decorations on Danexi: the feather garland, the shells-and-feather necklace, and the feather headdress. The annatto and feathers were also used to adorn the padrinos' and the parents' faces. At the end of the journey, we danced using the turtleshell drum and the bamboo horns that had also been decorated with annatto and feathers.

Day two: The painting of the young women.

The second day is the height of the woreküchiga. The young girls are released from confinement and are subject to a series of rituals that intervene in their bodies (cutting their hair, painting the skin, washing and smearing substances in their faces) to act upon their health and reproductive capacities. It is also the moment of the celebration where numerous non-human beings — represented by masked men — enter the domestic space of the village to predate the young girls before the protection cast over their bodies takes effect.

[94] There are no strict prescriptive rules in the ritual I witnessed –there was always room for interpretation and choice. The uncles, on behalf of the owners of the celebration, decided in each case if the ears got pierced, or the length of the haircut.

[95] This could mean, for instance, an advantage in activities such as hunting and fishing.

The worekü, enclosed in the corral since the previous evening, became the protagonists of the activities during the second day of the ritual. We woke up early to the sound of drums and rattle sticks and headed towards the common hall. We were late because Danexi was exhausted from the day before, and she had taken off all her ceremonial garments. We dressed her again, and the rest of the families were already dancing by the time we arrived. The paternal uncles were carrying the children. All of them were painted and dressed with ornaments from the day before. We joined them. I carried Danexi, and we danced back and forth to the sound of the bamboo horns and the turtleshell drum.

The families of the young girls took centre stage. After the dancing, they performed the same preparations for the same artefacts we had produced the day before, but this time they were to used on the worekü's bodies. They brought their materials and placed them in the centre of the hall. The coperos were in charge of peeling and washing the naichi; other people crafted new bamboo horns and saved the water accumulated inside the hollow stems; across the room, someone extracted the moriche leaves and crafted the inverted scarfs to be used as ornaments by the guests; other people grated the genip fruits and extracted the juice.

After all the elements were ready, the medicine man blew tobacco over the bamboo horns and the gourd filled with bamboo water. We repeated the mimicking game, where the participants imitated different animals and drank from the gourd. Afterwards, like on the previous day, we also performed dances and washed the naichi barkcloth in the river. On this occasion, though, the girls were not painted in front of the hall as the children had been the day before. Instead, the genip juice was saved for the afternoon when the worekü's' aunts, accompanied by other elderly women, entered the corral to paint the young women.

Small groups of family and friends went to the houses of the families of the worekü to bring back the gifts they had gathered to reward the masqueraders. The musicians playing the drums and rattling sticks accompanied them, making a big fuss. A procession of people carrying smoked meat, frozen chickens and sacks filled with rice and manioc paraded the village. The owners put the prizes inside the communal hall, in an elevated compartment near the ceiling.

After the morning activities, the owners invited the participants to have breakfast in their houses. That day, a traditional dish was served: a mixture of boiled banana and smoked meats, such as caiman, monkey, pig, fish, and armadillo, all mixed in a stew called mazamorra.

It was almost midday. The village was slowly waking up from its lethargy; the previous night was particularly intense. Many people did not sleep. All night, you could hear small groups consuming alcohol at the hall or just wandering the streets drinking. The teenagers were also busy walking up and down in small groups, flirting with others, and taking advantage of the fact that many visitors from different villages had come to Arara to be part of the celebration. After the first day, the organisers had already given away one big container of 500 litres of macerated and fermented manioc pulp, enough to prepare a thousand litres of manioc beer.

Apart from the traditional beverages, a significant amount of cachaça was available in the small shops around the village. In the previous days, many people bought cases of liquor in Brazil to resell during the celebration. This industrial spirit is cheaper and contains higher amounts of alcohol than traditional fermented beverages. Although importing alcohol from Brazil to Colombia is forbidden, the authorities do little to stop it. Inebriation is highly tolerated during celebration days. It is considered a sign of copiousness, along with the abundance of food. Other signs of a successful woreküchiga are the participation of many musicians, masked characters and guests from other villages.

During the ritual, people indulged drunken people, even those involved in quarrels, or those who made public scandal or fell asleep in the village's streets. Of course, heavy drinkers were often annoying and impertinent, but people tolerated them to a greater degree than on other non-festive occasions. I learned to avoid them because they constantly demand money for cachaça and cigarettes. Even in these cases, people always condoned this cheeky behaviour, remembering Ipi, the shameless and mischievous twin brother of Ticuna mythology. Policarpa told me, "Ipi must be present somehow at the celebration".

When the sun reached its zenith, the masqueraders made their appearance. Every owner had contacted people in advance to craft and wear a barkcloth disguise during the celebration. An unknown number of collaborators were expected to appear during the ceremony in exchange for a prize. The masqueraders portray non-human beings that inhabit the world. These beings are known as üüne or immortals. An immense variety of these beings inhabit Ticuna territory. They form a key part of the universe. They live in undomesticated spaces, in the jungle, rivers, and lakes, outside the village, and around the gardens. Human beings cross or occupy these places, making these cohabitated boundaries a contested matter. The üüne are attracted by the blood, in this case, the menstrual blood of the young women; the masqueraders represent their incursion into the domesticated space.

No one knew in advance how many masked characters would make an apparition nor the costumes they would be wearing. The owners kept that information for themselves, and the barkcloth costumes had been fabricated in great secrecy over the previous days. Owners who recruited masqueraders awaited them in the communal hall. When the masked characters arrived at the centre of the village, the uncles of every child and worekü tried to control them by grabbing them by their backs. When they succeeded, they danced together in a contained way, but when the masqueraders broke free, they engaged in an outburst of mischievous behaviour.

The appearance of the masqueraders was the most expected moment of the woreküchiga. All the attendants awaited the visit of these fantastic beings. The first appearance of the day was a couple of big monkeys called oma, with big heads and ears. The most recognisable feature of the oma costume is a stick tucked in the genital area representing a big penis. On the tip of the stick, the performers put annatto powder so that everything the phallus touches gets stained with red, particularly the women in the audience. They chased and tried to simulate copulation with every woman that crossed their path. The uncontrolled sexual drive of the oma characters provoked great amusement in the onlookers. Women ran and hid to escape their advances, but every time the oma found a distracted victim, they used their fake penis to stain their victims, only to celebrate their mischief afterwards by jumping and shaking a rattler.

In the first part of the representation, the oma masqueraders performed their stunts outside the hall. They danced with the owners in the street and on the basketball court. Later, the activities continued inside the hall; their objective was to get to the worekü. When the uncles of the isolated girls did not contain them, the masked characters charged against the enclosure, trying to destroy its walls and get inside. Amid the agitation, the other relatives of the worekü, especially elderly women, regrouped to drive them away and defend the enclosure.

The masqueraders acted in different ways according to the characters they were portraying. They constantly disrupted and joked with the audience between dances, but their objective was to reach the worekü inside the corral. The jaguars were furtive and sly; they acted calmly, prowling the enclosure, and when they believed they had better chances, they suddenly jumped into action, trying to force the door. The monkeys were agile and spry, constantly trying to climb the corral wall, jumping over it and bouncing. Other masked characters used arrows, rattle sticks, or their bare hands to hit the wall. It was a game of resourcefulness and alertness that lasted the entire afternoon.

The coperos were always attentive to the needs of the masqueraders, offering them manioc beer and other refreshing beverages. Hydration was a priority because the tight costumes and the exercise took their toll on the masked people. Family members assisted the performers. They helped them dress and undress, accompanied them during their performance, and eventually helped them to collect their prizes. The awarding of the prizes marked the end of the first appearance the performers. After collecting their reward, the masked performers returned to their homes and did not appear again until the evening, when they returned to take their costumes off and handed them over to the woreküchiga owners.

All the masked performances followed the same pattern: the performers left their houses in character, stormed the village centre acting mischievously, danced with the uncles of the painted children and the worekü outside and inside the communal hall, tried to enter the enclosure where the young women were confined and, finally, broke their characterisation to receive their compensation. The disguised men received the promised rewards from the owner as a token of appreciation for their collaboration. No money was used to compensate for this kind of ceremonial cooperation. The owner took some of the food that had been stored in the communal hall's high ceiling and rewarded those who had performed. The prizes consisted of smoked meat, rice, sugar, frozen chicken, bottles of fermented unrefined sugar liquor, etc. This is all publicly done, and the amount has been previously agreed upon.

Sometimes, differences emerged. The second group were a couple of jaguars. They are considered extremely agile creatures; therefore, the performers' representation should match this characterisation. It is very demanding to perform as a jaguar, and not everyone is willing to do it. Nonetheless, Policarpa convinced her uncle and nephew to disguise themselves as jaguars. After their performance, the audience started shouting in discontent when she gave them their rewards. People claimed that the gift was insufficient, accusing Policarpa of being stingy. The jaguars were unhappy with the prize and walked away without it. Policarpa was embarrassed and angry with the attendants. She told me afterwards that it was all a misunderstanding. The prize she offered was only meant for her uncle. She was just preparing other gifts for her nephew when the spectators meddled and provoked confusion.

Many other groups of masked men appeared in succession during the rest of the day, repeating the same dynamics: parading from their homes to the village centre, bantering and playing with the audience, dancing with the uncles, attacking the hut, and finally receiving their prizes. After receiving their rewards, they left and let other masqueraders make their appearance. They all promised to return later to give the owner the barkcloth costumes they had crafted.

After the appearance of the two jaguars, to the amusement of the guests, another group appeared. A jaguar, a leafcutter ant and an owl formed the crew. A camphor tree joined them, but visibly drunk, so much so he could barely stand, and the padrinos of the worekü asked him to leave the costume right there and then because it would be impossible for him to come back later to hand it over. Another group appeared afterwards. Leading the pack, two volunteers were masked as butterflies carrying a *nachine*, an enormous circular barkcloth canvas with clan motifs. These wheel-type artefacts are highly appreciated for their size and beauty. They are also known as shields, worlds or mother winds.

A fourth group followed: an oma, a leech monkey, and a couple of hummingbirds. Two jaguars formed the fifth group. To keep them at a distance from the worekü, I was instructed to grab them by their backs and follow them around, impeding them to reach the corral at any cost. They were sneaky and escaped my grasp several times, although they were opportunely repelled by a compact group of elderly women guarding the corral's door.

The last group consisted of 10 masked characters. Some of them carried enormous nachine. They were dressed in beautifully crafted pieces of painted barkcloth, which are very difficult to manufacture because it requires much skill to prepare such big pieces without ripping the delicate bark textile. The motifs were varied, usually referring to the owners of the celebration. Policarpa was happy with a big one with "Poly" written next to a jaguar, her clan, and two macaws. After the appearances, we took a break.

In the afternoon, the drums announced the resuming of the celebration. The activities restarted inside the communal hall. The turtleshell drum was lowered and carried by two people to the centre of the room. The worekü's uncles formed two lines facing each other. The rest of the guests aligned on either side of the lines. Some participants started playing the turtleshell drum, and we all danced, walking back and forth relentlessly. We were also given bamboo horns and played them to the drum rhythm.

The uncles carried the naichi barkcloth. When the dance stopped, they cut it into strips. Then, they used the barkcloth stripes to craft a shredded dress and a couple of bracelets for the arms and the legs. With the help of other people, they painted these pieces alongside the feather headdresses. Other ornaments such as feather garlands, a red cloth, shell necklaces, and beads were all cleaned. The uncles of the worekü put all the garments on and, afterwards, started a new dance interval. When the dance ceased, they took off the ornaments and gave them to the elderly women who went inside the hut to dress the worekü.

Inside, the young girls had been waiting patiently since the day before. They were instructed to spend all night standing, holding on to a mombin trunk. Only the women, the worekü̈s' uncles, and their brothers

could enter the corral. The worekü were dressed and adorned while the elderly women sang songs, giving them advice about life, marriage and maternity. Their hair was tied and cut at the nape of their neck. Finally, they put a feather headdress on, lowering it until it covered their eyes.

After the worekü were dressed, the people waiting outside received the signal to destroy the corral. All the men charged against the walls, tearing them apart. After a long period of confinement, the worekü appeared, fully dressed and dancing with their uncles. Their brothers accompanied them, holding their headdresses below their foreheads, covering the worekü's eyes. Finally, the secluded girls could join the celebration and dance with the rest of the guests.

After dancing to the music of the turtleshell drum and the bamboo horns, the worekü undressed and sat over a barkcloth piece at the hall's centre. It was time to cut the rest of their hair. The uncles started cutting their hair with scissors. Other people helped; we took turns cutting a lock of hair until the task was collectively achieved. The medicine man accompanied the entire process and blew tobacco smoke over the worekü bodies at every step. Manioc beer was copiously offered to everyone.

When only a few hairs remained on the top of the worekü's heads, they were simultaneously plucked at the stump of the rhythm stick, just like the day before with the children. The worekü were dressed again with all the ornaments. A thick paste of anatto was applied over their body, and white heron feathers were glued to their skin. At this point, the worekü handed a reward to their uncles for their collaboration. The prizes were placed inside a bag each worekü had knitted during their confinement. When the young girls were ready, they led the dance, going back and forth with their uncles and brothers, who still held the headdresses over their eyes.

After a couple of minutes of dancing, the music stopped. The worekü stood in front of the hall entrance, and their headdresses were finally lifted, allowing them to see. The dancing resumed, the communal hall was full and reaching euphoria. At one point, the worekü were handed a carved staff and were encouraged to break the seal of a couple of barrels containing manioc beer. Then, they used gourds to offer a drink to their guests. The rest of the night, the hall was full of people dancing and drinking.

After a couple of hours, the masqueraders returned. Some still danced with the worekü and performed pranks, although many of them were too drunk to continue with their antics. They took off their barkcloth costumes and left them to the ceremony owners. As night fell, the intensity of the celebration diminished. Only the worekü and their families remained in the hall, where they spent the whole night chanting and receiving advice from the village elders.

Day three: End of the festivity.

By Sunday, the social excitement had faded after another long night of celebration. That morning, the activities started considerably late when the sun was already up. Many guests were still drunk or recovering from two days of heavy drinking. Some of the people from other communities started to leave in their boats.

The ambience was tranquil when we headed to the communal hall. Inside, the room was almost empty. Only the worekü and their families were busy cleaning and organising the space. The masked men who had rejected Policarpa's prize the day before arrived wearing their costumes. We danced with them only for a few minutes, and finally, the prizes were awarded. This time, a much more generous compensation was delivered to the satisfaction of both parties.

Policarpa was happy. She finally had all the barkcloth masquerades she had ordered for the festivity. We gathered them up to take them to the house. We folded the costumes and removed all the elements that were not made of barkcloth, such as sticks, leaves, strings, etc. The other families did the same, leaving only the fabric to keep as a souvenir.

Javier, the medicine man, arrived carrying an *isana*, or long stick. Using his machete, he sharpened the end of the stick and stuck it into the ground at the entrance of the communal hall. He put a box of matches and a couple of long rolled tobaccos next to it. The aunties of the worekü brought two gourds filled with manioc beer and some pieces of smouldering wood. The worekü sat beside the arrangement of artefacts, with their legs extended towards the stick. The medicine man blew smoke on the stick, the manioc beer and the girls. This was said to help the harmonious development of their body.

The worekü took the gourds and the smouldering wood. They carried them to the village dock next to a yellow mombin tree at the port, where another long stick was nailed to the ground. They stood a few metres from the stick and threw the gourd and the pieces of wood at it. Afterwards, they ran back to the common hall.

The nachine — big, round barkcloths mounted over a wooden structure, crafted and used by the masqueraders the day before — were placed on the floor at the centre of the communal hall. The worekü and the children formed a line in front of them and danced, accompanied by their uncles and aunts. When we stopped dancing, the children and young women stepped on the nachine. They sat there and waited for the medicine man to blow tobacco smoke over their bodies and recite a prayer. Afterwards, the uncles and aunts lifted and carried them, still sat on the nachine. All those gathered helped to carry the the

worekü and the children outside and to the backyard, where the yellow mombin tree is located. We put them down, and they all returned to the hall running.

Once in the hall, they all formed a line and walked towards the river. The medicine man marched in front of the row, carrying the stick he had used before. As he walked, he blew tobacco smoke ahead of him, gesturing with his body and the stick as if he were opening a trail for those following him. The worekü marched behind him. The first girls in the row carried a gourd filled with ashes. They carefully took small amounts of the ashes and threw them on the soil as they walked. They stepped over them on their way to the river, so as not to touch the ground directly with their bare feet.

The procession arrived at the shore. Javier walked into the river until his knees were covered in water. He puffed tobacco smoke over the water, then stuck the stick into the riverbed. Half of the stick was submerged, and half stuck out of the water. The worekü lined up on the shore. They undressed, leaving just their red skirts on.

One by one, they approached the medicine man and received a burst of tobacco smoke from him again. The shaman blew smoke over the young woman's body, first on their lower backs, and then he asked them to turn around and blew it on their feet, knees, elbows and hands. This ritual practice, accompanied by hand gestures and prayers in a lower voice, was meant to protect the young women and stop them from getting pregnant at a young age. Policarpa affirmed that sometimes these spells are so powerful that some women struggle to get pregnant at all, and they must attend another session to break the spell.

Taking turns, the worekü got into the water. One by one, they stood next to the stick, took a deep breath and swam around it counterclockwise three times. Policarpa explained that this "opens the way for the fish to swim from the lower waters of the Amazon River to the community ravines and lakes". Some people mocked when one of the worekü swam in the wrong direction. They joked about the possibility of the fish leaving the community's rivers instead of arriving during the piracema, the migration season. We heard a voice shouting, "We are all going to starve for her fault". The worekü repeated the action, this time in the prescribed direction.

When all the worekü had swam around the stick, a collective bath took place. Some people watching the ceremony from the shore jumped into the water. Others were thrown into the river. It was a moment of great joy, as some people were surprised by the collective dip. It was a good-intentioned and playful moment. If people opposed resistance and did not want to get in the water, they were left alone. For a moment, the river was filled with people swimming and playing.

The debris from the corral and other activities from the previous days were also thrown into the river. After a while, people got out of the water and dried their clothes. The worekü dressed again, regrouped, and returned to the hall accompanied by their uncles, dancing to the music of the turtleshell drum and the bamboo horns.

Before finishing the celebration, there was one last step: burning the barkcloth-shredded dresses, armbands and leg bands that we crafted from the naichi. This activity, known as the burning of the champa, can be performed at different times. Some families burn the champa just after the bath in the river, but others choose to wait until their daughter's hair grows back and they need a haircut.

Some families set all the garments on fire in front of the communal hall. The worekü jumped over the open fire several times, accompanied by their uncles. Finally, in one last burst of playfulness, people were allowed to take the champa, still on fire, and use it to chase the worekü. The game's objective was to burn the feet of the worekü or any other distracted participant. This chasing, screaming, and laughter was the last commotion caused by the celebration. Once the champas were burned, the families returned to their houses to rest.

Acting over the world: Ticuna interventions in the social reality

My interest in the analysis of the celebration of worekü̈chiga is that it is a public display of the Ticuna conceptions of the world, society and personhood. These notions contrast with those definitions imposed by the hegemonic society. Analysis of the worekü̈chiga thus provides an ethnographic window into how Ticuna people conceive relations between different beings, and this is a crucial way they advocate for alternate boundaries of meaning and intervene in the social reality.

David Graeber (2001) explored different uses of the concept of value in the social sciences. Aside from the more accepted definitions in economics — value as a measure of how much of a certain thing we are willing to trade for what we want to obtain — and linguistics — value as a meaningful difference — he defines a third — sociological — sense of value, conceived as the predominant ideas of a society about what is good and desirable. I find this sociological sense useful to analyse the worekü̈chiga ritual as an arena where Ticuna values are brought to the forefront of collective life and are expressed by the "laws of Yoi", referencing their traditional lifestyle or their shared notions about how to live a good life.

Terence Turner (2008) has noted that the stabilisation of certain values that organise the productive activity of a specific society also produces representational schemes of time and space that constitute

cosmologies. Drawing from Turner's work with the Kayapo, Graber notes the importance of ritual practices as an arena for realising value: incarnating it, making it concrete, visible, and real (Graeber 2013). Conflicts between the national societies and indigenous groups frequently emerge around contradictory world definitions. I argue that these struggles over different values are made more visible during the woreküchiga, when the actors start making ontological claims about the body, society and the universe. I find these alternative formulations of the way the world is constituted especially compelling to understand the persistence of Ticuna identity in a context where the state and the market are constantly trying to impose their definition of limits through processes of nationalisation and the commodification of Ticuna everyday life. With this in mind, we can explore the multiple values the Ticuna realise in the woreküchiga.

I recapitulate the main elements of the ethnographic description presented in this chapter and analyse three spheres of life where the Ticuna understanding of the universe is reflected in the woreküchiga ritual. These are aspects of the reality the Ticuna consider meaningful, subject to intervention, and profoundly intertwined. I refer to notions of personhood, social structure, and the universe. These three notions are constantly addressed during the woreküchiga through references to the young girls' bodies, the clans of the participants, and the territory the Ticuna occupy and which sustains them. I believe this analysis sheds light on the Ticuna conceptualisation of their reality in their own terms.

Body

Many relevant celebration elements were oriented to act upon the young women's bodies. The woreküchiga is not the only rite of passage a person goes through in their life cycle — the ritual of the children's body painting and ear piercing are other examples. However, the woreküchiga is the most important for the Ticuna, as it deals with managing women's reproductive capacities. According to Goulard (2015), the Ticuna cosmology assumes that all beings possess an embodiment principle called *maü* and a vital principle called *a-e*. While maü is given since birth and defined by the clan and moiety in which the individual is born, a-e is progressively acquired during a lifetime through the reciprocal management of rituals, where the complementary half is essential for the correct development of the a-e. Therefore, the production of Ticuna people results from a collective project of nurturing, in which ritual

practices constantly shape the body from birth (Goulard 2013; Goulard & Barry 1999). Throughout the course of their life, a person is collectively produced, strengthened, and protected[96].

Since their first menstrual period, young women are considered at risk. They also represent a danger to other people around them. Their bodies, expelling blood for the first time, can be smelled by non-human entities and attract them. Therefore, the girls are confined until the ritual shields them from these spirits. They also must follow a different diet that helps them through this period of danger (Belaunde 2016; Carvajal et al. 2016; Ramos Valenzuela 2010; Santos Angarita 2013). After this first moment of isolation and dieting, their bodies are the object of intervention during the ritual to apace these beings and propitiate a harmonious development. Notably, the worekü are painted with genip and annatto. These substances disguise the odour of the menstrual blood and cast protection over their bodies. The Ticuna utilise all their senses to describe and make sense of the universe. This also reflects that colour and smell are two crucial dimensions of connecting with other beings (Goulard 2013). The effect these substances have on the skin is to cast a protective cloak over the person.

Another focal modification on the worekü's body is the plucking of the hair, which nowadays has been replaced by a scissor cut. This procedure is aimed at renewing the body. It is considered a way to change the skin (Matarezio 2017), and contributes to the transformations that make the worekü invisible to the immortal beings inhabiting the forest and constantly lurking the humans.

Other ritual actions upon their bodies are meant to protect the worekü from the immortal beings and help them develop harmoniously. The presence of the yellow mombin tree in many of the spaces where the ritual was performed — inside the seclusion corral, the space where the worekü were transported in the nachine, and the place where they threw the manioc beer gourd and the smouldering wood — is meant to induce longevity. The yellow mombin tree is considered a plant that does not die. The tree will regrow even if burned, cut or seriously damaged. This propitiates long life for the worekü.

Finally, the interventions from the medicine man using tobacco smoke are considered part of a contraceptive measure that will help the worekü to manage the reproductive potential of her developing body. This protection against pregnancy is supposed to fade with time and lose effectiveness after marriage.

[96] Practices focused on in body and its production are a recurring topic in Amazonian ethnographies (Hugh-Jones 2009; Turner 2009; Walker 2012).

Clans and moieties

Other focal points of the woreküchiga refer directly to elements of social organisation. All human beings are classified according to their belonging to a clan. The clans are themselves grouped in two exogamic moieties. One includes all the clans classified as with feathers, and the other groups are without feathers. Given the rules of marriage, the continuity of these social groups rests on the acknowledgement of their mutual dependency to marry and reproduce.

The clans' origins are explained in a mythic narration. Yoi cooked a caiman broth, and one by one, the people tried it and announced which flavour they identified. Depending on their answers, they were assigned a clan. If the broth tasted like a macaw, jaguar, açai, or any other plant or animal to someone, it would become that person's clan. The union between two people of the same moiety is considered a serious offence and a danger for the people involved and the entire community. This incest is called *womachi* (rotten flesh). It affects the reproductive capacities of the people involved, exposes their families and the community to the punishment of Yoi, and weakens the territory.

These allusions to the Ticuna social structure appear right from the preparation stage of the ritual when the paternal uncle of the worekü assumes a relevant role as an organiser on behalf of their parents. The paternal aunt is also required to perform particular tasks such as cutting the hair, painting the body or dancing with the worekü (Cardoso de Oliveira 2014; Pacheco de Oliveira 1988). Many other ritual tasks are assigned based on belonging to a specific moiety. Some of the chants, for example, are performed by members of clans that belong to the other moiety, emphasising their mutual dependence to produce people and reproduce the Ticuna society.

The attendants' clan is also made visible by the use of face painting during the woreküchiga. This public statement makes legible to everyone the otherwise hidden classification. It is very convenient given that many young people from other Ticuna communities attend the celebration. One of the main reasons for young people to attend these gatherings is the possibility to meet, socialise, flirt or even establish a sentimental relationship with other people of the region[97]. These visits are frequently transnational in

[97] Alongside other celebrations such as village anniversaries and football tournaments. People often cite the woreküchiga as the occasion when they met their partners. During my fieldwork in Lauro Sodré, it was common that Walsirney, Cristina´s 16-year-old son, was absent from his house for several days, and upon returning he would simply comment that he had been at some celebration in a neighboring Ticuna village, in Brazil, Peru or Colombia.

nature, and there is no shortage of people who offer accommodation to visitors. During the woreküchiga I described here, Policarpa hosted a family from Belem de Solimões with whom she had friendship ties. Her sister Martha hosted relatives from Yahuma-Callaru.

The use of two ritual instruments also underlines the societal division into moieties. The bamboo horns are used only when the worekü belongs to a clan without feathers; they can only be played by people of her moiety. The other instrument is the turtleshell drum only used when the worekü clan belongs to the moiety with feathers, and can be played only by the people that belong to a clan classified in that exogamic category.

Territory, domesticated and undomesticated

Some of the ritual elements are intended to intervene directly in the naane. This spatial category is used to describe the universe and how it is arranged. It can be used to refer to the more immediate world, including the rivers, jungle, sky, and gardens. It is also the realm of the invisible entities that live in the same territory as the humans but cannot be seen, although they can be heard.

The turtleshell drum dance is probably the most salient example of a collective ritual action that is supposed to affect the world. This dance pattern, in which a line of dancers walk back and forth, was explained to me as a way to extend the territory, and it is directly linked with the plants and animals that live on it. The dance is also considered to bring more abundance. The notion of a cosmos that expands and reduces, just like a living body, is explored by Matarezio (2017) and Santos Angarita (2013); they describe the cosmos as a body that is comes into form, matures, and decays following the vegetal metaphor in which the Ticuna also conceptualise the human body (Goulard 2015).

Another essential element that reflects the organising of the world and the negotiation of its limits and boundaries is the intervention of the masqueraders on the second day of the festivity. Many entities or spirits live in the world alongside humans, animals, and plants. These beings, known as üüne, share the characteristic of being immortals; they do not grow old or die. The term comprehends diverse entities: the owners of the animals and plants, enchanted people that have reached immortality, and evil spirits or *n'go*, among other entities. The üüne do not live in the domesticated spaces of the village, although they do raid villages from time to time, attracted by the smell of blood. During the woreküchiga, they were invited to trespass these limits. This erasure of boundaries is represented by the people wearing costumes and attempting to reach the worekü.

Finally, some propitiatory actions aim to "open the way" for fish and game animals. The mimicking of the animals drinking the bamboo water and the worekü swimming around the long stick semi-submerged in the river were explained to me as propitiatory acts to attract edible animals near to the village. These calls for animal abundance are ways for the Ticuna to ritually intervene in their territory during the woreküchiga.

Woreküchiga as creative energy devoted to the continuity of Ticuna world

Terence Turner (1984, 1986, 2008) argues that the Marxian value theory is grounded in notions of human activity, social organization and collective forms of consciousness applicable to non-capitalists and non-economic moments of social production. He explored its utility to analyze forms of social production in different Amazonian societies not involved in the production and exchange of commodities covering aspects of life not traditionally identified as the economic instance of the social system (1979, 1995).

As I explained in chapter three, the Ticuna people in my field site are only partially engaged in the capitalist economy; only part of their productive activities are devoted to producing commodities to sell in the market. A considerable amount of their activities are devoted to the reproduction of their social units outside the sphere of the market economy. The analysis of the worekuchiga ritual shows the way numerous elements of their cosmology are linked with practices that mobilize significative amounts of labour and creative energy to bring out to the public scene their ideas about the way the world functions and to maintain and reproduce that order through ritual actions such as the described in this chapter.

I find Turner´s work useful for the analysis of the sort of values and principles that are performed and reinforced in the woreküchiga. One of his most brilliant insights based on his studies on central Brasil indigenous societies is that in the absence of markets and production of commodities for exchange, the production of social persons and the relations that sustain collective life are considered central in the form of values and principles associated with that outcome “the key to understanding the hierarchical structure of the social and political systems of Central Brazilian Societies […] as well as the less obviously hierarchizised systems of other Amazonia peoples […] consist in understanding how forms of social value are produced in the process of producing people” (2003: 11).

The Ticuna devote time and efforts to perform publicly their own definition of the world, the forces that rule over it and the way they can use them to reproduce said world. These performances are destined to show the principles and values that otherwise circulate in private spheres as myths, stories, secrets, or songs. According to Policarpa, the preservation of these traditions is valuable because it represents the

“continuity of our world, our existence as a distinct people that have a particular relation with the natural world. That is the reason we follow Yoi´s law, to persist as Ticuna people”

All these actions observed during the celebration of the puberty ritual reveal the ideas through which the Ticuna understand their universe. Alongside the knowledge the Ticuna have of a reality shaped by political, social and economic delimitations of the world imposed by the state, the market economy or other ethnic groups, they maintain and constantly recreate an alternative view of the world based on their shared notions of person, community and territory. Most of my interlocutors would assume particular national identities, participate in the capitalist economy, and accept the government rhetoric about generic indigeneity. Nevertheless, they would also underline the particularities of being Ticuna: a common origin in the waters of the Eware Ravine, the importance of clan belonging, rearing practices that collectively produce healthy, apt, long-lived bodies, spheres of life that are subtracted from commodification, and conceptions of their territory that entail complex relations with non-human entities. The complex reality that arises from these often overlapping and contradictory definitions of the world constitutes an assemblage of borders, frontiers and boundaries in which the Ticuna struggle to maintain their collective identity and live a good life.

Figure 7 Wild game meat hunted in preparation for the woreküchiga

Figure 8 Painted child grabbing an oma masquerade from the back.

Figure 9 Masquerade in front of a nachine barkcloth.

Figure 10 Worekü after being released from the corral.

Figure 11 Medicine man about to blow tobacco over the worekü.

Figure 12 Worekü swimming around the semi-submerged isana.

Figure 13 Collective dip.

Figure 14 Burning of the champa.

Figure 15 Worekü running away from the burning champa.

Conclusions

I started this dissertation by describing the confusing practices of border crossing and how, as I began researching the Amazonian tri-border region, my main challenge became learning how to navigate the border. Accustomed to rigid, well-delimited borderlines, I was not familiar with the ways in which the loose, almost non-existent geopolitical delimitations functioned in the tri-border region of the tropical forest. Through conversations with my interlocutors, I tried to understand and map the borderland and its logics. My idea was to lay out a basic outline of the border and, from an initial point, start to navigate the region. Instead of the clearly segmented spheres of social reality that I expected, I found some fuzzy definitions of the border and the multiplication of all sorts of limits that appeared to acquire the fluid properties of the river. Most of the explanations I heard about the dynamics of border crossing relied on a contextual appreciation of the situation in order to successfully traverse the divisions around the different spaces created by the borders.

This initial setback led me to abandon the border as an object of study per se, and I started building a methodology that guided my enquiry into the ways this border condition influences the ethnic identity of the Ticuna. Taking advantage of the polysemic uses of the concept of border, I explored how it can be used as a metaphor to analyse the relevant dimensions of Ticuna life in the tri-border region. In this exploration of the diversity of dimensions people attributed to the "frontera", I outlined a navigation chart that led me to inquire about it as a political border, an economic frontier, and a sociocultural boundary. These concepts group together processes that influenced the life of the Ticuna people living in the three different settlements I worked in. As I would find out, these people did not have much trouble crossing any of these borders.

Throughout the dissertation, I described the concrete ways in which the border materialised and acted as a mechanism capable of influencing Ticuna social life, producing and enforcing limits that defined different social realities. The ontological sense in which borders help create worlds showed that the struggles around the definitions of said limits and scenarios provide new paths to explore and analyse the ways the Ticuna experience their culture and ethnic identity.

In this final chapter, I reflect on the implications of the methodology I crafted in order to conduct my research. I defend the usefulness of using the metaphor of the border to delineate the empirical and theoretical dimensions of my research object. It helped me to produce a significant amount of ethnographic information that allowed me to compare the similarities and differences that Ticuna people

experience across the different domains of each of these circumscribed limits. Mezzadra and Neilson propose the term “border as a method” to describe the approach in which the researcher’s aim is "to trace and analyse the relations between different kinds of borders, as well as the struggles and knowledge conflicts that arise along them" (2013: 28). This method prevents the researcher from taking for granted the characteristics of their object of study, and helps them to discover the relevant dimensions of the studied phenomenon in the research process.

Ethnographic description. The multiplication of comparisons

Ethnography, the distinctive methodological approach of anthropology, is intrinsically comparative. These comparisons occur at diverse levels and scales as we try to describe social reality through everyday interactions with our interlocutors while conducting fieldwork. I constantly pushed my interlocutors to reflect on the differences between Brazil, Colombia, and Perú, as well as between the Ticuna and the mestizo cultures. Comparisons multiplied, and contrasting points of view accumulated as I situated myself on different sides of the borders and talked to different actors living in or transiting through the border mesh. Every time I asked a question in the tri-border Amazonian region, people were also curious to know the same things about my place of origin. This back-and-forth of questions shaped their reflections. Whenever people talked with me, they were interested in knowing the minutia about the Mexico-US border where I grew up, increasing the reflexivity with which they thought and talked about their reality.

This proliferation of perspectives also resulted from the multi-sited ethnography I delineated as a methodological strategy. This approach allows the selection of field sites to emerge from the exploration of the object of study. As noted by Marcus (1995), the multi-sited approach is not an attempt to resurrect conventional controlled comparison studies, as it does not consider its units of analysis as bounded, homogeneous totalities that conform to isolated worlds (countries, regions, communities), which can then be compared according to a preselected and controlled framework. Instead, the comparisons are amplified by following the movement of the object of study. The fact I selected three different locations to conduct fieldwork added an extra layer to my research in the form of the juxtapositions of my case studies and the amount of data collected.

Furthermore, the fact that my research involved an epistemological openness in addressing the multiple senses in which the border is conceptualised — as a political border, economic frontier and sociocultural boundary — added different and complementary dimensions to the border region in which the Ticuna people inhabit. The description of these diverse components of the borderland reality allowed me to map

the attitudes Ticuna people have towards them, and the logics of connection, disjunction, or translation they operate in and through in their everyday lives.

Each explored dimension of the borderland required different sets of tools and research techniques for gathering information. These tools, devices or tricks that the ethnographer uses to collect information essential for their descriptions constitute another source of comparison. They comprise what Matei Candea (2019) calls a heuristic attitude to comparatism embedded in the ethnographic method. Instead of a single, rigid, normative way to establish comparisons, the tools I used in different contexts produced a prolific accumulation of contrasting information through surveys, censuses, interviews, life stories, direct observation, audio and photographic documentation, etc. In the 18 months I conducted fieldwork, I crafted a particular set of comparisons in my description of the cross-border region. They are displayed across the five chapters of the dissertation.

Ultimately, all these comparisons provide the minimum elements from which we can build another level of comparisons based on broader configurations. To address this higher level of analytical comparisons, I propose using the concept of assemblage.

Border assemblages

By delineating the different coordinates that shape the Amazonian border condition, I hoped to provide a more comprehensive answer to my research question regarding the persistence of Ticuna identity. This could not be explained using a single, standard unit of analysis (one community, location, or country). It was clear from the beginning of my research that the Ticuna people, living in villages scattered across three countries, have been traversed by multiple types of borders that, altogether, constitute a setting that articulates different types of limits. This made it difficult to study their case through more traditional anthropological frameworks.

My research about the ethnic identity of the Ticuna people takes into account the historical, political, economic, and cultural dimensions through which the Ticuna population living in the borderland fight to preserve their unity, built around the idea of belonging to a distinct, unified people despite their territorial fragmentation. I introduce the concept of border assemblage to advance the analysis of these interacting multiple dimensions that produce contingent border configurations, to which the Ticuna have to constantly adapt in order to survive. The term assemblage was coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), and it became a valuable tool for analysing phenomena resulting from the conjunction of heterogeneous parts. This concept challenges the logic of unity, totality, and essences in favour of

multiplicity (DeLanda 2006; Marcus & Saka 2006; Nail 2017). Unlike totalities, the constituent parts of an assemblage do not form a seamless whole, and every component retains a certain degree of autonomy from the configuration it forms part of.

My use is inspired by recent studies that have applied the concept of assemblages to frame ensembles of elements that emerge in specific places and moments. For example, Collier and Ong´s global assemblages (2005); Cons and Eilenberg´s frontier assemblages (2019); or Mezzadra and Neilson´s assemblages of power (2013). What is common among these uses is that when applied to a concrete reality, they help to describe a contingent arrangement of intertwined elements (sociocultural logics, economic dynamics, political processes) operating across different scales and temporalities.

The term border assemblages emphasises the resulting dynamics of the articulation of different kinds of borders, and whether they produce connections, disjunctions, tension, conflict, or friction. It draws attention to the fact that these different types of borders have a constitutive role in shaping realities, and it helps us understand why social actors actively engage in struggles over their definition. It constitutes an effort to capture the essential dimensions of the present-day Ticuna world, where they live immersed in multiple logics of inclusion and exclusion, and in regimes of meaning that impact their everyday lives. In the following section, I present some of the analytic discussions that the description of a border assemblage allows us to bring forth regarding the persistence of Ticuna identity: the importance of political and economic autonomy and the relevance of connections and border crossing.

Ticuna ethnic identity

My research sought to answer the following questions: to what extent do the Ticuna people consider themselves a unified transnational ethnic group and how does the border matter to the persistence of the Ticuna people as a social group? From the beginning of my fieldwork, it was apparent that the Ticuna preserve a sense of unity despite living scattered across three different (albeit adjacent) countries, whose borderlines evidently shape the dynamics of the region. Nonetheless, the understanding of the determinant dynamics behind this research problem required an exploration of the struggles over the definition of borders. Ticuna people preserve a sense of strong belonging to their ethnic group by maintaining spaces of autonomy and practising strategic border crossing, two key dimensions of the disputes around the border assemblages. These analytical dimensions appear in the body of the dissertation, but I will address them in greater detail here.

The Ticuna capacity to persist as a distinctive ethnic group is an outcome of their historic struggle against exploitation, dispossession and subordination that, under different guises (conquest, colonisation, slavery, servitude, and indigenism), almost exterminated them as an ethnic group. The most important outcome of the Ticuna social mobilisation that started in the 1970s and still continues is the recovery of the land from which they had been dispossessed. Thanks to that successful experience of organisation, the material and cultural conditions of Ticuna subsistence are nowadays anchored on the access and management of collective land and on forms of self-government.

Autonomy

The Ticuna have built alternative forms of living, different to those promoted by the state and capital under the banner of civilisation and development. Their autonomy is sustained by their access to commons and the recognition of their own forms of political organisation. In chapter three, I analyse Ticuna autonomy as a refusal of complete incorporation to the capitalist logic of production. Additionally, in chapter five, I analyse political autonomy as an organisational space distinct from the sovereign power on which the state-form is based. Autonomy appears as a possibility, an anti-systemic alternative.

It is necessary to frame Ticuna society in historical perspective. The incorporation of the indigenous territories and populations first into the colonial states and later into the nation-states was done through the dispossession and subalternation of the original population of the continent. A new order resulted from violent conquest and the imposition of colonial regimes. The different strategies used by the colonial powers to control the Upper Amazon territories consolidated patterns of domination that persist until today. The domination of the native populations relied on the category of indio and the principle of terra nullius, both key elements of coloniality analysed in chapter one.

By the second half of the 20th century, the formation of national indigenous movements finally started reversing hundreds of years of domination. Each country in the tri-border region passed different legislations regarding Indigenous peoples' rights. The Ticuna population ended up living in ethnic territories under three different legal categories: terras indígenas in Brazil, comunidades nativas in Peru, and resguardos indígenas in Colombia.

I characterise autonomy as alternatives to the capitalist economy and state assimilation. The Ticuna people have built, along with other indigenous peoples, an alternative to the logics of capitalism and the state, containing, at least in their territories, the tendency towards the complete commodification of life and the imposition of coercive power as a way to organise collective life. The comunidades nativas,

resguardos and terras indigenas are territories with political and economic logics based on their own cultural values. They are not explicitly anti-state and anti-capitalist, but they do represent alternatives to them. The Ticuna define these alternatives of economic and political autonomy as the capacity to lead one's life according to the values considered desirable for a good life.

In the communities where I conducted my research, people sustain themselves through horticulture and fishing. My interlocutors know that traditional forms of subsistence are only possible thanks to the access they have to land and forest resources. They regard land titling as an essential political triumph derived from their organisation for the recognition of their collective rights. In the three villages studied here, any community member can access a plot of land to cultivate a garden. Regardless of their community of origin or nationality, people who identify as Ticuna can request the rights of possession and use inside the communal territory. The Ticuna resist the commodification of all spheres of life and value other aspects of productive work, such as sociability and motricity, not just the production of exchange value.

The resulting dissimilarities in local government structures and the modalities of territorial rights in the three villages are significant. However, two institutions became central for all of them in the practice of self-government: the chieftaincy and the assembly. I propose to frame both as forms of non-sovereign powers that emerged from the new realities of social life (permanent, multifamily nucleated villages) and incorporated values upheld by the Ticunas as important regarding the type of person and society they want to produce.

The Ticuna conception of chieftaincy as someone who works for the community and solely enacts mandates from the assembly is not the result of an egalitarian ideology between abstract subjects. It emanates from the values of autonomy and self-sufficiency, anchored in the idea that a tranquil, peaceful life can be achieved through a radical respect for another's capacity to decide for themselves. It does not mean that life in common is devoid of conflicts, only that these are not resolved by the coercion of the local authority (rumours, gossip, and witchcraft are usually used to solve these differences).

This expression of autonomy is the outcome of fifty years of struggle and political organisation that often required the Ticuna to adapt to new forms of organisation. These instances of autonomy do not exist as externalities of the state or the capitalist economy; they coexist in constant tension and are interconnected. Therefore, another fundamental dimension of the border assemblage is the Ticuna capacity to transit between social fields.

Connections and border crossings

The concept of borderland shifts our focus away from the borderline to the adjacent territories that surround it. The concept is analogous to the notions of border landscape, border zone and border region (Donnan & Wilson 1999; Wilson & Donnan 2012). I employ the similar term of cross-border region to highlight the dynamic dimension that complements the bounded spaces in which autonomy operates. Here I draw attention to the relationships that unfold across different kinds of borders. This involves displacements from one side of a border to another. It usually entails the transformation of economic, cosmologic, and cultural regimes of value.

Throughout the dissertation, I have insisted that mobility is as important as the delimitations that borders create. The main characteristic of the Amazonian border region is the fluidity of the people that inhabit it — so much so that I describe it as a cross-border region because, as I found out, Ticuna people constantly navigate across the limits created and framed by the borders.

My ethnographic data demonstrated that despite the borderlines and the differences they established, people moved almost without significant impediment, making connections and creating networks through borders that ideas, people, and objects continually travelled through and over.

The most evident of these border crossings are the international crossings. Ticuna life is characterised by everyday travel by canoe to visit friends and family, to buy or sell products, or to carry out some bureaucratic procedure or attend a celebration.

The frontier that delimited different types of production logics is also frequently traversed by many of the dwellers in the localities where I conducted my research. These types of border crossings involve the transformation of value. These conversions are fundamental for the survival of the communities in which I worked, since none is capable of reproducing itself outside the sphere of the capitalist economy. Whether to sell or buy goods, work temporarily for a wage, or receive cash transfers from the government, practically all the members of the Ticuna communities studied here participate in the articulation of these two economic spheres. I even described crossings that involve a certain degree of illegality, like the passing of smuggled goods across the border or temporarily working in the coca crops in Peru.

Political spheres also depended to some extent on the transition between non-coercive local powers and the application of state force in cases where the police had to intervene, or when the respective national elections required the participation of the Ticuna by means of voting, since their local government system is inserted in the traditional systems of representation of their respective countries.

Border crossings constitute a dimension that complements the previous section on the autonomy that the Ticuna have established at the local level. While this autonomy contains the embryo and the possibility of carrying out a life partially outside the state and the capitalist economy, it paradoxically depends on the existence of certain connections to survive. As Gaya Makaran argued, “In this sense, it is crucial to highlight the inevitably ‘impure’ character of anti-systemic autonomies, which can hardly demand mandatory autarky or be imagined in a total ‘outside’, being immersed in a complex network of relations with the State-capital” (2020:21).

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