Countering Modernity

This volume highlights and examines how Indigenous peoples continue to inhabit the world in counter-modern ways. It illustrates how communalist practices and cooperative priorities of many Indigenous communities are simultaneously key to their cultural survival while being most vulnerable to post-colonial erasure. Chapters contributed by community collectives, elders, lawyers, scholars, multi-generational collaboratives, and others are brought together to highlight the communal and cooperative strategies that counter the modernizing tropes of capitalist, industrialist, and representational hegemonies. Furthermore, the authors of the book explicitly interrogate the roles of witness, collaborator, advocate, and community leader as they consider ethical relations in contexts of financialized global markets, ongoing land grabbing and displacement, epistemic violence, and post-colonial erasures.

Lucid and topical, the book will be indispensable for students and scholars of anthropology, modernity, capitalism, history, sociology, human rights, minority studies, indigenous studies, Asian studies, and Latin American studies.

Carolyn Smith-Morris is a medical anthropologist and professor at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, O'Donnell School of Public Health. Her research documents the experience of chronic disease, particularly diabetes, among Indigenous and Mexican immigrant communities and contributes to theories of chronicity and decolonization of healthcare. Her books include two monographs (*Diabetes Among the Pima: Stories of Survival* and *Indigenous Communalism: Belonging, Healthy Communities, and Decolonizing the Collective*) and two edited volumes on medical anthropology. She is also a contributing researcher and author with Cultural Survival in support of Indigenous rights.

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Countering Modernity

Communal and Cooperative Models from Indigenous Peoples

Edited by
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César Abadía-Barrero

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2025
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 9781032698045 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781032753478 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781003473565 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565

Typeset in Sabon
by Taylor & Francis Books

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Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
Format: 234_x_156_mm_(6.14_x_9.21) (156 × 234 mm); Style: A; Font:
Sabon;
Dir: P:/Frontlist Production Teams/eProduction/Live Projects/9781032698045/

Introduction

Relational Communities and Their Entanglements with Modernity: On Co-Laboring with Indigenous Voices

César Abadía-Barrero and Carolyn Smith-Morris

There is growing awareness of the limits of our modern enterprise to protect the earth's natural, cultural, and human heritage. In response, intellectuals and advocates have produced a corresponding surge in tropes of de-colonialism and the limits of capitalist democracy. New calls for counterpoints and remedies to the harms of modernity emerge with each generation and the global movements that have mobilized – from protests over the COP[1] treaties, to land reform programs, to initiatives in defense of human rights – draw together an increasingly familiar cast of advocates including environmentalists, climate activists, human rights advocates, scientists, and – often in leadership roles – Indigenous peoples.

What does a counterpoint to modernity's harms entail, and why are Indigenous peoples so commonly present at, if not leading, this counter-modernity agenda? The modern capitalist and corporate dominance was built through just a few hundred years of circumnavigating imperialism and violence. Yet the growth of capitalist markets meant the spread of a new mode of relationship between humans based not on relational ethics, but on one's capacity for the violent extraction of profit from racialized labor and plunder of the natural world. The global reach of these corporate actors not only dwarfs local action, but forces changes in our willingness to commit locally, to care for our own nest and the other birds in it.

Rather than the "cruel" failed promise that Eurocentric enlightened paradigms would bring about a betterment of humanity, modernity is seen in this book as a continuation of histories of imperial atrocity that, allegedly, has brought benefit to some while furthering colonial harms and destruction to most humans, our other-than-human kin, and Mother Earth (Berlant, 2010). For example, Indigenous epistemologies continue to experience a forced change in language and practices of territory, governance, or well-being under oppressive systems in the modern moment that mimic the political, legal, economic, and military domination of imperial eras. In this view of modernity, the empire is no longer limited to national structures (nation-states) but expands from and with the help of nation-states to transnational corporate and legal forces (Hardt & Negri, 2001). These forces are predominantly capitalist, representational, and homogenizing (Robertson, 1995; Chandler & Reid, 2019;

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-1

Asher & Wainwright, 2019). Hence, and as the authors of this book argue, the violence of modernity is enacted through jurisprudence, museography, communications, educational practices, agricultural technologies, liberal democratic mechanisms of participation or welfare, global commerce of "cultural objects," among others, to negate, diminish or attack the value and the beauty of communal ways to build life plans. For us, modernity therefore represents a continuum rather than a departure from imperial violence, coerced through military, political, cultural, economic and epistemic impositions.

To resist these forces of imperialism and violence, one must somehow check the tyranny of large-scale processes that erase local needs, differences, and values. When voices from Indigenous peoples are noticed, time and again, global powers and international bodies and organizations hear their cries for respecting and protecting Mother Earth and promoting relationality and local, communal values rather than wealth accumulation and harm to nature as a way to nurture prosperity and balance. Relational changes driven by capitalist encounters are relentless – as scholars from Escobar and Wolf, to Esping-Anderson and Rivera Cusicanqui have argued – in disrupting and eroding communal social organization and political processes (Cusicanqui, 2012; Escobar, 1991, 2018; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Wolf, 1982). Indigenous peoples are key actors in the resistance to the biopolitics of large-scale groupings, like the imposed borders and identity politics of the nation-state or globalized technopowers easily enforced via high technology and mass media. These values recognize our earth-bound subsistence and promote peaceful enjoyment over capitalist consumerism and growth. In short, Indigenous peoples are often leaders in the counter-modernity movements because their lifeways – not simply their markets, or the cost of their commodities – are under attack. Countering modernity is therefore about re-establishing relational communities and re-aligning consumption with human and planetary goods.

The authors in this volume seek the processes and politics of conviviality, among and across beings. We recognize ongoing entanglements with modernity that are neither total nor homogenizing. Many of us view communalist practices as both a form of resistance and of historical continuity with who we are as peoples. Surviving, the chapters in this book clearly illustrate, is not simply an expression of resistance but a profound exercise to continue being. While under current versions of decoloniality, Indigenous struggles can be read as the new important historical force that can shift larger economic, political, and social relationships, we also witness conflicts in confronting and challenging colonial structures, and reconquering an expansive ethical, political, and practical sense of what it means to live collectively. To decenter our assumptions, we have loosely followed the guidance of Giraud and Lallement (2021) in examining three inherited frames contributing to erasures in social science: Eurocentrism, the national (or nation-state) context as a "given" level for analysis, and the boundaries of academic disciplines. First, we are concerned with the non-commensurability of non-colonial forms that Indigenous authors share, and to engage with those more genuinely. Second, across this volume we

use multiscalar viewpoints as a strategy for resisting nation-state centeredness. Challenging the notion and problems of scale (e.g., global, transnational, national, local) demands not only attention to our own signification process (Amelina, 2012; Amelina & Faist, 2012) but watchfulness over "a transcendent position of the researcher" (Marston et al., 2005: 422). Scales are not "conceptual givens" (ibid.), but space is *both* real and constructed (Soja, 1989), requiring both local advocacy and sentient signification that is awake to consequences. Third, we ask readers "to suspend judgement and to work more in-depth on local cases without presuming they are the mere situated reproduction of configurations that Western researchers tend to associate to universal ones" (Giraud & Lallement, 2021: 18). Our attention to these priorities is flawed and incomplete, but in promoting local authors and long-term engaged collaborative groups to speak for themselves, without regard to academic paradigms of knowledge production, we believe the volume achieves an important set of goals.

Communal is Relational

Communalism is simply a value abstraction. Why give attention to such a general, dangerously universalizing framework? For starters, families and communities must generate a sense of belonging and inclusion in their members. Some mental, spiritual, and emotional experiences must occur. That experience, whatever we call it, births cooperative and collaborative social engagements, and can reach beyond individual community members to ancestral and future relations as well as to non-human beings. The authors in this volume highlight communalism as a touchstone for understanding community's presence despite modernity's manipulation of these ideals via scalar economic, legal, and scientific ideologies. Indigenous models for social cohesion and governance, once formative to the same colonial governments that would dominate them (Starna & Hamell, 1996) have been largely ignored as sources of political know-how. Yet at a time when post-state and anti-colonial models are finally being explored, Indigenous communities can offer expertise in consensus-building, long-term and sustainable human-ecosystem partnerships, and gender-equitable governance, just to name a few. As the cases in this volume attest, communal values and priorities have not been *destroyed* by hyper-individualized liberalism, they have been made *invisible*. Promoting attention to these communal processes will not only repair and redress past erasures through more reflexive and collaborative research and publication models, it might also guide better science and policy.

Necessary for any discussion of communalism, then, is a probing inquiry into the legal, epistemological, and moral assumptions of the industrial, settler state. Powerful influencers in global markets and politics are rooted in assumptions of liberal individualism, a Western philosophical construct that is typically named the binary opposite of communalism. But this is a false binary. Communalism and individualism are values that inform myriad choices and

actions over a lifetime, and exist simultaneously within all communities and its members (Smith-Morris, 2020). Far from destroying individualism, communal forces inform and populate the ways that individuals express themselves. Individualism is channeled into a limited set of prescribed models by each cultural community. One goal of this collection is to demonstrate – in the collaborative work of authors and in the content of their arguments – that Indigenous communalism is not limited to a singular, unified voice nor even to official membership in a tribe or "nation".

From this fluid conceptualization, we can consider how Indigenous peoples counter modernity in ways that retain and revitalize their communal, relational lifeways. These authors attempt to name communal processes in order to value and protect them. Yet in marking these practices as "Indigenous" – because that is characteristic of the peoples who more commonly value and practice them – we draw them under the gaze of our social science, the proverbial diorama glass. These chapters are, therefore, occasionally tentative, warning against cooptation and manipulation by academic actors and institutions patterned in the over-interpretation and metaphorization of consequential, local events. As Jürgen Habermas first said in 1980, "the term 'modern' again and again expresses the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new" (Habermas & Ben-Habib, 1981: 3). We must, then, be ever vigilant not to valorize the past (of antiquity, or of colonial or even pre-colonial epochs) in our efforts to deconstruct modernity. We aim to speak to local priorities through positioned voices and with wariness against metaphorical and generalizing tropes.

Various Indigenous relational and cooperative models including *Buen Vivir*, Living with Rom, and other alternatives resist generalization, and for good reason. This volume is filled with voices speaking of site- and community-specific ideals, most times borne across generations to the current stewards of any given place. Several authors therefore examine the potential violences of representative democracies, the trope of nationhood, and even the human exceptionalist perspective on identity. Others are concerned with capitalist market influence on the livelihoods of community members, and on the anti-capitalist or hybrid movements that have appeared across the spectrum of Indigenous strategies for survivance. Bird-David will suggest that communal models may only be safely encapsulated by the framework of "being many," without assumption or even attempt to delineate how, why, or in what set of values a particular people will express (Bird-David, Chapter 8 in this volume). This volume takes her idea to heart. We examine and explode extant presumptions that Indigenous communities will, for example, expand economically into the capitalist market, engage in greater scales and more sedentary forms of subsistence agriculture, and/or participate in representative democracies. We consider the damaging impact of counting and valuing a people solely in numerical ways, and we counter the grand narrative of modernity by demonstrating the ways in which Indigenous peoples are – already and still –

preserving consensual governance, respecting the teachings of ancestors, and preserving relational harmony within and across groups and their environments. The volume pays witness to the counter-modern strategies of smaller-scale, geographically self-determined, and intergenerationally committed lifeways represented by these Indigenous peoples. Finally, we call for others to not only advance deeper strategies of decolonized entanglements but to intentionally disperse power across a wider sphere of knowledge producers. We echo Joel Kahn's caution for those working with Indigenous peoples, that any author is "dragged inexorably into a direct encounter with modernity at the same time as its peoples have been enmeshed in modern processes of commodification, instrumentalization, and rationalization" (Kahn, 2001: 654). We value collaboration and co-ownership of knowledge and hope, in our relationships to each other and the peoples about/with whom we speak, to promote Indigenous equity of power in the written word.

Of course, Indigenous relational priorities are also fraught. Communities face their own challenges – syncretic forms of relationship, exclusionary and inclusionary politics, and symbolic and representative politics that cloud even local ideas of these issues (Quiroga, 1999; Taussig, 1987). Likewise, global processes are incomplete and motile assemblages (Amelina & Faist, 2012; DeLanda, 2006), so the idea of globalization is largely a false discourse deployed to claim order where it is, instead, chaotic. The effects of this totalizing discourse have fogged our understanding of "poverty" (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; Cochrane, 2009), of "health" (Biehl & Petryna, 2013; Farmer, 2004; Susser, 1993), and of "charity" (Nguyen, 2010; Scherz, 2018). The colonial era itself was an assemblage, a period of time to which have attributed enduring systems of structural racism, economic exploitation, and enduring poverty. To "de" colonize therefore means giving back land and autonomy (Tuck & Yang, 2012), allowing self-determination rather than colonizer rule, and more carefully parsing of the assemblages of actors (Mackey & Liang, 2012; Minn, 2022; Panosian & Coates, 2006), bureaucracies (Farmer, 1999; Gupta, 2012), mechanisms (Dumit, 2012; S. Erikson, 2019; S. L. Erikson, 2012, 2015), policies (Açıksöz, 2012; Dewachi, 2017), and metrics (Adams, 2016; Haiven, 2014a, 2014b).

Encounters

What impact do scholarly representations play in modernity's exclusions and minoritizations of Indigenous peoples? Disciplinary and professional encounters are rife with colonizing positionalities (Asad, 1973; Bhabha, 1994; M. Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre, 2020) to the degree that any profession dedicated explicitly to cross-cultural encounters or collaborations is insidiously constitutive. Accordingly, we have asked each authoring group to explain the relationships between authors as well as their roles in the production of knowledge for the chapter itself. This is particularly important for chapters without an Indigenous co-author, but relevant even when Indigenous people

have a place in the byline since the project of written representations such as this is itself a political act for a large-scale audience. These attempts at transparency are, we acknowledge, just one strategy to engage with the tools of modernity while prioritizing local, Indigenous voices.

Most disciplines, anthropology included, shift their epistemological certainties over time, their methodological priorities, and even their ethical principles. Our strategy has been to expose some of those transitions by engaging authors who would speak openly to continuity and change over time within their own work, and to consider how such shifts have been authored by (or harmful to) Indigenous peoples. Our purpose is not to reduce Indigenous identity or Indigenous polity to ontological definitions (Chandler & Reid, 2019: 5; Chandler & Reid, 2020). Suggesting the existence of a singular Indigenous knowledge is to engage in reductionism; similarly, the suggestion of one definition of communalism would be erroneous. Yet there are lessons to take from Indigenous peoples whose survival in modernity is an inherently collective achievement. Indigenous peoples' senses and practices of conviviality and their complex historical kinship and multi-species relationships are among these lessons. When these lessons are authored by Indigenous people themselves, some repair of academia's intellectual habits can occur. Thus, many Indigenous authors here speak for themselves and may, or may not, claim the right to speak for their communities. The anthropologists in this volume speak to engagements that do not turn Indigenous peoples into "a vicarious stage army for critical scholars meeting the fashionable demand to develop non-modern approaches to knowledge production" (ibid.: 95). We have aimed for Indigenous ownership of these expressions through author bylines or, when that was not possible, through reflection and expression of the authors' relationships with and authority to write about the communities addressed. Each chapter will share details on these.

Our insistence on the need for models, indeed this volume that joins together voices in dialogue only through means of modern technology, troubles our central message of local communalism. By engaging at a mass scale, do participants somehow reject or deny the local, relational priorities expressed so consistently by Indigenous leaders? We offer no simple answer to that problem. History, as written through empire brutality and colonial analytics, leaves us largely incapable of an imaginary that remains engaged in local relationality while conceptualizing the global persistence of this phenomenon (Hardt & Negri, 2001). If only a beginning, the priority we give to the relational authority of each authored piece is our embodied and phenomenological strategy. At a minimum, we hope we have avoided an "essentialist" and "exoticizing" perspectival approach (Ramos, 2012). Indeed, some of our authors speak from a deeply activist and entangled position, forcing the reader to consider the reality of Indigenous struggles and not simply an imaginary and speculative set of problems.

The impact of scholarly representations of Indigenous peoples might be measured in the historic exclusion of their voices from academic and scientific

bylines. We are pointing here not solely to the exclusion of Indigenous people from centers of learning and terminal credentials, but from definitions of knowledge. The epistemological assumptions behind authorial credit decisions are unnecessarily restrictive. Take, for instance, the broad flexibility some scientific journals enjoy to name hundreds of authors involved in a single publication; yet Indigenous interlocutors, leaders, elders, and communities have historically been excluded from these bylines, their intellectual property relegated to a category of data made meaningful only by a credentialed outsider's analysis. Another impact, only partially attributed to scholarly habits, is in the minoritization of Indigenous peoples as ethnic groups. The decades-long efforts of Indigenous people to establish the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples cemented and explained this critical distinction between Indigenous and minority (Koopmans & Statham, 1999; Kymlicka & Wayland, 1996). It is a distinction heavily informed by the post-colonial realities of our world, by militarized and legally violent occupation of territories, by confinement, and in the words of one Mapuche author, artist, and documentary filmmaker who here suggests the meaning(s) behind his cover image on our book:

> the barriers of a *threaded* enclosure toward the *outside* of the subtle but effective trellises of the exhibition enclosure or from the conditioned border of the photographic frame. In turn, the constrained limits of Indigenous reduction would transform those edges into a double exercise: An *inward* of the culture that had for need of survival, to learn to reread the ancient tradition, at the same time, and *outward* of the public discourse that sought the respect of the Chilean authorities, calling itself before them as "Araucanians" and the supposed germ of the Chilean nationality.
>
> (Francisco Huichaqueo-Pérez)

At the local level, however, non-Indigenous people, including anthropologists, are learning how to become closer to Indigenous knowledges and practices in a way that the idea is neither expropriation, nor claiming "becoming Indigenous." Perhaps one of the most radical ruptures for people who have been socialized under the auspices of colonial mentality is that practicing communalism demands that we awaken our capacity to *sentipensar*, that inseparable process of thinking–feeling long proposed by Latin American scholars working with peasant and Indigenous struggles to capture how reality, practice, words, and relationships are always felt, desired, and conceptualized (Escobar, 2018; Rappaport, 2020). Perhaps this is how non-Indigenous people have been learning how to *Mambear* and the meanings attached to it. *Mambear*, according to elders from Amazonian Indigenous communities in Colombia in this book, is "an ancestral practice of human–nature rapport in which people put a spoonful of *mambe* (coca leaf roasted with ashes of the *yarumo* leaf) in their mouths." According to them, *mambe* is a spiritual and physical medicine and a source of knowledge. Hence *Mambear* is both intimate and

collective, emotional and cognitive. Learning the words of the ancestors demands attunement to individual and collective feelings among and across beings, and it is in those multiple encounters with plants, ancestors, elders and even non-Indigenous peoples where opportunities to counter the legacies of modernity get created. We hope that this book conveys those encounters and facilitates new ones.

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Overview of the Chapters

This overview of the conversations ahead identifies the driving priorities in counter-modern communal work. How do cultural groups or communities generate communal and cooperative priorities? How do they maintain their communal ideals in the face of long and continuing colonial, capitalist, and representational influences? And how do communalist endeavors approach change, such that communities can hold together and resolve conflicts despite pressures of increasingly globalized forms of mobility, individualized market participation, and representational governance? To answer these questions, we turn to the teachings of elders, both women and men, and ancestors from whom traditional and communal knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. As the collection opens, the ancestral Indigenous voice is prominent and readers are called upon to read with multiple senses. Each author makes clear their authorial position and the authority with which they speak, so that the tone of the chapters varies according to these positionalities. As readers move through the volume, the later chapters include more strategies for Indigenous engagement with modernity and more non-Indigenous voices reflecting on lessons of Indigenous art, expression, and representations.

Communalism As Ancestral Knowledge and Balance Across Many Beings

Several chapters offer a different view on how survivance and furthering ancestral knowledge and traditions keep Indigenous communalism alive and "in and out" of the forces of capital and modernity (Tsing, 2015). The power of many chapters makes evident that the aspect that defies more profoundly modernity and its many forms of violence, oppression, and ongoing dispossession, is Indigenous knowledge. Hence, maintaining Indigenous knowledge, transmitting it to newer generations, and even non-Indigenous peoples, becomes the most important practice of communalism. While still entangled with modernity, and at times subsumed by its logics, the words, teachings, and experiences of elders and ancestors continue orienting Indigenous communities in modes of caring, dignity, or restitution that exemplify words otherwise. At the heart of the politics of ancestral knowledge is the formation of an Indigenous self, further emphasizing that individual self and community are not at odds in discussions of communalism (Smith-Morris, 2020). Rather, the

communalist values and ways of thinking and acting are at the core of how each individual member of the community sees themselves as subjects, negotiating their sense of belonging while at the same time acting according to new demands of history for hybrid positionality characterized by continued enactment of traditional knowledge while also gaining access to non-Indigenous education and potentially enrolling the labor market at a professional level.[2]

Perhaps the two most important lessons of seeing ancestral knowledge as the core of communalism are: First, ancestral knowledge is materialized in narrations and recognizable in the Indigenous voice that filled the chapters' pages. As a methodological contribution, we hear many direct accounts of Indigenous people narrating their ancestral ways of life and being a community. Second, this ancestral knowledge teaches about the recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans with many other material and spiritual beings in the world, all of them belonging to Mother Earth. Hence, the chapters in this section extend notions of communalism beyond the human.

Ancestral knowledge and the practices that maintain communalist values are never static, however. Dynamicity, mobility, or adaptations speak to how cultures get transformed, and have always been over time, since before colonial conquest and through the many ongoing harms and dispossessions. Historical, geographic, and territorial changes, complement the group-based scales of communalism identified by Simpson, Tapias, and Smith-Morris (Chapter 10). Historical changes bring about new intercultural and inter-species relationships that influence how Indigenous people maintain and adapt communalist values and practices to new social and ecological realities. Undoubtedly, European conquest comes across as the turning point of communalism understood as balanced relationships among humans, ancestors, and territories with its many other-than-human beings.[3]

In their chapter, Alvarado-Cañuta and Huichaqueo-Pérez (Chapter 1) explain that the *Küme Mongen* is the way and philosophy of life of the ancestral Mapuche people in Chile, the norm of balance of communal intention and action between all types of life and the environment. Crucially, they show how the colonial destruction of the *Küme Mongen*, aided by the lack of recognition and further harms that have come since the formation of the Chilean state, leaves many open wounds that need to be healed. They resort to Mapuche intellectuals and artists to offer us the Mapuche concepts that explain the complex ways in which Indigenous epistemologies see how everything is interconnected and how respect and reciprocity maintain balance. In a beautiful explanation of the material, historical, and cultural elements of communalism, Alvarado-Cañuta and Huichaqueo-Pérez show a *Trig Metawe*, a cracked vessel that the West sees as an archaeological artifact to be collected and exhibited in museums, even in progressive museographic proposals as a way to honor Indigenous pasts. Alvarado-Cañuta and Huichaqueo-Pérez, however, argue that these are not museum objects but memory garments that represent the Mapuche nation as a broken community. The vessel (Metawe)

contains a diverse and wounded people. The crack (*Trig*) not only reflects colonial violence as an open communal wound, but, in their words, "causes all the contents of the *Metawe* to leak out, the water, the grain, the *muday* (Mapuche drink) escapes involuntarily. In our case, the spirituality, the cosmovision, the community foundation that mobilizes escapes: the *Küme Mongen* escapes." Such a powerful example of colonial wounds and the importance of repair extends the discussions of reparations beyond land restitution, symbolic reparations, or even monetary compensations. The "simple" act of repairing the crack of the vessel is a way to start repairing kidnapped memories, knowledge, language, identities and communalist intentions and practices, so that *Küme Mongen* can also be brought back.

By resorting to the words, knowledge, and teaching of elders, chapters by Verón and Guimarães (Chapter 2), Ennis et al. (Chapter 3), and three different Amazonian groups in Colombia (Chapter 4) further convey how Indigenous ways of conceiving and practicing communalism are at odds with Western-dominated ideas of what is considered valid knowledge and the political actions that derive from the colonial epistemology of scientificism. Besides several critiques of Western ideas and ideals, these chapters describe a sense of communalism that speaks of interactions among many beings in a given territory. Following discussions of ontopolitical difference, for these Indigenous groups, a human being cannot be conceived as separated from the many beings that inhabit both the territories and their own bodily and spiritual selves. This understanding is important not to satisfy the new colonialist academic curiosity to capture the other by expropriating their knowledge and turning it into a theory (Chandler & Reid, 2020), nor to save the white settler moral guilt from the global catastrophe that modernity created. Several chapters in this part make clear that repairing our relationship with Mother Earth is important not because it follows environmental activism either, but because regaining balance under Indigenous stewardship is at the core of Indigenous ethics, politics, and struggles.

For the Kaiowá people who live in what is now considered Brazil (Chapter 2), *Nhandesy* Julia (one of the women religious/political leaders of the Kaiowá people who orients and guides according to the good Kaiowá way of life) explains how women transmit their knowledge to new generations with a strong sense of conviviality. Fire, *Nhandesy* Julia explains "represents the union, the protection of life, of the other, protecting the other against hunger, against the cold." The kind of wood used produces different smokes and is chosen carefully depending on the needs for cooking, healing, or protection. Furthermore, around the house fire, children learn

> how to eat, when to eat and what to eat, about the powers of plants and animals as food and for healing, about drinks and how to make them … Around the fire, they feel the smoke and the food flowing, the talks as well as the smoke touch the bodies of the elders and pass through the children.

Around the fire, "beautiful words emerge …," leaders emerge as they speak their words and political decisions are taken. Just as the *Trig Metawe* of the Mapuche, the Kaiowá and other Indigenous people in this book see plants, trees, animals, water, and fire as beings with agency and humanity that demand knowledge and caring. Such cosmopolitics of communalism, as Verón and Guimarães put it following de la Cadena and Stengers' formulation, is central to this book's contributions.

Hence, when elders transmit knowledge about plants, trees, animals, water, fire, and so on, they are teaching about the importance of communalism as a connection across many beings. *Nhandesy* Julia explains the healing powers of certain plants and trees, and how ceremonies add to the need to know and respect forest cycles, including when and how much to take from these beings for human needs. Knowledge transmission, however, has been wounded since the European conquest and through ongoing harms imposed by modern state regulations and old and new acts of aggression on Indigenous peoples and their territories. Several Indigenous elders describe the need to keep ancestral knowledge alive and are considering new strategies so that new generations of Indigenous people, and even non-Indigenous people, learn from them and start revaluing their colonialist knowledge about nature and "materializing" ancestral words in practice. In Chapter 3, Gissela Yumbo, María Antonia Shiguango, Ofelia Salazar, and Olga Chongo from Association of Upper Napo Kichwa Midwives (AMUPAKIN) in Ecuador, along with their white sister Georgia Ennis, narrate the story of their organization, guided by the "*runa kawsay* 'Runa lifeways' and as *ruku kawsay* 'the lifeways of the elder.'" Just as their Amazonian cousins from Colombia in their chapter, the Runa consider the forest and gardens to be their pharmacy, and highlight how women's knowledge and transmission occur in their sustainable, plentiful, and varied system of crop production, the *Chagras*. AMUPAKIN was the result of Indigenous women organizing to transmit the knowledge of elder women to new generations as a political communal practice that recuperates communal ways of labor, such as the *minga*, and adds to a "medical, cultural, and linguistic reclamation." Funding projects and activities brought about many of the known problems and negotiations required to fit group needs and ideas within the demands of funding organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental. As a gift for this book, this group of women reflected on the four features of communalism originally proposed by Smith-Morris (Belonging, Generation, Representation, and Hybridity), helping further elaborate on each of these categories from their perspective and signaling their contemporary challenges vis-a-vis funding mechanisms, politics of representation, and so on.

Just as their Runa cousins of AMUPAKIN, Amazonian elders in Colombia expressed in Chapter 4 historical shifts from preserving secret their knowledge to going public through written publications. While one of the main drivers for AMUPAKIN to write their words is to gain visibility, for the Uitoto, Korebajú, and Muinane elders in Colombia is about sharing their knowledge with newer generations and with non-Indigenous people. Both the Runa in Ecuador and

the Uitoto, Korebajú and Muinane in Colombia are weary and aware that non-Indigenous people continue misusing, profiting, and disrespecting their knowledge. In the case of Amazonian Colombian groups, however, it is very important that non-Indigenous people learn the value of plants from an Indigenous perspective, so that they can understand and shift their value system from one of stigmatization, destruction, or commercialization (for example around the sacred plants like coca, tobacco, or marihuana) to one of deep respect, caring and recognition as a source of power, memory, knowledge, and healing. Notwithstanding their openness to share their knowledge, Indigenous elders in Colombia recognize that ancestral knowledge about plants cannot be fully transmitted in written form, some medications need to be used carefully and only the elders know the specific conjures needed. As such, they raise a word of caution saying, "for the more specialized uses one must have the supervision of an elder." The incredible knowledge of elders, the result of millennia of knowledge transmission, puts them in the position of experts and women from AMUPAKIN make a clear call for such recognition. Although recognizing clear differences, just like children learn ancestral knowledge "through observation and repetition" and become the new generation of whatever Indigenous group they are a part of, non-Indigenous friends and kin can also learn Indigenous ways of life and, perhaps, start practicing the principles of Indigenous communalism. That is, at least, some of the hope expressed by Indigenous elders in the Colombian Amazon who believe that everyone should take care of humanity and Mother Earth through the teachings of Indigenous ancestors.

Finally, the chapters in these sections do not offer a clear conclusion since ancestral knowledge does not have the limits of academic Western time or writing. Many open-ended struggles around communalism speak to the dynamicity through which ancestral knowledge guides an array of communities that include other-than-human beings and other non-Indigenous groups that are resisting the ongoing and multiple forms of violence of modernity and colonialism.

Communalist Entanglements with Modernity

In the second part, authors begin to ask more explicitly how Indigenous peoples confront both the legacies and new expressions of dispossession, cooptation, or impoverishment that deplete their communalist ways of being and relationalities across time, species, and territories. Each of these chapters relates different strategies through which Indigenous actors use modern tools such as legislation, communications, markets, technologies, and art to reclaim or regenerate those material and spiritual elements that are key for their survivance (G. Vizenor, 2008; G. R. Vizenor, 1999). In these descriptions of Indigenous gains, limitations, and setbacks, the speakers in these chapters elucidate the field of power in which communalism is inserted. For example, advances in legislation to promote Indigenous autonomy or recognition, such as the

landmark Indigenous Law of 1977 and many constitutional laws (see chapters by Black et. al (Chapter 5), Akubadaura (Chapter 6), Morphy (Chapter 8), and Bolaños (Chapter 9)), confront a plethora of state and non-state actors that disregard or coopt these reforms. Furthermore, the tension between recognition of Indigenous rights within the logics of liberal law, privatization of land Hedges and Kipila (Chapter 7), and neoliberal multiculturalism results in social conflict across groups and inconsistencies within Indigenous justice mechanisms. Rather than pretend there are clean resolutions to such conflicts, our authors consistently point to the preservation of local consensus-building and long-term relational commitments as counter-modern strategies for moving forward.

Any conflict between representational political engagement aimed at communal land protection and the individualized desires of some community members to sell their land for income illustrates a key moral dilemma of modernity. In their collaborative biography, Black et al. capture this tension in Chapter 5 as it has occurred among the Brunkajc and other groups in Costa Rica in recent decades. Spanning a lifetime of advocacy in Costa Rica, both before and since the passage of the Indigenous Law of 1977, these elders and anthropologists discuss Boruca Indigenous Territory and the community's work to protect it. Understanding the complex burdens on community leaders as they struggle to meet local needs through the sometimes poorly fitting mechanisms of state law, United Nations mechanisms, and pan-Indigenous ideology, Don José Carlos Morales Morales – a Brunkajc elder – shares his perspectives on resistance and cooperation in the sometimes impossible contradiction of Indigenous rights within modern legal infrastructures. The protection of Indigenous land in Costa Rica has involved a struggle to push colonizers and settler descendants off demarcated Indigenous territories. And while some of these efforts are lauded globally as exemplary reparative justice, such results are not without Indigenous dissent. Communalism is not without its costs, but the relative weight of this value system becomes apparent as the impoverishment of capitalist contexts and minoritized citizenship weigh on Indigenous people of Costa Rica (Chapter 5), Australia (Chapters 11 and 13), and Norway (Chapter 12).

The *longue durée* of Indigenous survivance has required such strategic use of tools and perpetual vigilance for necessary repairs. While Costa Rica's Indigenous Law gave a degree of protection against state-sponsored development projects, since the time of its passage enforcement of the law has been lax and non-Indigenous persons who purchased Indigenous land (either legally before the law was passed or illegally afterward) are rarely confronted. In communities like Boruca, where community members have few ways to make a living other than farming and harvesting, not all agree with restrictions against individual property sales. Inconsistent enforcement of the Indigenous Law over the years has led to uneven treatments of land ownership across the community, which troubles the foundation of the social contract on which communal trust is built. These pressures ensure that enforcement of the law relies on both state

commitment and continued communal resolve. In taking up the ideas of "slow" or "attritional" violence (Nixon, 2011), the reader is called upon to estimate the long-term continuities and impacts of these engagements with modernity. For Morales and his wife, Leila Garro Valverde, Indigenous emancipatory practice (Perley, 2020) took the form of engagement in crafting laws at national and international scales to protect local communal possibilities. Morales, Garro, and other leaders navigate the few tools available to them in a historical moment when so much legal and large-scale (global/pan-Indigenous) work seems necessary. This biographical lens on the lifelong work of two elders conveys the complexity and perpetual nature of communal values; in this case, protecting Indigenous lands while meeting community members' needs and desires for engagement in capitalist markets. Their narratives are exquisite representations of the troubled pathway of communal values in modernity.

Can Indigenous relational and place-based values be reconciled against large-scale and institutional forces? These chapters look closely at contemporary Indigenous entanglements with modern structures for advocacy and self-assertion. As some have written (e.g., Paradies, 2020; Dussart & Poirier, 2017), modernity creates an impossible scenario that requires Indigenous people to work through colonial legal and political structures, in which their work ends up acknowledging and legitimizing that which they seek to dismantle. Developing legal and large-scale expertise has become a priority for many Indigenous peoples, because "law is a space of power that has historically been used to colonize, disregard [Indigenous] rights, [and] expropriate territories and extract the natural resources of Mother Earth" (Akubadaura, Chapter 6 in this volume). Yet the manner in which that expertise is achieved, and the process by which it may be deployed, remain vulnerable to cooptation and exploitation. Here, at the local scale, Indigenous communities must build local capacity while remaining vigilant to incorporative pressures.

The word *Akuburu* refers to those who support traditional doctors in Embera Chamí culture, giving an insider's name to a collective that involves both Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors. Relying on Indigenous jurisdiction and internal regulation, and "resorting to the institutional [only] in extreme cases," are guidelines by which Akubadaura in Chapter 6 attempts to resist the "colonial matrix characterized by individuality, racism and patriarchy" (ibid.). Their examples of women-led, Indigenous collaborations provoke a strong agenda of accompaniment, one mechanism of Indigenous leadership that can transcend scale without decentering the locally defined communal priority.

Communal values, however, can be eroded in more insidious ways such as the subdivision of communal lands into private plots and urbanization dynamics, which leads to an increase in individual subsistence activities and the loss of collective traditions. Hedges and Kipila explore this process in Purko Massai in Nairok, Kenya. In this case, it is not that external actors are threatening to remove the Massai people from their land exclusively. Shifts in property tenancy from pastoral and communal sharing economies and rituals

to impoverished individual households/landowners, also results in an increase in wage labor and a cash economy for subsistence. The centuries-old *Olpul* forest retreat stands as a communal strategy representative of the old days, in which the whole community eats, prays, sings, shares stories and seeks council.

The process of healing, however, does not refer to being together solely. The ways in which Maasai communities process and consume at the retreat a traditional soup rich in meat, fat, and herbs speaks to the potency of the collective preparations and intentions that boost the immune system, relieve tensions and worries, and give hope to the sick. In a sense, even if temporarily, the *Olpul* forest retreats as a communal local practice that emphasizes being together and receiving social support heals what individualistic modern lives and their associated capitalist economies break.

Bolaños and Bird-David tackle the drastic differences and repercussions of colonial and neocolonial approaches that the settler state uses to delineate communities and enforce participatory mechanisms. In Chapter 8, Bird-David turns communalism into a verb form, communitize, to contrast the different ways in which the British colonial empire, the Indian state, and the Nayaka people think of what constitutes a community. Against the Western demographic practice of grouping people and imagining communities, group configurations for Nayaka people are always shifting and in the making. In other words, there are "different modes of being many." And yet, the clash, first with British imperial forces and then with the Indian state that misses Nayaka's fluid ways of forming communities has always been present. The Nayaka dynamic modes of being many, however, also challenge modern scientific constructs by which anthropology has "imagined communities" and created ethnonyms to group people and make them legible. Hence, Nayaka different modes of being many offer anthropologists the wonderful challenge of abandoning the urge to group.

Affirmative action policies and other forms of political recognition of minoritized groups are at the heart of Bird-David's and Bolaños's chapters to show the contradictions and unexpected consequences of liberal politics of inclusion that do not address, misrecognize, or are at odds with dynamic forms of local communalism. The Indian state, where the Nayaka (also known as Kattu-Nayaka) live, included them in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order of 1950, two years after independence. Being recognized as Nayaka, or any other of the listed tribes of the list, grants access to state benefits, primarily government employment and higher education. The consequence of attaching benefits to tribe-demonstrated membership has been a flood of claims of people petitioning to be recognized as Indigenous and receive a "community certificate." As it goes with the heightened bureaucracy of piecemeal or quota-based benefits that depend on group belonging, processes to add a new ethnonym to the list of tribes or a new last name to a recognized tribe is convoluted and slow. In this process, a powerful bureaucratic and legal apparatus imagines "cultural traits" or "determining attributes" to assess if someone belongs to a group or is trying to falsely claim Indigenous identities. And yet, the Nayaka are mobile,

shifting, merging, and constantly creating groupings of people who are "with us" rather than "like us," even appending their names on the go and incorporating other-than-human beings as part of their community of co-residents of the forest. These communitizing ways of being many defy the bureaucratic attempts to contain them into fixed clearly identifiable groups and brings much chaos to the affirmative action process, which evinces the power of communitizing as a construct to rethink post-colonial dynamics and the consequences of misrecognizing communalism from within.

Hence, relationality, rather than multicultural identity politics, is at the heart of clashes between communalism as a modern project versus communalism as an Indigenous way of inhabiting territories (see also Escobar's radical interdependence proposal in 2018 and Ishikama and TallBear elaboration of relationality, 2022). We can see this clash in the case of the Nayaka in India (Chapter 8) and in the intercultural communal territories that Yaid Bolaños describes in Colombia in Chapter 9. The Nasa people, inhabitants of the Andean mountains in what is now southwest Colombia, have sustained collective work practices for the common good of all human and other-than-human inhabitants of their territories. Bolaños, a Nasa/anthropologist, uses community-unity to explain how the ancestral vision of unity of the Nasa

> influenced by the policies of territorial defense and the recovery of the ancestral legacies left by their ancestors, united with the peasants and Afro-descendants in a true collective struggle for the mobilization and vindication of the rights of the underestimated, the invisibilized, the landless, the violated and the politically persecuted.

Under Nasa vision, conflicts or disharmonies of body and spirits are not necessarily foreign; they are constitutive of social dynamics that can be healed and resolved with "the power of the word, plants, waters and with the origins of the guardian spirits that watch over our behaviors from their abodes located in the sacred places." Hence, the Nasa think of unity within an intercultural framework, collective struggles for territorial defense, and the power of ancestral knowledge and the wisdom of the elders, as well as the collective labor necessary to maintain harmony. The solidarity and sense of intercultural communalism necessary to confront ongoing and multiple forms of violence is visible both in the Nayaka's ways of being many and the intercultural efforts of Uitoto–Korebajú–Muinane elders to teach ancestral knowledge to non-Indigenous groups. In these chapters, intercultural communalism appears as a way of establishing and maintaining territorial harmony across beings and can include territorial communities of inter-Indigenous groups and kin and kin-like relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

However, just like in the Nayaka, a shift in legal mechanisms in Colombia intended to grant rights to unrecognized and marginalized groups, led to drastic shifts, conflicts, and breaks within Indigenous organizations, local governance units, and across groups of former subaltern allies. The new

Colombian constitution of 1991, recognized rights to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Bureaucratic, legal, economic, and political mechanisms were established so that these groups could insert themselves in the pluriethnic and multiculturalist programs that characterize much of the rights recognition of the neoliberal era. Land reclamation, for example, puts at odds the struggles of Afro-descendants, farmers, and Indigenous communities, since they have to conform to "identity politics" and negate larger intercultural communalism as a form of recognition and reclamation. Disputes and ruptures over territorial control signaled the end of intercultural forms of communalism and brought about new forms of land conflict among former territorial allies, even to the point that leaders that want to maintain unity have been harassed, threatened, or murdered. While confronting land grabbing and large landowners was possible within their intercultural communalist practices, now even young Indigenous people are exploited to cut down the forest formerly used for protecting sacred and medicinal plants. Furthermore, the bureaucratization of money allocated to the functioning of new forms of Indigenous participation in state dynamics has brought ruptures and tensions in Indigenous forms of governance, with some wanting to perpetuate themselves in positions of power and seeking individual gains, which further harms territorial harmony and generates "social imbalances."

Contending with Scale: Communalism Across Different Audiences

Following Appadurai's now axiomatic truth, one of the most insidious, persistent, and troublesome elements of modernity is its large scale (Appadurai, 1996). Despite some local successes, effective strategies of resistance against such insidious strictures of modernity are not easily replicated across the rich diversity and living complexities of Indigenous families, villages, and regional collectives. Communalism is achieved in community-specific ways and reflects the unique ideals of a specific community at a given moment. Thus and naturally, the communal choices of a family unit will not match perfectly the demands of the collective at a larger scale. Simpson et al. tackle this challenge in Chapter 10 by considering the political and symbolic ramifications of communalism as it appears across contexts of family, village, region, and larger scales. Inspiring their conversation is an Indigenous radio station in Ecuador, La Voz de la CONFENIAE, and the work of its staff to both strengthen communication across a region and to convey Indigenous voices to a broad audience. This radio station, which claims to serve the collective needs and wishes of its communities, is a relatively new and mass media form that simultaneously creates new communal forms across a larger and more diverse area, while attempting to preserve local cultural, linguistic, and environmental forms.

Learned first in a family setting, the value of communalism can then extend outward to family networks, and from there to more distant but collaborating communities. As these lines of affiliation and cooperation continue outward to

larger and larger scales, the character of the communal bond transforms. What purpose can such remote or representational action serve in the protection of local processes of subjective, interpersonal, and place-based, inter-generational commitment? Reflections from Indigenous Kichwa and Shuar villages on Ecuador's large-scale strikes, presented by Simpson and co-authors in Chapter 10, suggest both benefits and consequences to Indigenous "scaling up" to mass levels of scale. On the other side of the planet, Dussart explains in Chapter 11 how Warlpiri artists at Yuendumu have developed and produced narratives of identity over four decades, conceptualizing and reconceptualizing their artworks for sale and, thereby reflecting the flexibility of relatedness in contexts of "sedentarized" oppression (see Dussart, Chapter 11 in this volume). As a source and catalyst for Indigenous cultural pride and self-reliance, their art and worldviews are imbued with the power of the Dreaming but tethered to specific families' efforts. But these families did not see themselves as a community (i.e., Yuendumu) or as a collective, but rather as small social units formed through residency, the bonds of kinship, and post-colonial social realignment. Dussart considers the relationships between artist, family, and community as a catalyst for thinking about what it means to be Warlpiri, and whether art sold to survive increasing capitalist vulnerability is empty performance or knowledge transmission.

In regards to markets and art, for example, Dussart offers a powerful historical conjecture in which selling Walpiri art to tourists comes across as a co-cooptation strategy in which "Warlpiri artists and their families have conceptualized and reconceptualized their artworks for sale, imagined and reimagined their place in the global art market, and their reasons to engage or to disengage with the process." At the same time, the fact that only some families and some individuals within families are engaged in the art market, does convey how "residency, the bonds of kinship, and post-colonial social realignment" are transforming communalist ways of living in Yuendumu, an aboriginal settlement in northern Australia. Similarly, in Bell's Chapter 12, we can see how the Sámi people of Norway have put up an enormous fight to have the pieces of their ancestors returned from museum exhibits even while some Sámi artists utilize mainstream museums to denounce Norway's history of violence via settle state politics.

How local voices perceive these divergent scales of cooperation belies the fluidity of communalism as a value. Thus, unity-of-voice around collective ideals is an ideal that is only partial, and which must be re-established with every generation, as each new generation faces different threats of modernity to their communal survival. A stark but compelling example of this is revealed by Black et al., as they argue that Indigenous rights activism was possible in Costa Rica not in spite of but because of "the existence of top-down pressure from multilateral organizations such as the UN and ILO – pressure that was created through the work of Indigenous activists working with those groups." Whether Indigenous communities can leverage such influence in ways that nourish communities, without transforming them in unwelcome ways, is a key

question of this volume. As we learn from Don Juan Carlos (in Chapter 5) and others in this volume, the best possible solution in the contemporary moment is an imperfect one. A similar process is conveyed in the reflective essay by Bell (Chapter 12) which compares two museum exhibits on Sámi culture. The older exhibit at the Norsk Folkemuseet only whispers of Sámi reindeer herding as a cultural and communal practice, and conveys almost nothing of its contemporary survival among the Sámi. By contrast, an installation by artist Máret Ánne Sara at the National Museum of Art conveys the artist's family's forced precarity and retraumatization as a result of a government culling program. While these seemingly impossible negotiations by Indigenous actors to survive and thrive under modern capitalist legal and economic frameworks, debated in a large literature that could be traced to the "reform vs revolution" debates, Indigenous communalist and solidarity practices continue to defy the parameters imposed by modernity to exemplify resistance and survivance.

For Morphy in Chapter 13, the crucial marker of communal identity for the Yolŋu is not legal membership in a "nation" but "living with rom," rom being the law passed from the ancestors that demands attention both to the physical and social world simultaneously, acknowledging humans' obligations to everything in the natural world and their relationships. Modernity's concepts of the nation, even when adopted by tribal or regional groups, fail to capture the relational flow of these obligations, across species, time, and place. Any given group's embrace of the term "nation" is, within the law of rom, simply a performance or strategy against colonization, against modernity. As Black et al. conclude, success for Indigenous communalism should not be measured in terms of any singular legal or environmental protection per se, but in the possibilities offered to these communities for cultural and linguistic resilience and revitalization.

Co-Laboring Through Indigenous Voices

By having Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors establish a dialogue among themselves and with other chapters, we hope there is a larger sense of the co-labor (De la Cadena, 2015) across Indigenous and intercultural histories, narrations, traditions, struggles and spaces of survivance that invites for new and different ways of Indigenous communalism to thrive. The order of chapters in this volume thus concludes within the negotiated and strategized dialectic of Indigenous actors amidst the forces of modernity surrounding them. Rather than a view of Indigenous communalism as a theorized and static concept, these case studies expose the many and multiple ways in which communal values are critical to Indigenous survival. These communities not only engage modern tools, they build them through novel and creative constructions that serve to protect their lifeways, lands, and ancestral heritage. From art to activism, communalist values evolve to meet the insidious pressures of scale, capital, and time. And Indigenous peoples challenge the falsehood of communalism as unity-of-voice to insist that good living will only be achieved

through consensus conciliation based on trust in future, relational commitments and balance among all living forms.

To resist that falsehood, the scholarly world can better recognize and express Indigenous views not by placing their arguments in terms that are recognizable or familiar to the colonizer/West (Harrison & Rose, 2010) but by bringing into scholarly conversations more voices from outside the privileged centers of academia and the Global North (Marsland & Staples, 2021). Linda Tuhiwai Smith urges that the telling of Indigenous stories, and that *their* telling and writing of their *own* stories as authors, is not simply a performance of testimony, but is a restorative act that can "bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying" (Smith, 2021: 32). We hope this volume will make a contribution to that inspired agenda. We have worked to invite different voices, and different ways of speaking, into the restrictive space of the written word. Writing about and with Indigenous people may not "capture any 'pure' sense of what it means to be Indigenous" … nor are these theories "developed in a vacuum separated from … civil and human rights movements" (ibid.: 42); but by speaking plainly to both a goal and a context, by placing Indigenous communal priorities into this English volume (and a later Spanish one), we might "design the tools" that put power in the hands of Indigenous peoples (ibid.).

Finally, to counter the harms of modern capitalist and corporate dominance, Indigenous peoples are engaged in strategies as diverse as their myriad locally determined, relationally committed, and earth-bound communal embeddedness. We have shown ways that Indigenous peoples necessarily engage and exploit modern mechanisms including law, mass communication, market economy, public arts, and more. However, the primacy of ancestral teachings has informed hundreds of years of anti-imperial violence and remains evident in the chapters of this collection. Whether readers evaluate these hybrid engagements as disruptive and corrosive to Indigenous social organization and political processes, time will tell. The Indigenous elders and community leaders – dedicating their lives to what they explain is perpetual, inter-generational work – seem to claim otherwise. More specifically, the chapters in this volume point to *specific* mechanisms of resistance, regeneration, and redress. They include: structures of engagement that engage mass audiences but manage the tyranny of (large) numbers; construction of a politics of relationality that advances women's and men's voices as complementary, elders' teachings, ancestral priorities, and harmonious living in place-specific homes; artistic expressions that insist on local truths; small-scale governance with definite but porous geographic boundaries; and the sage linguistic and representational strategies of a multi-generational resistance. In sum, this volume captures Indigenous movements of counter-modernity in action, through life-ways that re-establish relational priorities and re-align consumption with human and planetary goods. We conclude our introduction with the unapologetic words of Tuck and Yang (2012), who claimed that decolonization should be about land returns; anything else re-centers whiteness and leaves colonial

thefts in place, unquestioned. We add to that claim an insistence on the communal, not only for local social priorities but for humankind's bind and obligation to the natural world.

Notes

1 COP, or Conference of the Parties, is a general term that refers to a conference of the governing body for any international convention. It is made up representatives of members states to the convention. Any group of sovereign nations can come together to create a treaty and familiar examples include the Kyoto Protocol, the Basel Convention, and several United Nations conventions.
2 The core of the tension is the threat of assimilation and gaining social capital for individual gain or putting new knowledge and social capital at the service of the political goals of their community. Importantly, these negotiations relate to hybridity mechanisms, in which they negotiate non-indigenous opportunities with ancestral knowledge. These Indigenous subjects in formation, learn that words materialize in practice and that the practice of communalism is a form of "cosmopolitics" (see Guimarães & Verón, Chapter 2 in this volume). In the different chapters, we hear how young Indigenous people struggle with combining ancestral and western education, enrolling in the labor market to confront economic precarity, and preserving their language.
3 That balance, however, should not be understood as a romantic past filled with peacefulness, but rather as the product of the constant work of elders and communities with each of its human and other-than-human members playing a crucial role. The histories of intra-group conflicts and the conformation of different regional Indigenous empires with its hierarchical structures and forms of enslavement and oppression of other Indigenous groups do exemplify that far from being an idealized past, conflict is another of the broad characteristics of human history. Perhaps during conflicts and wars, communalism as balanced relationships across groups is lost, giving rise to governing structures that favors certain individuals and social groups.

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Part I

Communalism as Ancestral Knowledge and Balance Across Many Beings

Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
Format: 234_x_156_mm_(6.14_x_9.21) (156 × 234 mm); Style: A; Font:
Sabon;
Dir: P:/Frontlist Production Teams/eProduction/Live Projects/9781032698045/

1 *Trig Metawe*[1]

Restoring the tears of dispossession for *Küme Mongen*

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Francisco Huichaqueo Pérez[2]

Introduction

Küme Mongen is the way and philosophy of life of the ancestral Mapuche people in Chile. *Küme Mongen* is often understood as the norm of balance, of communal intention and action between all types of life and the environment. With the processes of European colonization and the incipient Chilean state, this norm was superseded by a dominant colonial vision. This new way of seeing the world excluded Indigenous peoples in its new order, expropriating their territory and denying them many cultural practices. However, the Mapuche people have resisted until now from different angles, which has allowed them to remain a living and diverse culture.

We have been invited to reflect in this chapter on the relationship between *Küme Mongen*, communalism, and the restitution of the Mapuche people's memory garments. We understand the intersection of these perspectives as a series of steps or processes that contribute to the reestablishment of the *Küme Mongen* and therefore to the healing of the colonial wound in the Indigenous peoples. To begin this reflection, background information is provided to situate the reader through a succinct presentation of the history of the Mapuche people. In a second moment, we will expose the perspectives of *Küme Mongen* and *Lofgeaiñ* that can be understood as communalism, understanding the latter concept as a component of *Küme Mongen*. Then we will address the communal rupture and therefore of the *Küme Mongen* due to the kidnapping of the Mapuche people's memory garments. Finally, we present some reflections on the possibilities of exercising communalism for the management of the memory garments and restoring the *Küme Mongen*.

Background on the Mapuche People

The Mapuche people are one of the most numerous native peoples in Chile. According to the 2017 census, the Mapuche people composed of 1,745,147 people in total, which is equivalent to almost 10 percent of the Chilean population. The majority of the Mapuche population is mainly located in the Santiago metropolitan region and the south-central zone of Chile, between the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-3

Biobío Region and the Araucanía Region. The Mapuche people are currently in dispute with the Chilean state over the recovery of their ancestral territory. However, the Chilean state has responded by militarizing the territory and developing integrationist policies that promote formal recognition in discourse, but not in practice. Therefore, the Mapuche people are currently one of the most impoverished and discriminated groups in Chilean society.

The entire ancestral territory is known as *Wallmapu*. Before the Spanish colonization, the Mapuche ancestral territory in Chile, which extended from the Limarí Valley (north-central Chile) to the south on the large island of Chiloé, was known as Gulumapu. What is now Argentina was called Puelmapu. The Mapuche people are very diverse. There are territorial identities, which we can identify as the *meli witran mapu* or the territory of the four corners or four points of the earth. These territories have their own particularities according to their geographical location. For example, *Pikunche*, people of the north; *Huilliche*, people of the south; *Lafkenche*, people of the sea; *Wenteche*, people of the valley. But these four corners are also linked to the cycles and times of nature. The Mapuche gaze is not only toward the horizon, but also upwards and downwards. For example, upwards when we see constellations and the stars like *Wüñelfe*, also known as the morning star, or "the clock of the ancients" (Pozo & Canío, 2014: 64). All these identities share cosmovision, language, and cultural elements; however, they present some differences according to the geographical context in which they are located.

With the Spanish invasion in the 16th century, the Mapuche resistance began, giving rise to the Arauco War. This confrontation between Mapuche and Spaniards lasted for almost 300 years, intermittently, from 1536. Finally, the Spanish Crown recognized the autonomy of the Mapuche people from the Biobío River to the south in the Parliament of Quilín in 1641. During this and subsequent periods, the Mapuche people carried out several resistance uprisings, making them one of the most indomitable and resistant peoples to Western domination. With the establishment of the Chilean state in 1886, the military advance known as the "Pacification of Araucanía" began. A similar process that occurred in Argentina was called the "Conquest of the Desert," which took place between 1878 and 1885. However, these military advances were anything but peaceful. It was a violent genocide and extermination of the territory. In this sense, the Mapuche historian Claudio Alvarado Lincopi (2021), in his text *Mapurbekistan*, explains that with the emergence of the new republics in Latin America, a colonial matrix was generated that gave way to internal colonialism. According to this author, internal colonialism was necessary for the idea of progress and the new nation that emerged as a civilizing entity in the face of the "barbarism" of the Indigenous people.

The Chilean state offered Mapuche territory to European settlers to start the new country. The history of ancestral territorial dispossession included a migration policy of the time that sought hard-working and honest foreigners. In addition, a campaign was developed in which the stereotype of Indigenous people as barbarians and predators was disseminated to demonstrate the need

Figure 1.1 Sketch of *Wallmapu*, or Mapuche ancestral territory. Made by Francisco Huichaqueo.

for dispossession (Correa, 2021). This left the Mapuche population living in the so-called Indigenous reductions. They were very small portions of land, unusable for cultivation. During the government of Salvador Allende, the agrarian reform process that returned a small part of the territory to the Indigenous world was completed. However, during the military dictatorship of

Augusto Pinochet, part of the territory was again ceded to the cattle and forestry industries for economic purposes that only favored the business community. During the whole process from the conquest and colonization until today, the Mapuche ancestral territory was reduced from 10 million hectares to 500,000 hectares. From the Pinochet dictatorship to the present, all governments have promised constitutional recognition, including elevating the rights of Indigenous peoples. But to date, none of the governments has delivered. Moreover, center-left and right-wing governments have favored mega-extractivist projects linked to the forestry and hydroelectric industries. They have even responded by militarizing Mapuche communities in resistance, calling them the "red zone." This military response has given way to the application of the anti-terrorist law and a series of confrontations that have led to the death and imprisonment of Mapuche community members.

These facts have modified and violently affected the *Küme Mongen* in the Mapuche people, breaking with the spiritual balance of a millennial people. In addition, these aggressions attacked the communalism principle of belonging (Smith-Morris, 2019). The irruption into the territory affects the generation of the bond that unites the subjects and communities with the tangible and intangible environment. It is a subtle but evident way of eradicating any hint of Indigenous organization that hinders the current national development project. As a consequence, these projects have generated droughts, affected water courses, the growth of *lawen* or medicinal plants, and the relationship between communities, among many other consequences. In addition, in relation to heritage, sites of memory significance such as Mapuche cemeteries have been affected. The case of the flooding of the Mapuche cemetery in the Alto Biobío territory due to the construction of a dam by Spanish company Endesa is well remembered. All these outrages and violations of the culture and spirituality of the Mapuche people have generated two centuries of plundering and territorial and cultural dispossession, breaking any kind of balance of what was once our way of life. In spite of all this, the Mapuche are a diverse and resilient nation with a great awareness of the need to return to equilibrium.

Küme Mongen and Lofgeaiñ

Küme Mongen (*Buen Vivir*, good living) is part of the philosophy and way of life of the Mapuche people. In recent times the concept has been recurrently used by some intellectuals to refer to a form of balance with nature. However, to think of it only in those terms seems to us to be somewhat reductionist. For the Mapuche world it is part of their ontology. It is a complex concept that implies several other elements, such as: *mapu*, *che*, and *itrofilmongen*. The literal translation of Mapuche is "people of the land." It derives from *mapu*: land; and *Che*: people. However, its meaning is much broader. *mapu* is the whole. In the Mapuche people there is the term *itrofilmongen*, which could be defined as all forms of life in all dimensions of the *mapu*. Often *mapu* is commonly defined as land (Matías Rendón, 2020), but according to Ñanculef

(2016: 23) "*Mapu* is everything, it is the total." In addition, *mapu* or the environment includes the spaces above, below, what is not seen, the tangible and the intangible. The space above is known as *Wenu Mapu*, where the positive energies dwell, or what is commonly known as heaven is also the

> World Above, includes a great variety of elements that exist in the sky; not only the stars visible to the naked eye, but also the beings and spaces that exist in the sky. Not only the stars visible to the naked eye, but also the beings and spaces that are part of the cosmological and/or ontological knowledge. Beings and spaces that are part of cosmological and/or ontological knowledge.
>
> (Pozo & Canío, 2014: 15)

Nag mapu, the land where we live, the territory we walk on; *minche mapu*, the land below where the negative energies and spirits are found. *Itrofilmongen* is often defined as biodiversity. However, according to Melin et al. (2017) it is not possible to compare *itrofilmongen* with biodiversity because "they emanate from different sources and cultural matrices and, formulated, made explicit and raised with equally different purposes" (p. 20).

There is a cultural normative framework that sets the guidelines for the relationship with the environment based on respect and reciprocity. In case this norm is not complied with, an imbalance and a cultural transgression can be generated, which can also lead to a Mapuche disease. Thus, these definitions are part of the ways of life of the Mapuche people and are practiced in everyday life. On the other hand, Mapudungún, which is the language of the Mapuche people, is commonly translated as the language of the land. However, *dungún* is not only the word, nor is it only the word between human beings. It is also the language or communication between all beings and spirits that inhabit the *mapu*, it is not only "the expression of reason, thought or intellect, but also the expression of feeling and spirituality" (Loncón, 2011). For this reason, *Küme Mongen* is also about the balance that human beings and all beings and spirits establish with the *mapu*. They are relationships based on respect and reciprocity, but involve a true recognition of all the energies of the *Wallmapu*.

In relation to communalism, we have reflected on its implications and ways of manifesting itself in everyday life. At the same time, we ask ourselves what is the relationship with other closely related concepts such as community, communal, collective and communality? Carolyn Smith-Morris (2023) defines communalism as "being together and in relation to the community."[3] In this sense we consider that communalism connects and is in tune with values and purposes of *Küme Mongen*. This is the restoration of balance and the common good, so communalism can be seen as a category or an allied process. We understand communalism as the intentions and practices of Mapuche people, animals, spirits, and forces that inhabit all biodiversity. Communalism is not only the collective work in the present, nor with the entities of the present. It is also a work toward the past and with our ancestors. It is the rescue of historical and cultural memory and

of our ancestors. It is to transfer the knowledge of the past to the present and the future. But it is also a work toward the future, onwards. It is for the projection of Mapuche life. For example, it is important to recognize those who have preceded the Mapuche cultural development from different areas. There has always been a first person who has had to pave the way for others to develop in a better way. If we refer to the distant past, we find the figures of Leftraru and Janequeo, *toki*, or war chiefs who set precedents for the struggle for our existence. In the more recent past, without going too far, and by way of example, in the case of poetry we find precursors such as Elicura Chihuailaf and Leonel Lienlaf. However, currently, there is a litter of new male and female poets who have been able to walk with the inherited strength. And so, the same is repeated in the case of the arts, of history, etc.

For us, communalism also includes *inarrumen*. It is the process of observation, or Mapuche learning methodology, the way of understanding life and nature (Ñanculef, 2016). Through this process people become aware of the environment; it is a kind of state of alertness, it is a slow and delicate process. We consider that *inarrumen* is a fundamental part of individual and community action. It allows us to obtain the *kimün* (to know), to receive or read information from the environment, nature and energies. Gabriel Kurrüman, Mapuche-Pewenche *lamngen* and social worker, uses the word "*Lofgeaiñ*" in Mapudungún, which can be understood as "let's be community." According to Alberto Carilao, *dungunmachife* (machi assistant and translator), another word used in the Bollilco *lof* to which he belongs, is "*kiñewaiñ*," which means let us be one. Another word that is a little different is one used in Loncoche, which is "*kiñenewentuaiñ*," which is interpreted as "we will be a single force," according to Mapuche professor Manuel Díaz Calfíu. We can see how the terms change according to the territorial spaces, which in turn is a reflection of the great diversity and cultural richness. These expressions are frequently used in community meetings, to invite people to be united and act together. It comes from the term *lof* or community, which is the basis of traditional Mapuche social organization. The *lof* is constituted by land tenure and the union of different lineages. Thus, communalism involves a strongly collective basis that thinks of the common good as an ultimate goal.

The basis for effective collective action is respect for all forms of life, existence and thought. Without respect, the balance is broken. The *lamngen Ñanculef* introduces the concept of yam to refer to the concept of integrality and respect for all energies and places (2016). The lack of this principle has triggered major social and environmental problems that we are experiencing today. Another characteristic of communalism is its moldability. Collective action can take various forms and strategies. This depends on the contexts, the purposes and those who carry it out. It is a form of self-determination, in which each community defines its own forms of action. For example, recently there have been groups of Mapuche intellectuals or scholars, such as historians, artists, anthropologists, etc., who have taken on the task of rewriting our history. They have made visible what the official Chilean history has hidden.

Figure 1.2 Kollon Mapuche. Mask used in spiritual ceremonies of the community. Photo of the film Tralkan Küra/Piedra del trueno/Thunder Rock, from Francisco Huichaqueo.

Another form of communalism is found in the *mingako*, understood as the help or cooperation of the community to build a house or to signify a territorial space that can have family or community use. We also recall the episode of the solar eclipse of 2021. In a community in the south of Chile, the *lamngen* joined together to pray so that the sun would rise again and the earth would not freeze or turn into stone – always thinking that the energy and power of the sun are fundamental for Mapuche life. Another similar and very common form is the *Trafkintu* or exchange. In these instances there is no money. People usually exchange different things such as food, animals, and knowledge. It is a very old practice, but it is still being developed in urban and rural contexts. There are also land seizures or territorial recoveries that often result in confrontation with the militarized police, political persecution, imprisonment and death. This has been perhaps one of the least understood and most controversial ways of resisting in Chilean society. However, it is a legitimate community action, based on collective decision. And so, we could give many other examples. There is no single or correct way of acting collectively. The important thing is not to lose the objective, the common good. This is important to keep in mind because internal colonialism has also caused that within the same people there is resistance or rejection to these forms of struggle, such as academic, or territorial recovery. Assigning more value to one over the other. For us, all these are different forms of struggle, they are not exclusive but complementary.

Finally, the practices of communalism can be understood as practices of resistance, when we understand them as a mechanism to ensure the continuity of the community and Mapuche thought. In this sense, as an Indigenous community we have developed mechanisms of cultural resignification and oral memory – among many others – to find ways out of the colonial maelstrom of which we are a part.

Both perspectives share the anti-colonial vision through collective and/or community organization. Although both perspectives bring with them the permanent tension between the individual and the community, they contribute to the essence of the collective values necessary for the restoration of memory and restitution of socio-spiritual equilibrium.

The Indigenous vision based on good living, shared by the peoples of Abya Yala, has even been included in some constitutions. These social contracts have included respect for biodiversity as a basis for achieving their purposes as nations. Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia have recognized nature as a living subject endowed with rights in their constitutions. Sarmiento E. (2020) points out that these new legal categories are to defend the ecosystem in which we live, prohibiting harm to animals, ensuring economic development without affecting the quality of life of people. This is what the same author calls biocentric constitutionalism, a counter-hegemonic proposal that has its origin in the Indigenous peoples who recognize nature as a living entity.

Artaraz et al. (2021) point out that other authors such as Beling et al. identify three predominant ways of understanding Good Living: the Indigenist, which is shared among Indigenous groups; the neo-Marxist, as a counter-hegemonic paradigm to capitalism and finally, the post-developmentalist ecological critique that according to the authors has contributed to the socioeconomic transformation of the environment. However, Gómez-Barris (2017) and Sarmiento E. (2020) from a more critical view, point out that despite the existence of this declaration of principles, environmental protection has not been effective, so that states continue with extractive activities, characterized by unbridled exploitation of natural resources. Even, sometimes, the political translation of good living has been led by governmental institutions (Gómez-Barris, 2017).

The urgency of this recognition and the establishment of formal rights to nature stems from the urgent need to think about sustainable and sustainable development. In passing, the central aspects of Indigenous worldviews that do not separate human beings from the environment, such as *Küme Mongen*, are taken up again. This paradigm of the Indigenous peoples is on the contrary side of the universalism and homogenization typical of modern Western states that conceive only one way of seeing the world. In conclusion, we understand communalism as a fundamental phase or component to achieving *Küme Mongen*. Both concepts can be understood as perspectives or ways of life that include the action of the community and respect as the basis of any action that tends toward the search for the welfare of people and their community.

The Rupture of the *Küme Mongen* in Memory

In relation to the memory garments of the Indigenous peoples, who should command the holding and representation of the heritage of the native nations? The colonization process as well as the establishment and development of the Chilean state caused the native peoples of the now Chilean territory to be affected by a dominant cultural imposition. Although after many years of war with the Spanish Crown, Mapuche sovereignty had been recognized during the 17th and 18th centuries (Nahuelpan & Antimil, 2019), colonial violence began in 1852 with the Pacification of Araucanía (Pairicán, 2022), a military invasion led by the Chilean state. This invasion constructed the idea of the Mapuche as barbarians and savages who never evolved, so they were considered an inferior race that needed to be eradicated to make way for the development of the state (Nahuelpan & Antimil, 2019).

According to Pablo Marimán (2020: 92, 94), another Mapuche historian, this 25-year war "lent itself to crimes and vexations … the pressures on Indigenous property were expressed in dispossession and racial violence." In this regard, Héctor Nahuelpan and Jaime Antimil (2019) note that dispossession included appropriation of land and resources such as forests and animals; intrusion of missions and schools; community separation; racial subordination and thus physical, political, and cultural annihilation.

As mentioned above, the affectations experienced by the Mapuche people to this day are varied. Among them are the dispossession of native lands, the prohibition of speaking Mapudungún (Mapuche language), elimination of traditional medical agents, destruction of the natural environment, discrimination, forced assimilation, and appropriation of the indigenous heritage. Even extreme humiliations as when Mapuche people were kidnapped to be exhibited as animals or exotic beings in the Acclimatization Gardens in Paris, also called human zoos at the end of the 19th century. These violations have caused ruptures in the Mapuche people, and at the same time these ruptures have generated an imbalance in the natural course of Indigenous life, the *Küme Mongen*.

The analogy of the *trig metawe* refers to the Mapuche people as a broken, fragmented, and broken people. The Mapuche nation, as a broken community. The Mapuche people are the *metawe* (containing vessel), the container of a diverse and wounded people. The trig is the crack or rupture caused by the violence of the dominant and colonialist culture. The fissure causes the contents of the *metawe* to leak out, the water, the grain, the *muday* (Mapuche drink) escapes involuntarily. In our case, the spirituality, the cosmovision, the community foundation that mobilizes escapes: the *Küme Mongen* escapes. Then, the wound also becomes a painful wound that is individual, but it is also collective. The wound has repercussions at the community level and this affects the capacity to feel and think clearly in the search for collective solutions that can return us to the initial situation of well-being. Therefore, as a result of state violence and systematic discrimination, the Mapuche people have been configured as a broken people, a broken community, interrupted in

their *kimün* (knowledge), in their *mapu* (territory), in their *dungü* (language), in their *itrofilmongen* (biodiversity), in their memory, and in their heritage, among many other aspects.

In the field of heritage, the wounds were caused by looting, theft, and misappropriation of Mapuche material and immaterial culture. The subtraction has been systematic, resulting in colonial theft, deception, and exhibition of heritage in museums in Chile and the world, where indigenous peoples have no authority. For example, the Ethnological Museum of Berlin has a large collection of Mapuche tangible and intangible heritage. A large part of it is in its repositories and another part is on display. The fact that the heritage is outside its original territory produces territorial, cultural, and spiritual violence because the heritage is separated from its families. Worldwide, there are other known examples of Indigenous collections in large anthropological museums such as France, England, and Germany. In spite of the fact that the International Labor Organization through Convention 169 establishes that all subscribing states have the obligation to safeguard and grant restitution to all areas of the original nations.

The Kidnapping of Memory

Historically, archaeological objects or memory garments – as we prefer to call them – have been in the custody of state or private museums. Memory items are of great importance to Mapuche individuals, families, and communities. Silver attire, weavings, stones, and traditional clothing are used in daily life and ceremonies. Traditionally, these garments are inherited or passed down through the family. They possess a charge or force that mobilizes our memory and is where the default ancestor becomes present. The stolen garments that are currently in museums, carry their meaning, they carry the past, the memory, the knowledge. These garments represent and revive direct emotional links with our ancestors. However, as they are currently sequestered in these collections, it is impossible to re-establish the link while in a state of sequestration. This is where we find the broken community, one of the cracks in the *trig metawe*.

The garments are important to us because they signify the link with our ancestors. When we walk, our ancestors are with us, they support us and accompany us in spirit and knowledge. It is something we call a "back to front" that projects our existence. In other words, the *kuifikeche*, our ancestors connect with us and continue to connect the *Lofgeaiñ*, the family, and the community.

As mentioned, garments are not mere objects. They carry community forces that relate to tangible and non-tangible spaces. For example, what happens in the *machi*'s *kültrün* also called *kawin küra* (which can be understood as the gathering or conversation of the stones that are inside it). The *kültrun* is commonly defined as a kind of traditional drum, which is very commonly found in Mapuche collections in most national and international museums.

This *kültrün* is one of the objects that the machi, who is the highest Mapuche spiritual authority, uses on a daily basis. It is made from the hide of a horse that is tied with a braid made from the hair of the horse's tail. When the *kültrün* completes its life, when it can no longer be used, the spirit of the horse manifests itself by stepping on the *kültrün* and breaking the leather. In this case, the person who uses the *kültrün* has to acquire a new one. With this, we want to exemplify that the spirits of our ancestors or of the animals and elements manifest themselves before us in the tangible space making it clear that we coexist and are guided by them and never without them. Another example is the stones inside the *kültrün*, known as *kawin küra*. When the machi touches the *kültrün*, the spirit of the *kawin küra* is manifested and they come out sent by the force summoned by the machi in the *küimi* or trance. This is one of the ways in which the machi can visualize issues for the community in the ceremonial context where everyone supports and attunes in the rogation.

All museums, or the vast majority, operate under Western logics that leave out the cultural and/or cosmovision aspects of Indigenous peoples, who should be considered for their administration or tenure. For this reason, following the proposals of the decolonizing aspects, we question the forms of action of museums with indigenous peoples and we support the initiatives of restitution of indigenous heritage and/or the inclusion of people of indigenous peoples inside these institutions to command such heritage. Let us consider that in the case of Indigenous heritage, museological intervention must be done through the eyes of the culture itself. By including the cultural protocols of the Mapuche cosmovision, we radically change the treatment of the memory

Figure 1.3 Kültrün Mapuche. Drum used in ceremonies and gatherings. It also represents Mapuche peoples cosmovision. Photo of the film Tralkan Küra/Piedra del trueno/Thunder Rock, from Francisco Huichaqueo.

garments and the spirits that inhabit them. Thus, we remove the idea of the cabinet of curiosities where the seized garments have been exhibited.

Since ancient times human beings have been interested in accumulating objects to later appreciate and exhibit them (Serrano, 2000). The museum in its definitions and purposes has evolved over time. It has been adapting to cultural changes and demands of populations, reflecting aspects of human existence (Martínez, 2018). Its development has been so profound that even, an institutionality was created that concentrates and discusses everything related to the performance of museums in the world. This is the International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946, after World War II (Serrano, 2000). This Council articulated the museographic criteria, whose programs and technical solutions are still in force today (Martínez, 2018). According to ICOM Museology is defined as the science that studies museums, Museography as the technique of their management, and Museonomy their administration and management (Martínez, 2018). Since 1977 there has been the International Day of Museums, declared on May 18 by the United Nations Organization.

In August 2022, ICOM approved a new definition of museum at its Extraordinary General Assembly. According to this Council

> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution at the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. Engaging communities, museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing.
>
> (International Council of Museums, 2022)

According to Martínez (2018) today there is a great variety of museums: art museums, historical museums, wax museums, science and technical museums, natural history museums, museums dedicated to personalities, and archaeological museums, among others. Museums, libraries, archives, cultural centers all have colonial roots (Sermeno, 2017). According to Camic and Chatterjee (2013), there are about 19,300 museums in Europe and a similar number in the United States and Canada, which is favorable for reaching urban and rural populations.

A first issue that seems to us transcendental to be able to reflect on is in relation to the differences in the concept of heritage that are presented from the institutionality (academic and museographic) and from the native peoples or, in this case, from the Mapuche people. The word heritage has its origin in Roman law and has been used to refer to the goods that people have and that are passed on between generations. From anthropology, heritage is a cultural construction that changes according to the socio-historical contexts (Martínez, 2018). On the other hand, for the Mapuche world these are garments endowed with life, culture, and knowledge. For example, for the Mapuche world, archaeological objects are much more than mere objects. They are garments of memory that connect with family

ancestors. Museums should consider respect for the spirits of the ancestors and for the different forces that the garments possess. For example, their placement in museums should consider their provenance, as well as the performance of ceremonies or rogations by people belonging to the village. This is to ask permission and enter into dialogue with the ancestors so that the garments can be exhibited. This is also explained by Juanita Paillalef, Mapuche and former director of the Mapuche Museum of Cañete:

> … there are elements that are sacred. They must have forms, directions, ornaments, structures, light, color, etc., which are necessary, since all objects have a soul. At the moment that is not known or is badly exposed or is badly used and badly treated, it can lose its soul and its spirit can punish it.
>
> (Paillalef, 1998: 78 in González Casanova, 2021)

We consider that the treatment that national and international museums have had does not consider cultural norms, reducing its presence to a simple decontextualized object.

Since the last decades, a line of action linked to well-being and health has been developed and several museums around the world are implementing it. This has to do with a significant role (Mangione, 2018) and contribution that these institutions are making to improve the quality of life and health care of people. The actions have been mainly dedicated to working with older adults, people with mental health problems and disabilities. This has to do with a change in the paradigm in which museums are seen as places that motivate people to learn about themselves and their environment. These institutions have become more aware of the needs and interests of local communities, contributing to community resilience and understanding of the world (Camic & Chatterjee, 2013; Dodd & Jones, 2014). There is enough evidence from various countries to affirm that art and culture-based programs can reduce psychological and physiological symptoms, increase social inclusion, favoring the health status of people (Camic & Chatterjee, 2013). According to Chatterjee and Noble (2013) cited in Chatterjee and Camic (2015) the participation of people in museums generates several positive experiences such as the reduction of isolation, acquisition of skills, reduction of anxiety, increased optimism, distraction from clinical spaces, among several others.

In addition to this change, there have also been other changes that have to do with the dissemination of arts and exhibitions through the incorporation of technologies, audiovisual media and the Internet. This makes their reach much greater, expanding their educational and heritage preservation role. On the other hand, museums have become real industries that generate a whole economic system for themselves and the environments in which they are located (Martínez, 2018).

We share this vision of the social role of museums as a necessary and positive change that contributes to improving people's quality of life. However, we believe that this view is only applicable to contemporary or classical art

programs in the West. This new form of mediation by museums with Indigenous collections can be counterproductive. Mainly because this type of mediation does not incorporate the protocols and cultural codes in the handling of memory garments and their relationship with indigenous peoples. Therefore, looking at the garments can revive feelings of a culture that has been taken away. For example, Mack (cited in Camic & Chatterjee, 2013) has pointed out that objects found in museums are also memory containers and can release memories that affect mood, self-esteem and sense of well-being in people. This type of museographic work then produces the opposite of the benefits expected from the museum with its social role and contribution to well-being. These practices are little reciprocal, and are designed for the dominant culture that pretends to include Indigenous people (Boas, 2011 in Sermeno, 2017). Similarly, the public attending museums contributes to the colonial violence of governments, since museums that are funded by the government reinforce the idea of historical theft and cultural objects (Sermeno, 2017).

Thus, the new proposal of museums does not detach itself from its colonial logic and acts in conjunction with governments and hegemonic culture. These institutional actors maintain their intercultural ineptitude, which reflects their incompetence in generating effective intercultural dialogues. In this sense, various actors are responsible for keeping the colonial wound open. This situation does not allow the right of Indigenous peoples to advance with sufficient dignity to repair their cultural and spiritual memory. In order to think about the decolonization of museums and the change in power relations between Indigenous peoples and museum institutions, several aspects should be considered. These include the restitution of memory garments, goods, and the construction of new narratives (Fregoso, 2018). For example, it would be necessary to change colonial names of buildings and public places as well as symbols that perpetuate Western superiority (Achille Mbembe, 2015 in Fregoso, 2018). Finally, the real change could only happen with the active participation of Indigenous people inside these institutions, as a first step. The ultimate goal is to command all the heritage that belongs to us.

This can be a scenario for exercising communalism. However, it is first necessary to retake the idea of the Mapuche people as a large and diverse community. In this sense, in our conversations and tours that we have had in communities of *Wallmapu*, there are many people who are not aware of the colonial robbery. We understand that this is a product of the memory that has been erased. For many people, the recovery of memory items is not a major concern. There are other day-to-day issues that are more deeply felt, and more urgent. We do not forget that the majority of the Mapuche population is at a social and economic disadvantage, so the forces are focused on other interests such as working, recovering the natural heritage, water, forests, etc. Within this diverse community, there is also a community that is working to make visible the consequences of despoilment and to fight for the restitution of memory items. In this context, communalism acts internally. On the one hand,

this last community that is carrying out actions for the restitution, assumes the task of informing internally, of sharing information about the seizure of the garments and their possession in other countries. They also have an outward action. The theft is made visible and denounced through various formats. They are advanced troops to recover territory, the territory found in the memory garments. Then, dialogues are generated in which it is hoped to reach a collective conscience.

Another communal action on restitution is collective yearning. We understand it as part of communalist thinking. The collective thought that longs for the return of the forest, the water, to hear the silverware, the return of the memory garments. It is possible to act with the strength of the spirit and prayer. We think of the people's yearning for pride in being Mapuche and for it to continue for future generations. When we cannot move forward because we cannot find the will, we can return to the *inarrumen*. To the state of observation, of being alert and becoming aware in order to look for paths and act.

Around the world we can find many stories similar to that of the Mapuche people and their relationship with memory items in museums. One well-known case is about the Benin Bronzes of Nigeria. These garments of wood, ivory, bronze, and other materials were made in the 18th century and were stolen by British conquerors in 1897. The British Museum is one of the places that has the most Benin Bronzes. But these pieces are scattered around the world and it is possible to find them in museums in the United States and Europe. From the Nigerian community there is interest in the restitution of these garments in order to have them in their own museum. In fact, the Smithsonian Museum returned 29 Benin Bronzes to Nigeria in 2022, as part of the museum's policy of "ethical returns" (Smithsonian, 2022). Another example of restitution can be found in Jocelyn Bell's chapter, Chapter 12 in this volume. In it, the author relates how the Norway, based on international Indigenous law, yielded to repatriation. Bell points out that it was a means to improve community relations. However, it has not been an easy process as again the excuse is used that the Indigenous peoples, in this case the Sami community, do not have the resources to maintain adequate conservation of the objects. This is why the museum and the institutional framework appear as adequate entities to maintain the cultural heritage, which has caused permanent tension between the parties.

Another example linked to Chile and an internationally recognized deception can be found on the island of Rapa Nui, better known as Easter Island. In 1868 a British captain took the Moai Hoa Hakananai'a as a gift for Queen Victoria, who donated the Moai to the British Museum. The Moai are large megalithic statues carved with the faces of the Rapa Nui ancestors. This is an internationally known case because in 2018 the Rapa Nui community formally requested the return of the two Moai that exist in the museum. The museum states on its website to be aware of the importance of the Moai for the Rapa Nui, however, in return they have offered "mutually beneficial projects" (British Museum, 2022). In the case of the Mapuche people, there is a *rewe* of a

machi (maximum Mapuche spiritual authority) that is currently in the Musée du Quai Branly in France. This *rewe* was stolen by Gustave Vernory, a Belgian engineer who went to Chile in 1889 to build a train line. Vernory openly acknowledges this fact in his book *Ten Years in Araucanía*. The *rewe* is a sacred place, the space of connection through which the machi can connect with the spirits. Why think that the garments of memory are better guarded in that institutionality that has acted as an accomplice in the theft of the historical, cultural, and spiritual memory of the people?

The theft of the garments as a consequence of plundering has taken this heritage away its original territory and separated from its family origins. The captive garments exacerbate the existence of the colonial wound and the subjugation of native cultures. The kidnapping of the garments interrupted the historical memory of a people that was fractured by colonial expansion. Despite the fact that museums have rethought their social link, they continue to reproduce a paternalistic and exclusionary logic that continues to situate native peoples and their heritage as domesticated subjects.

The Light that Enters the Shadow

There are several mechanisms for the repair of the *metawe* and return to the *Küme Mongen*. Thinking about the Mapuche heritage from the Mapuche people themselves is an opportunity to generate a mechanism for dialogue and healing of the wound. For the Mapuche people, heritage is not only translated into archaeological pieces as described or used by the West, but heritage represents a living culture that mobilizes the collective and spiritual memory under the codes of the Mapuche cosmovision. We consider that this claim is part of our collective rights as a people and represents the natural thought and action of wanting to heal our memory. As was in the Sami case, who considered that repatriation contributed to restoring the communities' power to regain possession of their objects. Moreover, this resulted in community empowerment and a more symmetrical relationship with Norwegian society (Bell's Chapter 12, in this volume).

Through the crack it is possible to see a fragment of light that filters through and evidences the crack. The crack reminds us of the state of its wound, and needs the luminous forces of the sun and the moon, just as the complete *metawe* witnessed before its abduction. The artificial, cold, almost lifeless, artificial light of the museum or laboratory storage room is not needed and is not useful. Like a human body this *metawe* needs both light energies acting in complement for it to exist in its biological transit. To reconstruct the *metawe* the potter uses the *kütral* (fire), with its heat and luminescence seals and heals the clay. It is a witness of its birth and creation for the natural transit among us, as a container of our memory. The light means a possibility of repair, it is an opportunity to rethink how we want to restore the *metawe*. Currently our people are visible in the shadows. From this space we try to repair ourselves internally with the reinforcement and recovery of our Mapuche identity. And

at the same time, we hope to connect with the rest of society to look for mechanisms of reparation together. It is a path where different potters come together to repair the historical crack.

In ideal terms, we think of several ways of repairing the wound caused by the theft and treatment of indigenous memory. The first of them is that the Mapuche heritage agency be commanded by Mapuche people. These people must have the capacity to make decisions on the issues that are entrusted to them. The world of museums and their political links is not an easy task. We know the hostilities of the Western world, therefore, the people in charge must have firmness and capacity for diplomatic dialogue, with the purpose of generating understandings and conscience in both worlds. This logically requires that within the same institution there is political will and respect to work in harmony with the needs of the local Mapuche community. In Mexico there is an international experience of community museums. These are administered by the communities themselves, they are autonomous, they are the ones who define their own curatorship and forms of research.

Another way, though more complex, is through the restitution of the patrimony. We are aware that this is one of the most difficult ways, because it involves political will at the international level. In many cases, it is pointed out that they were gifts and not thefts. There is much debate about to whom the garments should be returned. While it is true that in most cases it is almost impossible to determine the family link, we believe that the garments should be returned to the people. In the end, it should be the people themselves who decide how to dispose of their patrimony, as part of their exercise of self-determination. This last proposal challenges us as a people, because it forces us to question ourselves and make decisions as a community to find common positions of thought and action that are in favor of the organization of the tenure of the garments. Finally, an alternative for a decolonizing work from museums is to incorporate critical and indigenous research methodologies (Sermeno, 2017).

In any case, the agency of Indigenous heritage is a complex process. This is a long-term work that involves a willingness to dialogue on both sides, from the state and its institutions and from the indigenous communities. In order to establish dialogue, each party must first do some internal work. The state and its institutions must change their paradigm of thought and action. Become aware of its intervention in the generation of the colonial wound in order to honestly recognize the need for intercultural dialogue. Ceding power so that indigenous peoples can make their own decisions is also an act of reparation. What we are proposing is not new. There are many diagnoses that enunciate the same recipe. On the other hand, there is also an awareness on the part of the Indigenous communities to exercise their agency in relation to the administration of their own memory. It seems that the "communities of origin do not necessarily recognize the process of musealization of their material culture" (González Casanova, 2021: 159). It is therefore necessary to rethink the urgent need for the return of memory in order to reconstruct history and heal the past.

Finally, the natural light that enters through the crack in the *metawe* also offers us to illuminate a path for healing that will allow us to leave the sequestered state of the museum display case. The crack through which our culture escaped and was wounded somehow offers us a way to repair and return to the natural flow of what is ours, just like a river that flows through its natural channel. The broken ceramic *metawe* returns to the earth until someday another potter rebuilds it. Thus, today, in the contemporary world that is mestizo and marvelously diverse, there are many types of potters who mend the cracks left by the misunderstandings between peoples. The potter has a healing capacity when he restores the *metawe*. He puts clay in the crack of the *metawe* and seals it completely. The parts are put back together and it becomes a complete whole. The potter restores the community and the collective is once again articulated to act, to think, to feel, to be *Lofgeaiñ*, to exercise self-determination. The *metawe* returns to transit naturally among us, but now transporting culture, language, cosmovision, and spirituality. It transports the *Küme Mongen*.

Notes

1 This means *cántaro trizado* (Spanish), crushed jar (English). The name *Trig Metawe* is taken from the poem "*Xig Metawe*" from Mapuche poet Leonel Lienlaf in his book: *Se ha despertado el ave de mi corazón* [*The Bird of My Heart Has Awakened*] (1989). See appendix at end of this chapter.
2 In this text the names of the Mapuche authors are not placed in hierarchical order or order of importance. This work has been developed in thought and writing in a complementary manner between the authors. We are very grateful to César Abadía-Barrero and Carolyn Smith-Morris for inviting us to participate in this book and for their valuable comments. We thank Manuel Díaz Calfiu, Mapuche teacher, Trutrukakamañ from Nilkawin Alto, and Alberto Carilao of Lof Bollilco in Ercilla, *Wallmapu*. We thank them both for sharing their wisdom and for their comments on this text.
3 In conversations with the author.

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Appendix

Cántaro Trizado

Poem by Leonel Lienlaf

Ya se está acabando
este cántaro rojo.
Ya se ha trizado
y dormirá
entre las cosas de la tierra
hasta que un día
otro alfarero
lo reconstruya.

Xig Metawe

Zeuma afmekey
Tvfaci kelu metawe
Xigy zewma
Mapumew umagtuay
Kiñe antu
Ka wvzvfe
Zeumatuaeyew

2 The Multiplication of the Multiple, Communalism, and Indigenous Tensions in Brazil

Valdelice Veron Kaiowá[1] *and Sílvia Guimarães*

Preliminary Considerations

Democracy in Brazil includes subjects that experience such complex and diverse realities and conjunctions, as do the Indigenous peoples. Produced in a localized context that emphasizes perspectives such as citizenship, popular sovereignty, division of powers, and the presence of capitalism, democracy ends up being effective for certain subjects and particular groups, excluding others. According to Marisol de la Cadena (2015: 60), "the literate world has the power, self-attributed, to define and represent events and actors for history and politics, two fields that are indispensable for the making of reality necessary for the functioning of the state." In this movement, the discourse of the Brazilian state transforms Indigenous people into incapable, poor, infantile, and savage, so that it can then forge them into non-citizens. Clastres suggests "… that a complete inversion of perspectives is necessary" (Clastres, 2003: 23). This ontological turn that escapes the centripetal force of the One to redefine the scope of what can be taken as political happens in the political actions of Indigenous peoples. These promote the necessary pulverization of the imperative of the inexorably single Truth, which articulates the possibility of neutrality. They produce an epistemological, political change that concerns the legitimacy attributed to the discourses that enter into a relation of knowledge and the hierarchy established among them. It is about the multiplication of the multiple. Thus, they deal with forest beings, plants, animals, waters, earth, and humans to produce political designs. They amplify Indigenous communalism, in Carolyn Smith-Morris' (2020) terms, expanding the concept of the human and of Indigenous politics. Following the argument of this author (op. cit.), it is possible to perceive a movement of resistance to hyper-individualism by promoting a resilient collective. The attacks and tensions promoted by capital and by the diversity imposed by the state in the figure of multiculturalism, create an individual autonomy, determines and fixes identities, which weakens and questions the collective, imagining it as traditional relegated to the past that violates individual autonomy and restricts Indigenous humanity.

Indigenous peoples in Brazil have shown the dynamic transformation of the collective, focusing on communalism and expanding this figure to encompass

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-4

ethical interaction with beings of the forest. As Overing (1999) states, the collective is made of the agencies and autonomies of people who rely on the network of interactions for the collective to maintain itself. The fabric of social life is managed by these ethical interactions that recognize humanity and agency among forest beings and immortal beings, deities, and so life must be experienced avoiding the breakdown of this ethical relationship that would cause war or cause sickness. A cosmopolitics (de la Cadena, 2015; Stengers, 2018) manifests itself, tensioning realities and teaching other ways of creating political relations beyond what Western democracy allows.

This chapter aims to discuss the Indigenous forms, especially of the Kaiowá people, one of the subgroups of the Guarani linguistic family,[2] of doing politics, creating porosities and not borders and barriers between beings of divinity. To this end, it will be based on the narratives and interpretations of *Nhandesy* [3] Julia, a religious/political leader of the Takuara community, located in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, on doing politics from the perspective of Kaiowá women.

Transmission of Kaiowá Women's Knowledge and Teachings on Conviviality

We will follow the speech of *Nhandesy* Julia, a leader of the Takuara community of the Indigenous Kaiowá people, who will guide us through the contours and depth of the cosmopolitics driven by the Kaiowá women. She explains this intricate network of interactions with diverse beings that expands and contracts the universe, produces a relationship of knowledge that is mutual and specific to a shared reality. *Nhandesy* Julia begins her explanation by stating that the domestic fire appeared at the time of the beginning of life, in *Jasukavypyvy*, when fire came out of the hand of *Jekoakui*, an immortal female being. Thus, at the time of creation, fire appeared from the hand of a woman, from *Jekoakui*, "from the middle of *Jekoakui*'s hand," signaling that fire belongs to and should be handled by women. This scene signals the fact that only women have the wisdom to handle fire, *Jekoakui* passed this wisdom on to the woman.

The domestic fire is the fire of union because that is how it is in the view of the Kaiowá woman, according to *Nhandesy* Julia, because it refers to the condition for living in a collective way, in solidarity, in reciprocity, living a Kaiowá life. She says:

> Fire represents the union, the protection of life, of the other, protecting the other against hunger, against the cold. When preparing food, not just any wood is put on the fire, it depends on people, on the collective that involves women, if someone is sick, for example, in order not to bring evil, the smoke has to be a smoke that can be breathed, like the smoke of the cedar, a sacred tree (*tempetari*). For Westerners, fire has another meaning and is thought of differently when it is removed from that collective look.

It is around the fire that the extended family gathers, for example at dawn or dusk, when preparing mate or mate tea (drinks that are shared) and other foods. These moments around the fire also mark the second teaching moment in a child's life, after being in the mother's belly. Around the domestic fire the child learns how to eat, when to eat and what to eat, about the powers of plants and animals as food and for healing, about drinks and how to make them. And, also, they hear about important knowledge that signals the good way of living. Around the fire, they feel the smoke and the food flowing, the talks as well as the smoke touch the bodies of the elders and pass through the children.

The contradictions between the Kaiowá world and the modern world emerge in this place of knowledge. The smoke that heals is seen as dangerous by the official health services; health professionals do not know which trees are burned and think that the smoke from the fire produces pneumonia in children, ignoring the bacteria and other viruses that it carries into the Kaiowá territory. There are many orientations from health professionals blaming the way of living around fire for illnesses, seeking to transform this way of living, of inhabiting. They ignore the importance of domestic fire for the Kaiowá, who resist and maintain life around fire. Kaiowá bodies are made around fire, they become more human, the food brings people together, and the smoke forms thoughts, shapes body sensibilities, and makes the person and the Kaiowá collective. What you eat, the air you breathe, the tactile sensations, the sight and hearing, shape a corporeality that continues to be fabricated throughout life. To be and live around the domestic fire is to become more human as a Kaiowá.

Nhandesy Julia explains the complexity of fire, she affirms that it has an "owner," or rather "guardian," it is from *Jekoakui*. Fire also feels, it has agency, humanity, it must be cared for just as it does. Fire brings unity in life, in daily life, in social life, in the village, it connects several paths, several families, several fires are connected by blood relations or affinity with a large family. In front of a fire, families and people come together, producing bridges or political alliances of social life, and all this happens around the fire. From the hands of a woman it is made and maintained.

The presence of fire marks moments of sharing important information for the Kaiowá. When the *Aty Guasu*, the great assembly of the Guarani and Kaiowá peoples takes place, which lasts for a few days, it is often important for the political authorities of the state to be present, if they really want to listen to the Kaiowá. Around the fire, beautiful words emerge, people talk about their sorrows, lament losses, decide new political paths, the youngest tell about their lived experiences to the elders. And the teachings, the food, the smoke, all of this enables the events. It is the moment of political alliance, for example, when the "retakes" are planned. Some words are never said in the *Aty Guasu* plenary, but there, around the fire on the nights in between the daytime meetings, many decisions are taken. There, a special moment of reunion of the great leaders happens, when one is heard and one can speak, so the stories flow from each land, the collective memory is raised.

Nhandesy Julia explains that the collective memory is alive and revived around the fire. A Kaiowá never forgets the stories told by his great-great-grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and grandmothers. Facing the fire in the *Aty Guasu*, several lines emerge from several perspectives. This sharing of events, of varied voices, leads us to what De La Cadena stated: "Similarities emerged simultaneously with differences and made possible diverse conversations about the same event that, however, did not add up to one" (de la Cadena, 2015: 24). Events are made from different prisms and Indigenous political practices draw paths. These Indigenous political practices emerge as cosmopolitical (op. cit.), in the sense that fire and its guardian effectively participate not only in the daily life of the Kaiowá, but also in the recognized and consecrated events about the history concerning the struggle for ancestral lands, which the Kaiowá have unleashed in the struggle for territorial rights in Brazil.

In turn, the Western or modern world tries to fix as legitimate a knowledge, a history, and a politics, to the extent that it excludes the political struggle of the Kaiowá. This is in narratives about the origin and encounters around the domestic fire, which are restricted to the "cultural" terrain of tales, of folklore, and are not considered part of history. The resilience of communalism (Smith-Morris, 2020) is made in the gatherings at night driven by the domestic fire, which displaces history from the place of something "given," the factual, as opposed to what would be the fictional or mythical narratives, view of Western positivism. In the wake of Trouillot's (2016) argument, a historical event can only be considered historical insofar as it is meant by a specific collectivity. There is no special distinction between the nature of the narratives of facts lived by ancestors or immortal Kaiowá beings and the historical narratives of Westerners, other than their claim to truth. Central to this discussion is not to identify whether or not a given collective makes a distinction between fiction/tale/legend and real and unreal as the positivist tradition might sound, disguised as a "real" discussion about the nature of history, but to understand what are the devices that define the real, by whom it was experienced, and how it was experienced. These devices may vary from one society to the next, but what is at stake is the claim for a kind of credibility. The way this credibility is claimed and granted operates an epistemological rupture between historical narrative and so-called fiction. What happens and is mobilized around the domestic fire is an unthinkable event within the hegemonic analytical categories and political agendas of the modern world.

In the Kaiowá world, words, food, and fire emerge simultaneously, the word is not a mere representation or metaphor of the thing, it is, in itself, something that exists and acts. This kinship relationship between people, food, and words produces the good way of living (*teko porã*) and makes the good place to live (*tekoa porã*). This is made from the group formed by humans and non-humans related to each other and collectively inhabiting the same territory. It is based on the understanding of inhabiting that the leaders build the meaning of doing politics.

Nhandesy Julia emphasizes the web of relationships that connect diverse beings in the cosmos. About traditional remedies, she affirms that plants teach a lot about their potentialities. The wisest ones observe and learn from the plants and pass on the teachings of each one of these plants, about how to use the leaves, the roots, in short, everything is shared. And in this web each one needs the other to survive. For example, the leaf called *guasu ka'a* must live in the bush under the protection of other plants, which take care of it. The *guasu ka'a* needs to stay in the bush, it cannot be removed and planted in another open place, but it needs the protection of the other plants in the forest. It cannot have contact with the sun's rays, if this happens it suffers a process of combustion, the fire comes out quickly, it sparks with the heat of the sun that heats it. *Guasu ka'a* is a potent medicine, and in the old days the elders collected and stored its leaves and used it to make a domestic fire. This was the way of making fire through the sun, through the brightness of the sun. However, with the entrance of non-Indians into Kaiowá territory and the devastation they caused, the trees were all cut down and the Kaiowá no longer find the *guasu ka'a*. It was also a very strong medicine, it healed wounds. *Nhandesy* Julia concludes her explanation about this plant by stating that: "Everything is related, everything has a connection, the leaf with the sun, with the domestic fire."

The teachings that are incorporated in a Kaiowá woman are in the rituals that they experience throughout their life cycle, the rite of first menstruation (*Kunha koty*) is a privileged moment when knowledge crosses the corporeality of a Kaiowá woman. And this formation does not refer to the individual, but sustains or grounds the center of the community's life. It allows several lives to happen, as *Nhandesy* Julia states: "Everything is connected. The woman learns to take care of the domestic fire that is intertwined with a plant and smoke and food production." Different lives and social organizations meet in this formation, especially the immortal being *Jekoakui*, who passed on his teachings to the women. From the beginning of the cosmos lived by *Jekoakui* flows the beginning, the beginning, the beginning of exchanges, of reciprocity, of life, of friendship, of how one should live with the guardians of nature. *Jekoakui* was also the one who, in the first world, molded this land we live on. She received gifts from various immortal beings and was kneading and molding these gifts, which allowed the creation of this land-world, where the Kaiowá live today. This makes her also the guardian of the land, so *Nhandesy* Julia explains, "This knowledge of looking at the land with this human look, as a human, to think that the land has its guardian so it has to be respected." The Kaiowá women concentrate this knowledge and pass it on:

> The Kaiowá woman builds every day her skills, her experiences to sustain this way of looking, this life. They live the *teko porã* (the good way of living) which is the teaching that leads us to sow relationships of reciprocity, of respect, and a deep value of all forms of life.
>
> (*Nhandesy* Julia)

These women learn about the beauty of life, which is sacred. They sing the song: *Kunharumengueta*, which is about the forms of life, the beauty of life, the beauty of the various forms of life that are in the bush, the beauty even of the thorns that are in some plants. Life must be looked at, lived, felt, and related to this look by looking at the beautiful, the beauty of life and its little differences. The women learn that they must coexist with these various lives because everyone lives together there, in the forest, each one in its own place. *Nhadensy* Julia explains:

> There is room for everyone, that is how *Jekoaikui* made the world. There is the place for the fish, the various animals, each with their guardians. So life, living life in harmony, with the river, the bush, the trees, the animals, is something that humanity should learn from the Indigenous people. It is something that sustains the Earth, the cosmos, the life of looking at life in harmony. This is the Kaiowá cosmology (*Jasukavypyvy rembipy*). Living must be sustained by respect for the guardian of each of the beings that live in the forest. And this is in the Kaiowá, in the memory of the elders mainly, this memory is alive in the spirit of each one and this is passed on between generations, between beings of the forest.

This respect is based on the accurate observation and reverence for life, this means looking at the various forms of life as sacred, as human. And this allows the "opening to the Other" and their ways of living as analyzed by Lévi-Strauss (1993) in Amerindian cosmologies. In this work, the author emphasizes the philosophical and ethical sources of Amerindian dualism that explain the openness to the Other, which was clearly manifested during the first contacts with the whites, the first colonizers, although they were animated by very contrary dispositions. This "openness to the Other" is anchored in an ethical posture in the way they understand and act in the world. How they insert and deal with otherness allows us to understand the interrelation between knowing and ethically positioning oneself. And this leads us to discuss the cosmopolitics perspective in the interaction with several human agents, as we will see in the next section.

Ethics and the Politics of Conviviality

We begin this section by bringing the account of the Krahô Indigenous people, the Timbira people who live in central Brazil, and then we will find the statements of *Nhandesy* Julia, which converge with the Krahô cosmology. According to the Krahô, the being of the forest, who is the guardian of the buriti tree, trusts the Krahô so that they do not cut down the entire buriti tree to perform their funeral ceremonies and other festivities. As Prumkwyj Krahô (2017) explains, the crow is the buriti log that is present at central moments in a person's collective life cycle. The crow is life, it is the spirit of the people, because when someone is cured of some disease, it is necessary to finish this

process with a party with the buriti log. Also, when a person dies, it is necessary to hold a party for the dead person with the buriti log, and so a buriti palm must also die. Every buriti is a life, a human being, and the buriti logs, for the Krahô, become family members. Every interaction with the plant must be done with great respect, because the buriti brings joy through its logs. A buriti is killed to have a log race, for example, to bring joy, so there is a special care in the collection of the buriti.

Log races are relay races with wooden logs and are part of ritualistic contexts. These races are held in pairs and there is a relay in carrying the logs. The person who is going to collect the buriti log cannot take a female, but must take a male, an old one, or a female that does not produce. When a Krahô dies, the buriti trees become sad because they know that some of them will also die so that this people can run the log race. The movement of life in the village follows the movement of the *buriti* and its *buritizal*. The shaman holds the *tora* to run and knows who can or cannot carry the buriti log, who is prepared. According to Prumkwyj Krahô (2017), the shaman has a transparent gaze, like an owl that turns its neck and sees everything. He accompanies those who are doing *resguardos* and are able to carry a *tora*. For the shaman, the *tora* is light because he performs the *resguardos*, but those who are not following his resguardos, who do not follow the care and restrictions that must be lived in different phases of life or to be a runner, cannot carry the *tora*. And so this interaction between the *buritizal* and the Krahô people is maintained. After the making of each crow, outside the village limits, two groups of men or women, divided according to their ceremonial halves, run taking turns carrying the log of their ceremonial half, that is, passing it from shoulder to shoulder among their companions until they reach the village. The dispute takes place between the ceremonial halves of the Krahô people, which regulate/guide the ritual in question.

Here emerges an interaction between human beings, individual agencies, autonomy, and ethical code that moves Indigenous communalism. The *buritis* are seen as human, the men who cut the logs have autonomy to do so, but they follow an ethical code established among the beings, which is based on the care for the *buritizal* and the rules about what to cut, how much to cut, how to cut, and the purposes for using the log. There is a trust between the collective of people and the *buritizal* so that the person in charge of cutting down a tree does not cause genocide in the *buritizal*. All beings of the forest are inserted in this ethical relationship because they are human, they make up the landscape. The buritis are beings that depend on the cultivation of faith in people, they have a relationship of kinship and alliance with the Indigenous people, and a relationship of translation and trust.

Nhandesy Julia narrates a similar fact about the relationship between the Kaiowá and animals. In the case of the hunting of peccaries,[4] for example, these animals have a "guardian," an ancestor who was the first peccary, the first being to have this form, and it is he who takes care of the many peccaries that exist in the forest. This figure of the "guardian" is related to the mythical

narratives analyzed by Lévi-Strauss (1997), when he mapped that, among the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, in the time of the ancestors all beings had a human form, but they unleashed diverse practices linked to an ethic and, by making these practices more dynamic, these beings underwent bodily transformations/metamorphoses that led to the creation of the diversity of beings in the world. This creation of diversity was essential for beings and their collectives to become the same or diverse, and to trigger interactions with otherness. Ethical rules started to be drawn in the game between beings. Lévi-Strauss (op. cit.) found in several mythical accounts of various Indigenous peoples, facts that portray a primordial time when only one animal/human people inhabited the cosmos. This people, through various events, ended up producing body differentiations and sets of rules, practices, and diverse ethical and aesthetic meanings that came into effect and separated the groups to infinity. A seriality of bodies and ways of living is created; the Kaiowá, the *queixadas*, the *mucuras* (opossums), emerge. This dynamic is linked to the possibility of thinking and articulating the difference in Indigenous sociocosmologies, signaling the possibility of a metaphysical space that encompasses the difference. The possibility of the new emerging manifests itself throughout the chain of differentiation, and rules are created that allow for coexistence among these beings. These serial differential distances, found in mythical thought, set in motion the cosmos of Indigenous peoples.

So, in the case of the *queixada*, among the Kaiowá, when you go into the bush, this guardian of the *queixada* follows in front, he comes in front of the flock, he is this primordial ancestor, the first *queixada*. According to *Nhandesy* Julia:

> He's big, not fat, but thin. And this very thin peccary can never be hunted, never be killed. He goes ahead when a group comes, he comes and can never be killed, you have to let him pass, he comes and behind comes the others, fifty, sixty, the entire group of the peccaries. Then he always lets them hunt and kill one or two, depending on the size of the Kaiowá family. That's how it works, that's why you can never kill the big one that comes in front, that's how the Kaiowá people do it. And also you can never kill the whole group. That's very dangerous, if you do that, the guardian of the peccary will never leave a game to feed us again.

Behind each animal there is a guardian. This is a symbology that for the Kaiowá is sacred, it is not something that the Indigenous people folklorize, but words, actions, and worlds are created from there. "This is the human way we look at animals," says *Nhandesy* Julia, every people has a guardian that must be respected, there is a human dimension, they are subjects and agents of their lives and are not something to be dominated. According to the Kaiowá, every collective of beings has a guardian who must be respected. These guardians must also be listened to. These are teachings for Indigenous life, all animals must be respected, and the ethical relationship code, between humans, must be activated in the interactions that are established. Hunger and disease can take

over the Kaiowá world if this rule is not followed. For the Kaiowá, this is the big problem in the modern, Western world. These interaction rules are broken and hunger, heavy rains, or drought come as a response from the forest beings to the neglect of social relations.

In Kaiowá Indigenous life, animals also teach about the good way of living. Through these relationships between beings or collectives, many teachings flow. *O akutipay* [5] is an animal that teaches about living; it is very difficult to hunt, and the elders say that it has several forms of escapes, that is, it knows how to act to escape, to get away from a hunt, it knows how to "open seven to twelve doors" to escape. It is very difficult to hunt this animal. The person who manages to hunt it is said to be the wisest, to have a wisdom or knowledge about animals. There are teachings on how to hunt it, and there are teachings on how to live that animal. *Nhandesy* Julia's companion told his daughter and her children that she and they should be like *akutipay*, that is, she and they should know how to have a way out, have several ways out, not be locked into one way out. This informs that they and she should have several dialogues, several looks. So, each animal has a teaching, transmits knowledge, teaches the Kaiowá, who learn a lot about ways of living. The transmission of knowledge flows through these various beings.

The care for the animals multiplies; for example, the "guardian" of the fish allows it to be caught, but counts on care in the preparation of the animal. *Nhandesy* Julia explains that a fish can never be fried, it has to be boiled in water. The guardian of the fish doesn't like it when fish are fried, he gets angry and can trigger a conflict like not allowing fishing anymore or launching an illness. Each animal that is hunted or caught has very deep teachings and a respectful relationship must be built.

Besides the way one should prepare food from the meat of an animal, the hunting of an animal must follow rules about how to hunt, the time of the year, and the use of that animal for that period. The capybara should be hunted when it is cold, because capybara oil is used to soothe bronchitis or asthma. This animal must be hunted by a Kaiowá in cold weather, to make hot broth from the oil. The fat that is on the capybara's bone must be cut and cooked with manioc. This signals that there is a right time to hunt and feed on each animal. For example, the *mucura* (opossum) can also be food, but only pregnant women can eat it. The husband hunts, kills, and removes the fat, which must be cooked and put in a container and stored. The meat of the *mucura* must be made into a broth and this food helps a woman to get pregnant faster. When the pregnant woman feels pain, she should rub the oil of the opossum on her belly and take about three spoonfuls. And if the child is in the wrong position, then this oil helps to position the child for delivery. So, the opossum should not be hunted without motivation, the need for survival of the group. Each animal has a role, a reason, and a way to become food. These are the teachings of the animals, as *Nhandesy* Julia states. When the forests are destroyed, with the death of plants, animals, and water, this directly affects the Kaiowá people. This forest in its entirety is part of the Kaiowá.

The waters of the Kaiowá territory are read as "mines that accumulate ancestral memory" by *Nhandesy* Julia. The leader goes on to state that these waters need to be cared for because they concentrate a lot of ancestral and collective memory. She refers to what geological studies call "aquifers," a system of underground waters, which are concentrated in the ancestral territory of the Kaiowá people. Here *Nhandesy* Julia's thinking connects with geological studies. In the territory of the Kaiowá people, which is in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, there are eight different aquifers, the largest of which is the Guarani Aquifer, which was so named in 1996 by the Uruguayan geologist Danilo Anton.[6] This immense aquifer covers parts of the territories of Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, and most of Brazil, covering 1,200,000 km^2. Most (70 percent or 840,000 km^2) of the area occupied by the aquifer is underground in Brazil. The total area of the Guarani Aquifer in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, traditional territory of the Kaiowá, is 214,000 km^2, of which 35,800 km^2 are outcrops and the remaining 178,200 km^2 are underlying. *Nhandesy* Julia deals with the power of these rising waters that must quench the thirst of the Kaiowá, these ancient waters must not be restricted to the past, but must be preserved in the present to maintain the future project of life of the Kaiowá people. These waters are the source of the collective memory, of the Guarani Kaiowá, *tembetary* ancestry. From this memory it is possible to preserve life, so we must drink from this water, from the memory it carries.

She explains: "We have to think of really going to that source, the source of ancestry, of our ancestors, of that living, collective memory, of the teaching not only for the Kaiowá but for humanity." *Nhandesy* Julia sings about the respect and beauty of animals: "*Ndopomoa Gwyra ijoapyrava, ndopomoa Gwyra ijoapyrava*." (Listen to the sacred song of the birds), *Inhandua poty harapype Gwyra ijoapyrava* (Look at the birds' clothing let us follow the song and dance of the birds on Earth). Similar discussion is brought by Alvarado-Cañuta and Huichaqueo-Pérez in Chapter 1 of this volume, for the Mapuche people, heritage is not only translated into archaeological pieces as described or used by the West, but heritage represents a living culture that mobilizes the collective and spiritual memory under the codes of the cosmovision. And the water enters this discussion for the Kaiowá people. Water is not only seen as a resource to be consumed. Artifacts, objects, and natural resources present profound dimensions in Indigenous sociocosmologies.

Final Considerations: The Resilience of Communialism in Controlling Equivocations

The erasure of Indigenous participation in politics and composition has deeply affected the lives of Indigenous people, especially in the face of the destruction of their world brought about by the so-called "development" of the modern world. Land is an equivocation, in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's sense:

> An equivocation is not only a "failure to understand," but a failure to understand that understandings are not necessarily the same, and that they are not related to imaginary ways of "seeing the world," but to the distinct worlds that are seen.
>
> (Viveiros de Castro, 2004: 255)

As a mode of communication, misunderstandings arise when different views of the same world use the same word to refer to things that are not the same. There is a collision between meanings and experiences about land for the modern/Westerners and the Kaiowá. Excluded from politics in the West, land is an essential political agent in Kaiowá life, political destinies are drawn in interaction with it. But the state is also an agent in this cosmopolitical game, which is activated in the claims for territory. Its presence is demanded, even though it does not recognize the ontological and political status of Kaiowá relations. They have always negotiated and dialogued with state institutions and authorities based on the possibilities of having "partial connections" (Strathern, 2004). If the state silences and denies the multiplicity of life forms, the Kaiowá cosmopolitics aggregates, connects, and tensions, transforming that which potentially annihilates into possible allies, similar to what occurs in the Andean world of *runakuna* politics, as explained by Marisol de la Cadena (2015). They demand the demarcation of Indigenous territories by the state, the protection of their lives by the state, the possibility of having quotas for Indigenous people in universities. It demands from the state conditions for the survival and well-being of the Kaiowá, within the limits of the grammar and translation that Kaiowá politics can act. One uses the skills of partial connections to communicate with the state and protect the territory, its forests and waters. To say that the aquifer is the ancestral memory itself is an futile argument, impossible to be recognized by the state. Because of this, the negotiations for the preservation of the waters began to take place in terms of the defense of the environment. However, every translation commits an equivocation at some level and there continues the erasure or invisibility of the agency of the diverse beings of the forest and the waters (de la Cadena, 2015). The greatest cosmopolitical challenge facing the Kaiowá is to control equivocations, to resist it through communalism.

Notes

1 The first author is an Indigenous leader of the Kaiowá Indigenous people in Brazil. We have the consent of these people to carry out the research, especially from the Takuara community, where we have the consent of Nhandsy, the community's religious leadership. This project is part of a more comprehensive research project on Indigenous Peoples of Brazil and their care practices, which went through the Ethics Committees in Brazil (CAAE: 02380212.3.0000.5540). The two authors were involved in analyzing the themes and constructing the article, together with the community. We thank the traditional indigenous leaders of the Takuara Indigenous community who allowed us to deepen the discussion about their sociocosmology. We are

grateful to Carolyn Smith-Morris and César Abadía-Barrero for their valuable comments. And we thank CNPq for the resources allocated to this research.

2 The speakers of the Guarani language are subdivided today into the Mbyá, Nhãdeva, Kayová, and Chiriguano dialects. A panoramic view of these societies reveals that they experience the Guarani socio-cosmological "complex" in multiple ways, which brings them closer together, but also distances them from the presence of different colonizing fronts. The words in the Kaiowá language are written in italics.
3 *Nhandesy* is a term used to define women leaders of the Kaiowá people who act in the religious/political sphere, orienting and guiding according to the good Kaiowá way of life. *Nhandesy* Julia is the mother of one of the authors of this chapter, Valdelice Veron, and was the companion of Marcos Veron, a great Kaiowá leader who was killed by invaders of his people's land, Takuara, in 2003. *Nhandesy* Julia's speeches were translated from the Kaiowá language by Valdelice Veron.
4 White-lipped peccaries (*Tayassu pecari*) are fruit-eating mammals in tropical rainforests, living in herds of 50 to 300 individuals.
5 *Akutipay* is called paca, in Brazil, the scientific name is Agouti paca, a medium-sized rodent with nocturnal habits that inhabits most of Brazil.
6 Information about the Guarani Aquifer was taken from the website: www.sanesul.ms.gov.br/noticias/aquifero-guarani-o-gigante-de-agua-doce-6554 in 23/02/2023.

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Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
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3 Relating to the Forest

Possibilities and Limitations of Collaborative Research and Community Media Production[1]

Georgia Ennis, Gissela Yumbo, María Antonia Shiguango, Ofelia Salazar and Olga Chongo[2]

Introductions

Georgia: Good day to you, dear reader. My name is Georgia Ennis, and I was raised in Michigan. I am a woman of Euro-American settler descent. I have also lived and worked for extended periods with Amazonian Kichwa communities in Napo, Ecuador. Many of the thoughts in this chapter were shared with me by four members of the Association of Upper Napo Kichwa Midwives (AMUPAKIN). They will now introduce themselves to you, as they introduced themselves to me during a series of interviews carried out between three respected Kichwa midwives and a young apprentice to the organization.

María Antonia: Good day … my name is Catalina Antonia María Shiguango Chimbo.[3] I was born in a community called Rukullakta (Old Town). My parents are from Sumaco, and that's why I know the old lifeways of my parents, both my mother and father had taught me.

Ofelia: Good day, daughter! To my daughter Gissela, as well as to sister Georgia. Listen carefully to what I am going to say. My name is Ofelia Nelva Salazar Shiguango, and I come from the community known as Ayllu Llakta.

Olga: First, I would like to wish sister Georgia a good day. I come from the community of Awayaku, and my name is Olga [Chongo]. I have continued to work with the organization AMUPAKIN, working with the goal of carrying on the knowledge of our elders about medicine and Vertical Birth.

Gissela: Well, I am going to respond in Spanish [rather than Kichwa].[4] My name is Gissela Yumbo. I come from the community of Ayllu Llakta (Family Town), which was recently formed, and which is found in the parish of San Pablo de Ushpayacu.[5] I am the daughter of one of the midwives of the Association, hence I developed an interest in finding out about the objectives and goals that we have as a culture. In this case, it is the midwives of AMUPAKIN who are carrying on the traditions so that we don't lose the essence that marks us as peoples native to this place, mothered by our own earth.

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-5

Discussion: As you now know, in part from their own introductions, these women are María Antonia Shiguango, the organization's founder; Ofelia Salazar, former president of the organization and María Antonia's daughter; Gissela Yumbo, daughter to Ofelia and granddaughter to María Antonia; and Olga Chongo, the incoming president of AMUPAKIN in late 2022. These women and their fellow members have been Georgia's teachers and colleagues since 2015.

Many conversations and stories in Kichwa begin with such introductions, which both bring you – our interlocutor – into the story, while they also identify who someone is and the relationships they claim to a community or local scholarly tradition. These forms of introduction, although variable in their realizations, are a significant and widespread feature of Indigenous-language discourse practices across North and South America. Georgia first noticed them during her fieldwork in Napo in a variety of public and private settings, including at community political meetings and cultural events, on-air interviews, and in recorded narratives. For instance, María Antonia's husband Francisco introduced himself in the following way when he recorded a traditional narrative for a collection of stories (AMUPAKIN, 2017) produced with AMUPAKIN:

Francisco:	*Ali punzha nisha salurani tukuy ñuka uyakunara. Ñuka Salazar Aitaka nishkamandami ani. Ñuka shuti Francisco José Salazar Chimbo.*	"I bid all my listeners a good day. I am from the place called Salazar Aitaka and my name is Francisco José Salazar Chimbo."

Significantly, Salazar Aitaka is both a place and a person, one of Francisco's respected elders. Scholars of Indigenous languages have noted that such introductions can provide both important contextual and referential functions in speech. Across the Americas, in settings of inter-tribal communication in which linguistic codes may not be shared, the use of such introductions can indicate a shared Indigenous identity and perspective across languages (Ahlers, 2006; Rodriguez, 2020).[6] Such formulaic introductions in Indigenous languages also have important referential functions. Discursive protocols in Navajo or Ojibwe may ask speakers to identify their clan membership or other kinship information, which in turn allows listeners to locate that person within a web of relations and to reckon their own relationships to each other (Webster, 2009; Uran, 2005). In Native North America, Smith-Morris suggests such introductions "index not only political and material history, but also relevant contemporary authority, functioning much like Western titles and curricula vitae" (Smith-Morris, 2020: 27). Among Kichwa speakers, such references similarly establish links to a speaker's authority and legitimacy in sharing knowledge which has often been passed down inter-generationally. As editor and narrator of this conversation, Georgia wanted to begin this way because this chapter is an experiment in bringing the communalism of Napo Kichwa

storytelling to life in a distinct format from the conversations and narratives that comprise daily Napo Kichwa spoken textuality (Uzendoski & Calapucha-Tapuy, 2012). This approach establishes each of the participants as authors who command larger histories of familial and cultural knowledge production.

In 2017, AMUPAKIN self-published a tri-lingual collection of narratives as the book and DVD *Ñukanchi Sacha Kawsaywa Aylluchishkamanda/Relaciones con nuestra selva/Relating to Our Forest*. Funded by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture and Patrimony with a grant for the narrative arts, the project emerged from a collaborative partnership between the members of AMUPAKIN and anthropologist Georgia Ennis. The project sought to articulate the relational environmental worldviews of Amazonian Kichwa women and men, and the ways that they interact with a social forest in a multi-authored collection of personal and traditional narratives. It also encouraged language reclamation (Leonard, 2017; Davis, 2017; Hinton et al., 2018) by pairing young volunteers with elder speakers to film, illustrate, transcribe, and translate the narratives.

This confluence of interests provides a vantage point on what has been called the "shifting middle ground" (Conklin & Graham, 1995; High & Oakley, 2020) of Amazonian eco-politics in alliances between external advocates and Indigenous communities. Conklin and Graham describe this middle ground as "a political space, an arena of intercultural communication, exchange, and joint political action" (1995: 696) in which both sides negotiate in an attempt to achieve – and ideally align – their goals. Yet, this middle ground is also prone to contradictions and misunderstandings, as goals or underlying assumptions may not be shared between groups. Black et al., Chapter 5 in this volume provide a powerful illustration of this middle ground, in that the goals and strategies of Indigenous peoples and potential allies may not always align. In the creation of a legal framework to protect Indigenous lands in Costa Rica, Indigenous practices of environmental conservation seemed to be one of the primary motivators for government support. Indigenous participants, in contrast, primarily sought to promote cultural sustainability and political autonomy. As Black et al. argue, however, "Indigenous autonomy and cultural sustainability should be a goal in their own right, rather than seen only as a means to environmental sustainability" (Chapter 5). We would add to this excellent point that linking the rights and autonomy of Indigenous peoples to environmental conservation opens further pathways for colonial judgment and interference, if, for example, Indigenous peoples "fail" to live up to external expectations of their stewardship. The middle ground between Indigenous communities and external advocates is certainly fraught.

Such misrecognitions and tensions also emerged between AMUPAKIN and potential allies. AMUPAKIN's project intentionally included different expressions of Napo Kichwa communalism – particularly social relationships with the environment and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Yet, it was also shaped by external, institutional understandings of what constitutes Indigenous "art," "culture," and even environmental knowledge. As we will

discuss in greater detail, María Antonia's first idea for the project was to base it around the production of different varieties of *aswa* (mildly fermented beer or *chicha*), a locally significant beverage produced by women. This project was not legible as art to members of the Ministry of Culture, who ultimately funded a proposal focused on ethnobotanical narratives and knowledge. Members of AMUPAKIN still made forceful statements about the value of their traditions, and what is needed to protect them in the face of ongoing colonialism in their narratives. As in the case of Costa Rica, such examples show the ways that Indigenous communities or individuals may also negotiate the middle ground between external demands and their own plans to their own advantage. In this chapter, we reflect on both the transformative potential and the tensions involved in transmitting and translating Napo Kichwa knowledge between local communities and wider audiences. Following an introduction to AMUPAKIN and its members, the remainder of the chapter is structured around the themes of communalism: belonging, generation, representation, and hybridity.

Methodology

This chapter is co-written with women who largely describe themselves as "illiterate," but who are respected speakers and storytellers in Kichwa, known around the township of Archidona as "Achi Mamas" or "wise women." As María Antonia will tell us in more detail, they are professors and should be valued as such. The development of this chapter has been a communal process. Although the final writing and editing in English are being carried out by one voice – Georgia's – in what follows, you will meet a multi-generational group of women as they reflect on the importance of their organization and the value of their knowledge. The development of this chapter has been somewhat slow, a familiar feature of life and work carried communally. In Napo Kichwa communities, decisions are generally not made hastily or alone, but discussed in depth among all involved parties – community meetings can last for hours, as each member is given space to ask questions and share their perspectives. Likewise, as you will learn, labor is also not completed alone, but in the form of reciprocal, communal work known as *minga* in Kichwa (Uzendoski, 2005: 112). Preparations for this chapter were also a form of *minga* or communal labor.

Orality and communal labor, in conjunction with writing, have been fundamental methods for this project. To prepare this chapter, we held several meetings, connecting through internet-enabled video calls between the United States and Ecuador. In our first meetings, we discussed the concept of communalism and some of the ways this concept is evident in the work of AMUPAKIN. The members of AMUPAKIN ultimately preferred for Georgia to give them a series of questions/prompts related to the themes of communalism and to interview each other in Kichwa about them. The interviews were predominantly conducted by one of the youngest members of AMUPAKIN,

Gissela Yumbo, an apprentice to the organization in her mid-20s, who is also the daughter of one of the members, and granddaughter of the founder. Gissela was in turn interviewed by her mother Ofelia, although she responded in Spanish rather than Kichwa. This format also allowed the participants to guide the conversations in ways that were most comfortable to them and to ask further questions of importance to them. Although certainly shaped by anthropological input, this approach allowed for a blending and transgressing of normative research practices in which the anthropologist retains complete control of the interview setting and questions. After recording the interviews in Kichwa, Gissela transcribed and translated them into Spanish. Georgia then reviewed the resulting texts, translated them to English, and edited them to put them into conversation with each other around some of the main questions raised by the concept of Indigenous communalism (Smith-Morris, 2020). Georgia then re-translated the resulting text from English to Spanish using Google Translate (an imperfect but functional method) and shared the draft with Gissela who read it to other members of AMUPAKIN for revision and approval of the content. This multi-step process of writing and translation has allowed us to develop and refine our conclusions communally. In the text, we rely on **bolded names** to distinguish the voices of our authors. In the sections following this introduction, the contributions of each of our authors are marked in the following way: **María Antonia**: Catalina Antonia María Shiguango Chimbo; **Ofelia**: Ofelia Nelva Salazar; **Gissela**: Gissela Yumbo; **Olga**: Olga Chongo; and, **Georgia**: Georgia Ennis. Readers will also encounter sections – such as this – written in a more distant, narratorial voice, sometimes marked as *discussion*; this voice belongs to Georgia, who steps out of the conversations to provide clarification at various points.

This chapter centers on orality as a methodologically necessary step in collaborative knowledge production. When she was asked to co-author with Indigenous colleagues for this volume, Georgia faced a central issue – how to co-author a chapter together when written language is not the preferred method of communication for some of the authors? We drew upon our previous experiences in co-authoring a written book together based on the spoken word, which allowed us to navigate some of the challenges of co-authorship across written and spoken modalities. We utilized a format very similar to the one that shaped the book project we are going to discuss – intergenerational and collaborative storytelling, transcription, and translation. The combination of multi-voiced discussion and analysis is partly inspired by the relational media practices exemplified by Miyarrka Media's *Phone & Spear: A Yuta Anthropology* (Gurrumuruwuy & Miyarrka Media, 2019). Our approach is also inspired by communalist practices themselves, which decenter the "programmatic obsession with individualism" (Smith-Morris, 2020: 5) evidenced not only by the industrial settler state, but also by still dominant models of anthropological research that celebrate the lone ethnographer's authoritative voice (Behar & Gordon, 1995). Much like the book we first produced together, this chapter has multiple authors, and several voices and hands have shaped

the words you are going to read. In doing so, we emphasize that the often-oral knowledge of anthropological interlocutors is as important as the written analytical products usually produced to describe it.

Locating Napo and AMUPAKIN

AMUPAKIN's headquarters are found in the province of Napo, Ecuador, on the outskirts of the market city of Archidona, in a small Indigenous community called Sábata. Its members belong to a group of people commonly known as Amazonian Kichwa (Quichua) or Upper Napo Kichwa, a name which references their linguistic connection to the Quechuan language family.[7] Like many other groups, the name Upper Napo Kichwa people use for themselves – Runa – means "person" or "people" and usually includes a territorial identifier such as Napo Runa or Tena Runa. The concept of *runapura* expresses the communal life of Runa people living among themselves, though today it may also include other Indigenous Amazonian groups (Reeve, 1985; Reeve & High, 2012; Uzendoski, 2005: 15). Amazonian identities highlight the complexity of locally defined understandings of Indigeneity within Indigenous communities across the Americas (Canessa, 2012; Huayhua, 2018; Weismantel, 2001; De la Cadena, 2000; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). In addition to Amazonian Kichwa Runa, Napo is also home to Waorani communities, some Chicham (Jivaroan) families and individuals, Highland Kichwa merchants, as well as *mishu* (white-*mestizo*) settlers, and a small population of Montubio and Afro-Ecuadorian *arrivants* (INEC, 2010).[8] Euro-American foreigners are often called *rancia* or *irakcha* ("blond hair," which is referenced a few times in the following text); they are a regular feature of life in the tourist-friendly region.

Residents of what is today the Ecuadorian province of Napo have experienced dramatic changes resulting from multiple overlapping forms of colonialism in the region. For much of Napo's history, the region remained comparatively peripheral to the Spanish colonial system, sporadically missionized and exploited by colonial landholders (Oberem, 1980: 100–103). Situated at the headwaters of the Napo River, tucked between the Andean mountains and Amazonian lowlands, the area was historically difficult to reach. Since roughly the 1920s, more intensive missionization, settlement, and extraction have rapidly altered life for the residents of Archidona (Muratorio, 1991: 20, 163–164), a small but bustling market town on the Western edge of the Amazon, first settled by Spaniards in the 1560s (Oberem, 1980: 79)

Like other Amazonian groups in the region, Napo Kichwa families and communities have traditionally practiced shifting cultivation of manioc and other staple foods in swidden gardens, known as *chagra*, combined with hunting and gathering on large, communally managed territories, with use rights dictated by custom and mutual agreement (Macdonald, 1999; Muratorio, 1991). These practices are often described as both *runa kawsay* ("Runa lifeways") and as *ruku kawsay* ("the lifeways of the elder"), a temporal shift acknowledging their importance but also diminished use in contemporary circumstances.

For María Antonia Shiguango – founder of AMUPAKIN and an elder Kichwa woman born in 1947 in the community of Rukullakta near Archidona – these lifeways passed down across generations are extremely important to her organization's mission. The forms of communal living remembered by women like María Antonia and her colleagues have been altered by land reforms, government-directed agricultural development, and the infrastructure of extractive colonialism. In the face of these changes, Kichwa communities have claimed land rights in various and contrasting ways, including private and communal ownership, and developed new forms of communal political organization (Erazo, 2013). The Association of Upper Napo Kichwa Midwives is one such communal organization that emerged in the face of new sociopolitical pressures in Napo (Carro et al., 2017). The remainder of this section tells the story of AMUPAKIN's history in the words of its founders and members. Their perspectives highlight the value of their elder's knowledge, as well as their recognition of both the utility and contradictions involved in forging new relationships and collaborations with outsiders – including local organizations and international NGOs – to protect it.

María Antonia: Both my mother and my father taught me how to live when there was no city or village. That's why I now know that our forest is our pharmacy and hospital, our forest is our garden, as [they showed] me the waterfalls and pools, the mountains, the forest, the trees. Those were the kinds of lessons they transmitted to me, and they advised me to never forget them.

I began to think about what I could do so that my mother's counsel would not be abandoned, because she told me, "Living or dead, I will see how you value my knowledge," as she had already instructed me to [expand upon] her abilities [*paju*] and power.

It was a great effort to go by foot to bring together the women from Cotundo, Killu Yacu, and Pano [from all over the province of Napo]. That's how it began. As the [non-Indigenous] political leaders of that time would not support us, I came to ask [the NGO] Sacha Kausay for help; it was possible to ask those with blond hair [*irakcha*], as my parents would say, for help to continue … From there we worked with the [Ecuadorian] Red Cross, who contacted [the Spanish Red Cross] to gain support to begin.

As I don't speak Spanish well, the Red Cross wanted to take control of everything, as we were all illiterate. If we didn't stand up for ourselves, they would have done everything how they wanted and not what we desired. For example, we envisioned a traditional meeting house, but they built it from concrete instead …

I remember my mother telling me that we must leave [our knowledge] flowering for our children, our teachings about the forest, written down so that they would be known all over the world, while it would also legitimize our knowledge for the leaders that support us. That's why I say that these are my ideals, thoughts, everything that my mother planted in me. Despite our failures and struggles, AMUPAKIN endures.

Georgia: For María Antonia, the history of the organization she founded is inseparable from the social relationships that led to its formation over the

course of several years. Her daughter, Ofelia Salazar, likewise remembers the different relationships and organizations involved in bringing AMUPAKIN into being between the early 1990s when María Antonia first began to look for support and the early 200s, when they opened a medical and cultural center with the financial support of the Red Cross.

Ofelia: In 2004, the project of AMUPAKIN took off. More women who were midwives arrived, and we ended up with around 75 women. This was when I had recently joined as an official member, before my mother had taken me to meetings, but being young, I didn't understand very much. Now I realize that they were very wise ideas to organize ourselves, to continue on with our knowledge, fighting for our young people. That's why I took on the role of director, to continue fighting for our "healthy" [*saludable*] lifestyle as those from the Ministry of Health would say. From then on, facing struggles, ire, and tears, that's how we have continued onward with this organization until today. However, some have become weary and left, complaining that they don't earn enough, because today a great deal of money is necessary to provide education, clothing, medication, and any other thing to our children.

Napo Kichwa Communalism

Such statements from two key figures in the history of AMUPAKIN point to the importance of communal practices and principles in their work. They also highlight some of the impacts of the rapid monetization and globalization (Lu, 2007) of a formerly subsistence-based economy in Napo. These are themes that emerged frequently in the conversations carried out in AMUPAKIN regarding Napo Runa communalism.

What is Indigenous communalism and how does it manifest in Napo Runa Kichwa practices and thinking, particularly in the work of AMUPAKIN? As articulated by Carolyn Smith-Morris, *communalism* is a flexible anthropological concept which captures a human universal – the potential for communal living and values – that nonetheless manifest in distinct "ways of knowing" (Smith-Morris, 2020: 11). In the Nishnaabeg theory of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, such Indigenous ways of knowing are uniquely place-based forms of knowledge production and transmission. Describing her nation as an "ecology of intimacy," Betasamosake Simpson writes that it "is connectivity based on the sanctity of the land, to love we have for our families, or our language, our way of life" (2017: 8). As a non-Indigenous scholar, Georgia understands communalism not as an essential, racialized characteristic of Indigenous peoples, but as a human capacity linked to place-based relationships established between people – and other beings – who live and work together.

Oral transmission of traditional, place-based knowledge is one way in which Kichwa people generate relationships not only across generations but between people and local places. The body of knowledge sometimes called *runa yachay* (Kichwa knowledge and philosophy) transmitted intergenerationally contains

numerous lessons about the importance of communal living and labor. Georgia asked the members of AMUPAKIN to reflect on what makes Napo Kichwa lifeways unique in comparison with those of their settler neighbors. For these women, living and laboring together is one of the most significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as well as between life in the countryside and the city. As these women describe their lives, the importance of experiential knowledge and place-based perspectives are evident in their theorizing of the concept of Napo Runa communalism.

María Antonia: It's true that in the old days the Runa of the forest lived together in groups, communicating well [between settlements] with whistles [from the conch horn]. That's how we Runa Kichwa live. In contrast, because the white-*mestizo* people have money, they live together and with their language they have enough for food, clothing,

We Runa are not like that. Now the time has come to teach our children and we don't have enough. That's why we look for support. According to them, [we] lie when we say that the old ways are important, that's why some white-*mestizos* and settlers don't respect it.

Gissela: We all have our own customs. For example, in Kichwa culture, we live in the reality that we must reclaim our own customs. Settlers in the city live within four walls with a street, but we live close to nature, close to the river, among our family. You could say there is an obvious difference in how we are able to live. And if we are talking about foreigners, they also have their own way of life, depending on the place; they have their clothes, their language, their food. It's the same for us. We are different. That's what I can say from what I have experienced.

Communalism is like unified or organized labor, where people come together or in our *mingas*. [9] Today, the system we live under is trying to divide us into groups, because there are groups in which you should work alone – you are set up to live alone. But we actually strengthen ourselves more when we work together in groups. Certainly, there are those among us that do not practice these things, but we must understand that is only in a group that can we move forward, we must try to understand other people with their different ideas.

That's how I understand communalism, that everything is done through communal labor.

Ofelia: In my perspective, we Runa or Indigenous people live grouped together in communities among our families. In our households, we live with fathers, mothers, and children, and from this group, we branch out to our in-laws and our *compadres* and *comadres* until we create a village, which will become a community, within which associations and organizations will come together, staying together to live and work in groups. I usually invite [people to work together], while the *mestizos* or settlers work alone in whatever way they can … A single tree doesn't live in a forest alone. In the forest there are many trees – small ones, medicinal ones, edible ones. We are like that in our community. The city instead is solitary.

We should never end up like the settlers. I prefer to live as people who work in the great forest, growing our community, and inviting the children, the mothers, the men, and the young people to stay in a large home in the deep forest, a place for AMUPAKIN … AMUPAKIN is an assembled forest, containing the thoughts of young people, elders, and daughters. All of us together are like an assembled forest, standing tall. We are a community, an organization, a team, an association of strong women who continue moving forward.

Relating to the Forest

The emphasis on intergenerational interaction and labor is one of the greatest strengths of AMUPAKIN to support their project of medical, cultural, and linguistic reclamation. However, the importance of communalism for its members does not mean that daily life is without conflict – as Gissela notes, differences in thinking and planning can emerge. These tensions are also evident in the collaborative, communal media project we developed together.

Before we continue thinking through the themes of communalism at AMUPAKIN, some indication of how we came to work together is necessary. Georgia arrived in Napo as a doctoral student from the United States and developed relationships in the region through language study. She began visiting AMUPAKIN as it was the main research site of her colleague Trisha Netsch Lopez (2022), who was conducting dissertation fieldwork on intercultural health and midwifery in Ecuador.[10] The members of AMUPAKIN were also active in the Napo Kichwa media industry, which was the focus of Georgia's doctoral research. She eventually proposed that she work with AMUPAKIN to explore the behind-the-scenes production of cultural reclamation media.

From the start of our work together, we agreed that Georgia's research would also seek to provide a tangible benefit to the members of AMUPAKIN. What this meant in practice was that she provided her skills as an anthropologist and researcher in ways that were useful to the organization when they asked for them. Often this meant lending her camera or taking photos for the group during their events or providing translation services or coordinating meetings and events with other foreigners. We also agreed that Georgia would pay the organization an honorarium – to be used and divided as they saw fit – as part of the process of community consent developed with AMUPAKIN. Georgia further sought individual consent from each participant in her research, while she also paid room and board to individual members who hosted her in their homes. Despite the advice of some ethnographic methods manuals to avoid paying research collaborators (Musante (DeWalt), 2014), such payments attempt to recognize the economic value of these women's labor as professors of *runa yachay* and respond to their own requests to be compensated fairly for their labor.

Georgia had the opportunity to contribute more significantly to the organization, however, when María Antonia asked for assistance in applying to a

competition held by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture and Patrimony. Aware of the grant funding available for artistic projects, María Antonia asked for assistance in developing a project that would bring both income and recognition to the organization. After almost a year in Napo, Georgia hoped to design a project grounded in Kichwa pedagogical practices that brought together the intergenerational community of AMUPAKIN in a way that could promote both cultural and linguistic reclamation. And María Antonia even had an idea for the project's theme: the production of different varieties of *aswa* (also known as *chicha*), a widely consumed manioc beverage usually served lightly fermented that is principally produced by women as part of intergenerational, gendered knowledge.

This was the first place our collaborative project ran into trouble, however. After meeting with very well-meaning representatives of the local office of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture, we were discouraged from developing a project about *aswa*. Chicha was not legible as an artistic product, no matter the angle we suggested – a cookbook documenting the different techniques accompanied by photos, drawings, and narratives, or a video series documenting the production of different kinds of *aswa*. The terms of the grant specified folktales, sculptures, artworks, plays, or films. This, then, was a significant initial limitation on the project, and one of the first places we had to navigate a middle ground implied by the representational expectations of outsiders.

During her time studying media in Napo, Georgia had learned that some staff at the Ministry of Culture were interested in *supay*. Due to missionization, this word is most often translated as "devil." It can also mean "spirit" or "being" in ways that overlap with other terms like *yaku runa* and *sacha runa* or river and forest beings, respectively. These words also overlap with the idea of *amu* (from Spanish "*amo*" or owner) and *apa*, which usually refer to the spirits who control resources like plants and animals in the forest. These were also beings who are discussed frequently by elders at AMUPAKIN and around Napo more widely. Elder midwives would tap the trunks of trees lightly and ask them for permission to gather their medicines. Women discussed the relationships they held with powerful *yaku runa*. And they also discussed the many places around Napo where these beings were known to live, and the ways that they managed the forest. For Georgia, spending time with the Napo Kichwa people and talking with them about the forest meant coming to see it as a place in which social relationships extended not just to other people but to plants and animals, who were also social beings.

The year prior, María Antonia and other members of AMUPAKIN had consulted with artist Virginia Black on their knowledge about the forest and its inhabitants. Developed to support Black's research (2016) on the forest as a social space, the project involved recording a narrative about a medicinally significant plant and its *amu* with one of the elder members, while a younger volunteer listened to the story and illustrated it. We drew upon this model to develop a new proposal for the Ministry of Culture, which focused on narratives detailing members' environmental knowledge and relationships.

After consulting with María Antonia and several other members of the organization, we developed a plan for an intergenerational and intercultural narrative art project, which we initially called "Proyecto multimodal de literatura oral de Napo: ñukanchi sacha kawsay aylluchisha" (Multimodal Project for Napo Oral Literature: Relating to Our Forest Life). We designed the project to include 15 oral narratives told by the midwives of AMUPAKIN and their husbands regarding their knowledge about *sacha runa* and *yaku runa*. To record the stories, we collaborated with Alí Aguilera Bustos, a student in visual anthropology at the time studying at the Facultad Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales of Quito (Aguilera Bustos, 2018). This approach also allowed us to provide training to some of the young volunteers of the organization on audio and video recording. We also transcribed and translated the stories communally. Younger volunteers and relatives of the storytellers transcribed them in Kichwa and then translated them into Spanish. A team of English-speaking graduate students translated the stories from Spanish into English and worked with Kichwa consultants to refine the translations. This approach was considerably more legible to our supporters at the Ministry of Culture. Using funds from the Ministry of Culture, AMUPAKIN (2017) self-published the collection as a book and DVD with text in Kichwa, Spanish, and English. Significantly, members of AMUPAKIN received honorariums for their work coordinating and contributing to the project, while we were also able to provide payment to younger affiliates for their services in translation.

This project has provided numerous insights into the production of the shifting middle ground in alliances between Indigenous Amazonians and outside advocates as they negotiate collaborative projects. It is important to note that the project itself, although initiated by the Kichwa people, was also shaped by the input of an external anthropologist. There are considerable and ongoing shifts in attitudes regarding the secrecy of traditional knowledge in Napo. Some young people espouse more open ideologies to continue to transmit information they see as in danger of being lost, while others and many elders are more protective of their traditional knowledge. These are also tensions that exist in various degrees for the women of AMUPAKIN, which emerge in their own thinking about our project and the ways it has been received in Napo. In the following sections, we hear more from them about their experiences with the project, as well as some of the main tensions involved in recontextualizing communal practices and familial knowledge within expanding Amazonian informational ecologies and market economies.

Belonging

"Belonging" is one of the central processes of Indigenous communalism. There are at least two senses of the word "belonging" that were salient in the discussions that took place at AMUPAKIN. First is perhaps the more obvious idea of belonging within a group. The second sense of "belonging" that shapes the discussion of communalism is related to the question of ownership of

Napo Kichwa knowledge, particularly as it is recontextualized in new settings. That is – to whom does Indigenous knowledge rightfully belong and how should they be compensated for transmitting it?

As an external anthropologist, Georgia continues to grapple with the fact that the narrative art project makes the accumulated knowledge held by Kichwa elders much more public. Such knowledge has traditionally been very closely guarded within families. Many of the stories in the collection do qualify as privileged, local Kichwa knowledge or *runa yachay*, although such topics are frequently discussed in daily life in Napo. This tension runs through the collection and recordings, as some storytellers conceal more than others, or speak more indirectly than their colleagues. Who knowledge belongs to and how it can be shared are central concerns in the following conversations.

Olga: I adhere to living grouped together. It is good to organize ourselves, because only when we are organized together will we have support, working together between young people and elders. We have come together to maintain these forms of knowledge, to give ourselves strength and to continue moving forward. Within AMUPAKIN, I have joined together with the respected midwives, discussing every kind of vital force and form of knowledge – for example, regarding vertical birth – to continue working together in the organization.

We decided to participate in that book project [*Relating to Our Forest*]. Why? Because we don't want to remain hidden over there, we want our knowledge to matter. If we said no, why not? Our vital energy can't just be given away [by] just teach[ing] those things in these times. We also teach our children about the practices of drinking *wayusa* tea, about our gifts, and other things that we pass on to them. I would not do a[n external] project in that manner [for free]. But if there is a project that pays [us to teach others], then we can teach. The issue is that we can't pass on our own knowledge or our *paju* [abilities/gifts] without a payment.

Our project was to speak about and write down what our grandparents had taught us. My thoughts on this matter are the following: not everyone has respected our knowledge. Half of them have, but the other half have not. Why is this? Those who have not respected it are the *mestizos*, the settlers, who say that the stories are untrue. And those who have appreciated it more are the foreigners, they've said it is good, and we have sold them some of our books. But among Kichwa Runa, they haven't appreciated it as much. Why? Before, many did not know how to appreciate our elders, which is why they are not following [their knowledge] now. That's why we made the book, to keep teaching them to appreciate it, if not, they will never learn to respect this knowledge.

Gissela: Regarding the project that we carried out for the book entitled *Ñukanchi sacha kawsaywa aylluchishkamanda, Our Familiarity with the Forest*, I think that it was an opportunity where several forms of participation were contributed.[11] There was very strong integration among the wisdom and knowledge of the midwives, the participation of young adults and children, as well as the husbands of the midwives. [It was like] a small *minga* so that we

could know about this knowledge, the stories, the myths, that have been shared across generations, but now are being lost. It's good for us to be able to reclaim all this knowledge, or at least for it to be discussed by young people, who are now losing even the language – as you can tell from my speech in Spanish. I speak Kichwa, but mostly with the very elderly, and I can even translate it.

As young people in this project, I haven't really seen any problems that have come about. Rather, for us as young people, it has been a great opportunity that we have a space in which we can share with the elders, with the dear grandmothers the stories which the grandparents have shared. Similarly, we had the opportunity to become more comfortable with, for example, cameras, to learn new technologies, but always rooting ourselves in the knowledge of the culture of our homeland.

Olga: The stories and conversations that the grandparents have left us surely have an owner, who we call the *amu*, of each story that is told. This makes us value them a great deal! And that is why we have had the strength to carry them onward! If we left them behind, all of this would be forgotten. We continue working to maintain this knowledge.

We will work by inviting, by calling on the children [to participate]. I think that there should be a project developed for the youth and the elders to maintain this strength and knowledge. And with this project it would be paid for the elders to pass their knowledge on to the youth, as well as others.

Ofelia: I, as a younger person, still think that knowledge is very valuable and that no one can afford to pay for it, because it is our way of life. If I give [this] to someone else, I think that I am killing our way of living. My life is very valuable and if I die myself then everything comes to an end. The *mestizos* often [casually] ask for someone to tell them a story or that we treat them [medically], but it's not that way. Our abilities [*paju*] are strengths, and if I share that strength, my own strength diminishes, that is why we say that our lives are cut short. We can be a bit stingy in sharing and we don't want to give it away. If I do give it away, I give it to my children or family members, but to the community, no. And if we do share it, to learn it, one must complete several fasts; only one who fulfills the prohibitions can earn this knowledge, because even to complete medical treatments requires these fasts. The settlers think that it is just about avoiding hot peppers or certain foods. That's why, as they say in Spanish, our knowledge is "priceless" [*invaluable*]. A life in the forest that is known and lived, that's why, as we Indigenous people say, the forest is our house, life, and family. That's why we should care for the forest. And that's why I would ask for a significant grant to care for the rainforest, which would utilize funds provided by foreigners or settlers. With such funding, we would be able to continue to care more for our forest. Why do I propose they give us money? We cannot hurt our forest, rather we would plant more, which is why I think this would be a valuable strategy.

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Discussion: As Ofelia explains, the intellectual property for such knowledge remains with the Kichwa people even when it is shared, for as she says, "it is our way of life." In these statements, we hear of the importance of payment given to knowledgeable experts (usually called *yachak* in Kichwa, "one who knows"). Such payments are important for these women in intercultural exchanges, but also when providing services to other community members. Utilizing one's knowledge and abilities is understood to require the use of one's vital life force. As Ofelia explains, when she shares such strengths with patients or learners, her own strengths are also transmitted and therein diminished. Although these forces may be shared freely within a family, healers like the members of AMUPAKIN usually require some sort of payment, monetary or not, for their role in mediating these vital forces. Although it may sound instrumental from an external perspective, Olga's claim that they cannot pass on or utilize their knowledge and gifts without payment is part of a broader understanding of knowledge and labor in Napo Kichwa communities. Indeed, in both these interviews and the narratives produced for *Relating to Our Forest*, several speakers described how historically these exchanges were mediated through barter of food or firewood, while today such exchanges are governed by money. For Olga, and other members of AMUPAKIN, it is particularly important that their expertise and knowledge is recognized monetarily because of these norms. How to make a living and life within an increasingly developed market economy in Napo is one of the central concerns for the members of AMUPAKIN.

Generation

One of the fundamental issues that the women in AMUPAKIN face is how to make their knowledge valuable and economically viable for new generations in the face of discrimination by outsiders and the pressures of living under an expanding settler economy. This is a concern more broadly shared by Indigenous communities in the Amazon. A subsistence-based lifestyle is increasingly difficult in the face of territorial loss and other forms of environmental disruption. Generating ties between elders and young people through which to transmit their knowledge, as both Olga and Gissela have discussed, is one of the main opportunities that AMUPAKIN provides to its members. AMUPAKIN also creates economic opportunities for its members. The association sometimes applies for grants, as we did from the Ministry of Culture in 2016. AMUPAKIN has also developed small businesses, such as a boutique of artisanal body products produced by members using forest-sourced ingredients. These businesses can bring tangible, economic benefits to AMUPAKIN's members based on their ownership of their knowledge and artisanal skills. Significantly, this provides income to both elders and young people, who work together to produce and sell the products. Such economic practices can create opportunities for intergenerational interaction and knowledge transmission. The process of *generation*, then, creates multiple relationships, both across

generations within AMUPAKIN, but also potentially between AMUPAKIN and outside organizations and actors.

María Antonia: I am illiterate in the sense that I don't know how to write, but I also wanted to continue onward, so I implored the other midwives to gather and to learn together from all of the things that we know. The intention was to continue, whether they wanted us to or not, for good or bad we have followed this path. I do not speak Spanish, so I have continued with my own voice, following our culture as best I can.

Now in the *chagra* (garden) I plant medicine, I plant plantains, but just like that the land is slowly running out. These medicines are what give life to my body, and with these thoughts, I continue speaking and working with the young people who help us. I speak to them clearly and explain how one works [in the forest]. We have worked and requested support in order to have an income. Our way of life is valuable. It is a good life. I have helped to make this point. I also need others to support me in my work. This is the idea with which I carried onward.

Ofelia: As I see it in these times, half of them say that [we] are just making [our knowledge] up, because now there is a city, hospital, pills, and pharmacies, with the goal that we should all go to the city. In contrast, the other half tells us, "Thank you so much respected mothers." They are grateful because since the Association was formed, we have gone on teaching that the traditional way of life is very good, and that they should carry on, as we will help them. We struggle so that our rights, strength, and knowledge will be known by all the world, so that others are not afraid. We are fierce warrior women. Saying this brings me joy, and that is how I continue onward, inviting our sisters from each community that they come together to organize with us.

Georgia: AMUPAKIN also creates a space for intergenerational groups to generate their own theories and ideas about linguistic and cultural continuity. This is particularly important because many young people have diminished time with their elders due to pressures from school and work. The question of how to maintain culture and language in the face of ongoing colonialism in Napo is a central concern for people there, particularly for the members of AMUPAKIN. The following exchange about how to approach cultural maintenance and reclamation occurred spontaneously between Ofelia and her daughter Gissela during their conversation, beyond the guiding questions provided by Georgia. These are questions that matter to the women of AMUPAKIN, which point to the importance of intergenerational interaction for cultural and linguistic maintenance.

Ofelia: Sometimes, some of us elders hold back our knowledge, guarding it. Because the young people who hear it, lose it without holding onto it. So, all you young people, what can you do as a young person to continue to maintain these learnings? Have you thought about how they used to keep them?

Gissela: This is a complex topic. If we as young people set ourselves to raising our awareness, the responsibility to maintain this knowledge within oneself will be more deeply felt. I think that the most logical thing would be to

develop an event in which the rituals are practiced, certain things with young people so that they continue learning them. I think this is one way of maintaining the knowledge of our culture. Personally, I would like to involve myself in those kinds of daily events so that they are every day [occurrences] and they don't get lost, so that it becomes a custom [itself] to maintain the good customs. In each way of life there are good elements and bad elements. We can emphasize the older ways of life that have been passed on to us as living traditions. From there, as a young woman who will likely someday start a family, [it falls to me] to share with my children in the coming generations what I have learned along the way.

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Discussion: In Amazonian Kichwa households, socialization and education have typically occurred within families as part of daily life (Mezzenzana, 2020). Children often do not receive formal instruction from their parents but learn through observation and repetition. Such practices for socializing children into *runa kawsay* are now less possible as many children spend significant portions of their days in school, while young people frequently work outside the home to help support their families. AMUPAKIN, then, provides a space in which intergenerational learning is a central goal and focus of the members of the organization. Olga, for instance, described to Georgia during fieldwork in 2016 that she continued to recuperate and improve her spoken Kichwa by interacting with elder members. Now a middle-aged adult, Olga had been encouraged as a child to speak Spanish instead of Kichwa to avoid discrimination. Similarly, Gissela has explained to us that she understands Kichwa and can translate it, as well as speak it with elders, but that she is most comfortable in Spanish, the language she also used for her interview. This is the case for many young people and children in Napo in the 2020s. Yet, through Gissela's ongoing work at AMUPAKIN, she has developed greater skills in Kichwa language and cultural practices, while she is also able to earn money from her work there. AMUPAKIN creates a site in which language, environmental knowledge, and women's medicine, among other forms of cultural knowledge are a central focus, but also a source of some economic security, allowing for members to generate new connections and relationships.

Representation

The theme of *representation* is another key piece of the processes surrounding Indigenous communalism. In the conversations at AMUPAKIN, representation took on at least two meanings. First, representation relates to how the midwives choose to represent themselves in terms of clothing, language, and other material practices as part of their association and in our collaborative production of media. Some anthropologists have critiqued Napo Indigenous performance media for representations that are more "ideal" than "real" (Rogers,

2003). Throughout the Americas, scholars have noted that Indigenous peoples frequently have to negotiate external expectations of what Bernard Perley terms "charismatic Indigeneity" in Indigenous performance (Perley, 2014; Graham & Glenn Penny, 2014; Graham, 2002). Yet, for someone like María Antonia, the reclamation of traditional clothing and other material culture – including frequently exoticized items like face paint and feathers – in performances and daily practices brings her a great deal of contentment. María Antonia's statements suggest that the way she represents herself in public media and performance is more akin to regalia, rather than a costume. The other, closely related meaning of representation has to do with the ways these women and AMUPAKIN's knowledge are represented and known more widely in the world by outsiders. This is a political sense of representation, both within the organization and to outside audiences.

María Antonia: I have really enjoyed those writings [for our project], because first [in the videos] the older way of living is visible, including the wooden *banco* seat, the *tulpa* firepit utilizing three stones, the earthen pots, baskets, our language, our clothing, our way of life. Only in this way would I be satisfied. However, [many people] have gone onwards without valuing [this way of life]. That is why I became sad and wanted to reanimate this way of living by making it visible. You can see [in] the colorful seeded necklaces that I wear and in the way I paint my face that the knowledge I continue teaching is evident. I converse in my own language, carrying on my own natal culture.

Olga: I see that in the end the people value the work that we do in AMUPAKIN, and they wish for us to continue maintaining our knowledge. I think that, somehow, we have come to be known all over the world.

Gissela: In AMUPAKIN, communalism is also understood as there being a leader who represents the group, who is going to be taking care of the goals of the group and protecting the group. Now in AMUPAKIN I think they are undertaking similar activities [within their areas]. The group works in these kinds of activities, with the understanding that the midwives are getting a little older every day. It is now falling to the young people to rise up and meet the objectives and aims of the organization to protect against the loss of ancestral knowledge like language and culture.

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Discussion: Representation takes on several meanings in these conversations. María Antonia is centrally concerned with how visual signs of past and contemporary Kichwa culture are known and represented in the present. Part of AMUPAKIN's project of cultural reclamation also includes reclaiming the use of material practices that have been discouraged by settler society. Members of AMUPAKIN, for instance, regularly adorn their faces with bold red achiote (*manduru*) pigment, sourced from local seed pods. In preparing for performances or other public events, elders and young people may discuss the symbolic meaning of different signs and the ways these connect to personal and

regional histories. Representation thus speaks to issues of visual representation and material culture, but as we see for Olga and Gissela, it also has to do with public and political representation. For Olga, AMUPAKIN has become widely known – or represented – all over the world. Her assertion is correct. Information about AMUPAKIN is regularly shared on social media networks like Instagram and Facebook by visitors, and they have been profiled in various Spanish- and English-language videos available online. Similarly, Gissela is concerned with the ways a representative of the organization also represents the interests of the group. Although AMUPAKIN is a communal organization, they are also represented by a president and vice-president who serve regular terms, guide plans for the organization, and interface with external representatives. She thus points to a central tension of communalism in which members of a collective must negotiate the roles and responsibilities of individuals within their communal organizations.

Hybridity

The process of "hybridity," finally, refers to the need to balance between individual and collective concerns and scales of interaction in communal settings. It can also point to the tensions and negotiations that occur between generations. These are processes that are central to navigating the tensions between individual and collective knowledge, particularly individual versus collective ownership of cultural knowledge within monetary exchange economies. Hybridity speaks to the tensions that can emerge within communal associations, which challenge the limits of collective projects. These are tensions that members of AMUPAKIN continue to confront and navigate together. Such issues have emerged throughout our conversations, as different authors discuss sometimes conflicting stances about the transmission of knowledge beyond their immediate communities. Ofelia clearly encapsulates these tensions in discussing differing values regarding transmission of *runa yachay* or Kichwa knowledge, as does her daughter, Gissela.

Ofelia: As our way of life belongs to a different reality than the way of life of the town, it is very difficult to engage both ways of living at once, but we nonetheless continue onward …

To carry out [the book project] was [also] difficult. Our own community was not so supportive [financially] for producing these sorts of things. Here the Ministry of Culture supported us in carrying out this project [financially]. As we got ourselves under way in the work, we found that some of the midwives wanted to participate and others didn't. Why did some of the *mamas* not want to participate? They said that their abilities and knowledge must remain within themselves and can't be known outside – it is certainly not for the *mestizos* and foreigners. This knowledge is just for our children. Our forest is just for those of the forest. Among those of us who live in the forest, we understand each other. The *mestizos* do not understand, and that's why the midwives are stingy in conversing. [Some midwives] say that it is our life, and it is our

strength that – if we talk about it – will leave [us]. That's why we considered conversing and writing in these videos [for the project], so that later our children will see them and continue learning. We had those plans, and they also requested a little bit of money. In the old days, one made a living from bartering food or labor like producing firewood, but it is no longer that way. Now money is very significant, so it was important that the project included some remuneration for the midwives, so that we could write those pages and they could be read, seen, and known more widely.

However, we've also encountered difficulties within our communities, within our communities, who have not wanted to support these projects. Instead, it has been taken up more externally by the foreigners, because in the text is our Kichwa language, Spanish, and English. The young foreigners see this and like to buy it for their studies. But there has not been much uptake among our community. This work is nonetheless valuable. Why is it valuable? So that our children will learn. Our children will eventually see what we have been working toward. That's why I served as a translator of my language in that project.

Gissela: I think that this subject [of the book project] is really very broad, because we are talking about generations, elders, young adults, and foreign or local people who do not know about these topics of knowledge, who do not know about plants, who do not know how our ancestors lived … In this reality, the midwives are subject to the need to be able to depend on money.

My grandparents and family have told me that before it was done with barter. For example, the value of a cow or the sale of the value of a cow that used to be given as an animal is now money. We would have to represent the size or the value of a whole cow, and that was offered in exchange for knowledge or to acquire some ability. I now understand that the elders close off that ability to be able to pass on gifts or knowledge to you. That is understandable for the elderly, but for the young there is also a downside. Young people who are born in a time where there is a lot of [settler] culture, do not know who to follow or they simply follow the fashion. In that case, we would not be highlighting or valuing the culture of our land where we were born. We [young people] can get lost in it by believing that what we are learning is good, without valuing what we have at home or the place where we live.

So, we would have to find a way for the midwives not to feel as out of place from the old days as they are in the present. I mean by developing some kind of project that helps or supports them with cash so that the midwives can help us with their knowledge. They can be encouraged so that they can transmit this knowledge to their own children. I say that because some young people are not interested in this type of subject.

I think that there must be many ways to help with these projects. But everything is for profit, I think. AMUPAKIN is an association where this type of activity can be carried out and perhaps generate some type of workshop where the midwives are paid, so that they can raise awareness. I also think that

[elders] should be aware of this, so they should be participating in this association to strengthen the knowledge of those ancestors.

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Discussion: Ofelia and Gissela's statements point to an ongoing tension involved in the production of *Relating to Our Forest*, which has emerged at various other points in our discussion. Some members of AMUPAKIN were hesitant to participate because of norms around secrecy and the proper transmission of knowledge. Others, including Ofelia, saw it is an opportunity to record their knowledge for their children, while also earning money for their expertise. While such recording also involved making that knowledge more accessible to outsiders, it seems for her – as well as others who ultimately participated – that the potential benefits of documenting knowledge for the future came to outweigh the potential costs. Although not without its contradictions, *Relating to Our Forest* is in many ways a hopeful project, directed toward a potential future in which Kichwa youth and young people are able to reclaim linguistic and cultural knowledge currently seen by many as less valuable or relevant. As both women suggest, such projects also create avenues through which knowledge holders may be able to earn a living, though this does involve some reconfiguration of traditional knowledge practices.

Yet, this is also where conflicts between individual needs and communal practices became particularly salient. In AMUPAKIN, these tensions are not limited to just the project *Relating to Our Forest*, but ongoing work in public performance and media production. During Georgia's research with them, the midwives were regularly asked to "collaborate" (*colaborar* in Spanish) with regional organizations by providing free performances or other services for local events. While some saw these as opportunities to increase AMUPAKIN's recognition, others disliked performing without income. In resolving these issues, some midwives have chosen to leave the organization, while others choose no longer to participate in public events or research projects. Navigating these tensions within communal practices is ultimately an individual decision. As we have learned from María Antonia and her colleagues, however, "AMUPAKIN endures," as its members negotiate a middle ground between individual and communal goals, internal and external expectations, and intergenerational differences that blend and transgress previous norms and ideologies of labor and knowledge production.

Conclusion

We conclude with two statements provided by Ofelia and María Antonia that both highlight the economic significance of Indigenous knowledge and knowledge holders, and the importance of making this legible to their outside interlocuters. María Antonia's questions have particularly impacted Georgia, as she continues to navigate her own relationship with these women, who have been some of her most important professors. Although small in comparison with the

salaries offered by institutions to their professors, Georgia did offer a modest honorarium to each of her fellow authors and to the larger organization of AMUPAKIN for the time and knowledge shared in creating this chapter together. Rather than a direct purchase of that knowledge, her payments attempt to redistribute the financial benefits of academic labor to the people who enable anthropological publications. Georgia does not see herself as the owner of these conversations because she paid the other authors for their contributions, but rather as redistributing the financial resources she receives as an academic. While most anthropologists are not paid directly for individual publications, their writings are often what allow scholars to accumulate authority and prestige that *do* support their academic appointments and financial security. Finding ways to materially recognize the people who make this labor possible is a small step toward reconfiguring the relationships of academic knowledge production.

We hope the potentially unsettling questions about what is owed to Indigenous peoples for the expertise they contribute to research, and the experiences we have shared about the collaborative projects at AMUPAKIN, raises new questions for our readers about the value of the communal practices and Indigenous teachings from which many anthropologists have benefited. Such questions are important as anthropology continues to grapple with what kinds of relationships it has had and could have with Indigenous interlocutors and colleagues.

Ofelia: Right now, I am really battling to carry on and ensure that the midwives work with high spirits. The state should really establish a form of payment for the knowledge that the midwives provide, just as a medical professional receives a salary. While I have been president [of AMUPAKIN], I have submitted my requests to every Ministry possible. I have introduced the idea and organized so that our center AMUPAKIN remains a clinic providing attention in ancestral medicine, where the midwives can transmit their abilities to the young people, and [ensure] that midwifery remains a part of future generations.

María Antonia: I didn't know where to include this, but I want to pose a question. If we live grouped together [communally], I believe that what you have asked [about] is very valuable and it costs, as it were, to sell. Write [for me] that from now on, if people interview elders, I say that they should pay them. But not just $5. No. Rather, it should be like what professors earn from teaching, as we are getting older, earning our living teaching, we can gladly transmit our knowledge and wisdom in that manner.

So, [my question is] how can we quantify its value? Like this, all the teachings in the forest like the rocks, the water. How much does that cost? One becomes familiar with these things when they are given knowledge and they observe the prohibitions. To learn of all of this takes a long time. That's why just sharing this knowledge freely I have not earned a living. Because I am an elder learned woman, I have said that now I want to earn my worth. I am a highly respected professor, imbued with knowledge in my being and body, and teaching [others] to learn [this] is very valuable [work].

That is what remained for me to say.

Notes

1 Acknowledgments: Georgia Ennis would like to thank her co-authors, Gissela Yumbo, María Antonia Shiguango, Ofelia Salazar, and Olga Chongo for their generous teaching and friendship in this and many other collaborations. She also thanks the editors of this collection and the other contributors for creating new spaces for academic engagement.

2 We will discuss our methodology in more detail in the text, but an opening statement is important. Authorship and the listing of authors are not neutral processes. Due to institutional requirements for publications, Georgia Ennis is listed as first author on this chapter, as she initiated the project and carried out the final translation and editing of material from Spanish, as well as the analytical sections. Gissela Yumbo is listed as second author in recognition of the major contributions she made in conducting interviews, translating, and transcribing oral interviews from Kichwa to Spanish. After a digital group meeting between all authors, Gissela interviewed each of the women in Kichwa using questions developed by Georgia. In turn, Gissela was interviewed by Ofelia Salazar, although she provided her responses in Spanish, which is her primary language. Contributors María Antonia Shiguango, Ofelia Salazar, and Olga Chongo are listed relative to their positions within AMUPAKIN when the article was written: María Antonia is founder of the organization, Ofelia Salazar is the outgoing president, and Olga Chongo is the incoming president. Georgia and members of AMUPAKIN have an ongoing research relationship, subject to IRB approval, which involved both organizational and individual consent to conduct research with the association.

3 Sections of text attributed to the members of AMUPAKIN have been translated from Kichwa or Spanish into English and lightly edited for clarity or to reduce repetitions. The mark "…" indicates that the original remark has been edited, while text in square brackets [] indicates editorial additions for clarity.

4 Gissela interviewed María Antonia, Ofelia, and Olga in Kichwa and translated their responses into Spanish. María Antonia is a Kichwa-dominant speaker, while Ofelia and Olga are competent in both Kichwa and Spanish. Gissela is in the process of reclaiming and strengthening her use of Kichwa, as she discusses in this chapter; she was thus more comfortable responding to questions in Spanish that were posed to her by her mother in Kichwa during her interview.

5 Although a subject beyond the scope of this chapter, the ongoing formation and coordination of Kichwa communities is an important manifestation of communalism in Napo. See Erazo (2013) for a discussion of governance and sovereignty in Upper Napo Kichwa communities.

6 Limerick (2020) describes another use of standardized introductions in Kichwa in which they frame intercultural institutional encounters. Phrases like "*ali punzha*" ("good day") are modeled on Spanish discourse norms (Andronis, 2004). The case described by Limerick is somewhat different, as he describes settings in which Kichwa is used only for a brief opening before speakers switch into Spanish. Although a full consideration of these practices is beyond the scope of this article, they suggest a complex blending of Kichwa and other discursive norms developed for expanding communicative contexts like interviews and institutional speech.

7 Although it is still unknown exactly how Quechua came to be so widespread in the region, an area unconquered by the Inka (citations), the most likely explanations highlight the importance of colonial era "reductions" of diverse Amazonian groups into missionary centers, where Ecuadorian Kichwa became a *lingua franca* (Oberem, 1980: 93; Muysken, 2009: 82–84).

8 Montubio is an Ecuadorian ethnic category linked to contemporary coastal groups descending primarily from Afro and Indigenous populations (Roitman, 2008). Jodi Byrd (2011) utilizes the term *arrivants* to emphasize that largely non-white, non-

Indigenous peoples were often forced into the colonial encounter and occupy different positionalities within a settler colonialism system.

9 *Minga* is a pre-Colombian system of communal labor found in both the Andes and Amazon. Gisella responded in Spanish to questions posed by her mother Ofelia in Kichwa. As such, her discussion of "communalism" utilizes the Spanish term *comunalismo* rather than a Kichwa term like *wangurina* (to join together, to unite).

10 Netsch Lopez shares a concern with engaged and ethical approaches to research with Indigenous communities. See (Netsch Lopez, 2022: 40–46) for a discussion of issues surrounding transmission of ethnobotanical and ethnomedical knowledge in academic research and in her work at AMUPAKIN.

11 Gissela translates the title of the book project differently from our original translations, in which she was less involved. It is likely that the originals translations will be revised when a later edition is published.

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4 Intercultural Communalism

Intercultural and Intergenerational Work Around Medicinal Plants in a village in Southern Colombia

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Introduction

The Amazon piedmont, where the Andes and the Amazon meet in one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world, has been subject to different waves of colonization and extractivism. From quina and rubber in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the spontaneous and directed colonization processes of the mid-20th century that established cattle ranching as one of the main economic activities in the region, to the coca bonanza, which began in the 1980s and was part of the complex dynamics of armed conflict and recent mining and energy projects (Ciro Rodríguez, 2020). Each of these moments has had different impacts on the demographic and territorial configuration of the department. The rubber companies imposed a regime of terror among the Andoque, Uitoto, Muinane, Bora, and other Indigenous communities, which included one of the worst genocides in history, also known as the rubber holocaust (Pineda Camacho, 2000). The survivors of this holocaust migrated to other regions and many of them were again displaced by the colonization of the mid-20th century, both by peasant families who migrated fleeing the bipartisan violence, and by landowners who monopolized large tracts of land. Among the latter, the most recognized is Oliverio Lara Borrero who established a business complex around cattle ranching in a 35,000-hectare hacienda, Larandia, which became the largest cattle ranch in the country (Vásquez Delgado, 2015). The concentration of land in a few hands through expropriations followed by logging and burning, replaced trees, rivers, plants, and animals

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-6

with large pastures (Melo Rodríguez, 2018), transforming not only human–nature relations, but also the regional identity and the way of representing the territory, which went from being Amazonian forest to having a "cattle-raising vocation" (Delgado, 1987: 16).

The El Manantial reserve, the scenario that made it possible to capture in this chapter the reflections of Amazonian Indigenous elders, was one of the many properties that were part of the Larandia hacienda, which was largely abandoned after Oliverio Lara was murdered and the family had transitioned to drug-related businesses elsewhere (Bolaños, 2017). Peasant and Indigenous families, some of them descending from these displacement processes, bought the land from the heirs of Oliverio Lara Borrero. The first buyers in the late 1990s/early 2000s got organized to legalize their newly acquired properties. Guided by the Indigenous elders who had purchased plots or came to visit the area, the new residents of El Manantial recognized these lands and their people as Amazonian and proposed to conserve the forest surrounding their purchased plots and recover the soils worn out by cattle ranching. They planted trees, vegetable gardens and medicinal plants, transforming the abandoned pasture landscape into lively plots. In addition, they found a natural corridor with important ecological functions that they decided to protect, with the added benefit that it could incentivize tourist activities. Currently, several residents of El Manantial refer to its natural reservation as "a hidden paradise in Florencia," the capital city of Caquetá's Department (i.e., equivalent of state or province).

This rich and complex world of multiple cultures and a difficult process of individual, community, and nature restoration and healing is the context of this chapter. Throughout more than 20 years of conservation of natural corridors and revitalization of the quality of the soil in their plots, secondary forest is already present, and several animals have returned to inhabit their territory. In collaboration with non-Indigenous community members, national and international support, the three Indigenous elders of the El Manantial reserve, Emilio Fiagama of the Uitoto people, Raúl Perdomo of the Uitoto people, and Pedro Valencia of the Korebajú people, together with other elders from their communities, have led a dialogue on the care of the land, water, plants, and animals. Each elder leads a ceremonial space in which ancestral knowledge is strengthened. These ceremonial spaces also function as pedagogical spaces for students of the Universidad de la Amazonia and national and foreign visitors who come to share and learn.

In this chapter we propose to relate how an intercultural communalism has developed, in which strengthening ancestral knowledge about medicinal plants not only facilitates the repair of the wounds of war (Giraldo-Gartner & Abadía-Barrero, 2022), but also complements the knowledge of different peoples and stimulates fraternal bonds that strengthen an "emotional community" (Jimeno et al., 2015) among Amazonian inhabitants in which cultural differences are maintained but a communal sense of existence is strengthened. Unlike other historical moments and geographical dynamics in which

maintaining divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples was important, the context of displacement and the need to co-inhabit Amazonian spaces that are now dominated by modernity and its drive for accumulation and destruction makes this group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous savants see the need to join efforts to strengthen community life, sharing, learning and respecting differences. This intercultural communalism that we are building around the notion of Living Well (ÑUE IYANO in Uitoto, ÑATA PAI in Korevaju) does not seek to amalgamate and eliminate differences but to think about the multiple and changing contexts marked by multiple violence against humans, animals, plants and sacred places as a strategy to establish practical exercises of articulation, healing and prevention, in search of the strengthening of mother earth and all its inhabitants.

Methodology: Textual Co-Authorship on Oral Narration

One of the researchers asks Elder Alfonso, in a *mambeo* session[1] in the healing house in Elder Raúl's plot, about the methodology for this text and about the writing process. The researcher begins by thanking them for their welcome, their openness to continue receiving the research team in their spaces, and their acceptance to write this text, even allowing them to record the session to facilitate the work. He then shares how the research team discusses the ethics of their work, recognizing that Western research and anthropology have disrespected and expropriated ancestral knowledge. He also comments on how the ancestral knowledge that circulates in the *mambeaderos* is built, grows and changes according to the context, according to the teachings, according to the group of elders or abuelos (i.e., grandparents or maximum authority invested with knowledge and respect), and how inadequate it seems to "freeze" their dynamic knowledge in a written text. And then, he asks about authorship options:

> one idea is that we [i.e., the research team], more than authors, are the vehicle of your teachings; hence, you [the elders] can be the sole authors and we [i.e., the research team] simply serve as "transcribers" or collaborators. Or we all [researchers and Indigenous elders] go into the text as authors with the understanding that the texts, the knowledge and the teachings are yours [i.e., the abuelos].

Then, he asks: "How can this ancestral knowledge of oral tradition become a text? What is the role of non-Indigenous people in supporting your knowledge transformed into texts?"

After thanking *Moo Buinaima* [Creator Father],[2] Elder Alfonso clarifies how these intercultural texts can be created and their importance:

> We [i.e., Indigenous elders], or personally I, cannot tell you that we are going to lead this or that, that we are in front of this or that, that we are

> the authors alone, no. We are not. Before I had said that we are speaking from this space [house of healing] without discrimination, you have all the resources [meaning technology, writing skills, access to publishing venues], we have the word … [This is about] sharing the word together and making a single word of life for the good of all, because it is time that the Indigenous person thinks, not so much about the ancestral part but about interculturality, that you teach us and we also teach you and in this way it also spreads for the good of all the youth and all the children, not only for the Spaniard or the foreigner but also for the different Indigenous races that we have so that both in the Western part and also in the foreign part, there is growth. We speak from here and we say: the word must be materialized [i.e., words must be "made dawn"][3] and this is the principle of seeing this word written on paper so that the future [i.e., future readers] will be attached to that word and embrace that word together, that is to say, not only the Indigenous. Well, on my part, I agree that we are all heading this, let us all together weave that basket.

Elder Raúl adds:

> the main objective is conservation. When we talk about conservation, we are not only talking about natural resources, but also about the different cultures that live here, in the context of the city. One of the most striking things here, in our reserve, has always been the social fabric, how the different cultures can work together from their capacity to contribute with what is within our reach. We have to make visible the work that is being done and we realize that there are tools such as technology [i.e., recordings, writings] to make us visible, and what this points to is that it will be a tool for our children to see and read, and it is a way for them to take ownership of the work that is being done and to learn about the work that we are doing together. In our country, we are many peoples, it is pluriethnic, pluricultural [according to the constitution], so we can work together for the good of our future. We have to make visible what we, Indigenous peoples, have, so that other cultures know about it and through that they can see the articulated work we have done here, with young people, with children, with universities, with women, with the elderly. Why are there no differences here? because through this joint sharing, there will be respect. That they [future readers] know these spaces, that they know this cultural diversity that we Amazonians have and that it is through each culture that we can work together, because we have to take total care of all the creation of Moo Buinaima and of all his children without discrimination because everything is His; it is for the good of others, of those of us who are here today and always thinking about the future that is coming, our children, our grandchildren. What we are looking for [with this text] is a blessing from the Almighty and that whatever is done is done thinking of everyone else and; in this way, we

> will strengthen what we have thought and what our abuelos have been sustaining. We have always said that working together and thinking about the good and about that generation that comes is the task of those of us who are here in this space, those of us who are with the sacred plants. That is what every night we sit down to do [in the ceremonial spaces] with that commitment that is part of a whole. The research team is already part of the family from the moment you are here, helping and collaborating with us, because we are building; this is building! I believe that, with the three elders, these three spaces with this writing project plus what has been done with the reserve [supported by the research team] has been a very valuable work here in our community, here in our reserve. We all want to be well, and we all have needs, but if we talk about humanity, Moo provides everything, and with him we can sustain these spaces and share and continue building, continue weaving.

And it is thanks to this intercultural and communitarian methodological ethic that this text is offered to continue weaving a communal basket that contributes to the construction of the good of all. Similar to Chapter 3 by Ennis et. al. in this volume, we assume this text as an experiment that attempts to transform the oral tradition into written text, recognizing the limits of writing for this task. However, we reiterate the importance of translating this knowledge into text for multiple audiences, at a time when the oral tradition is even more threatened both by the loss of Indigenous languages and by the ways in which modern epistemology continues to seek hegemonic dominance through the endorsement of knowledge production based on individualism and scientism (Green, 2020). The proposal of exchange and collective construction of this text, which is for many audiences and with many wishes that it contributes to many people and many worlds, appears as a form of "intercultural communalism," where, as Elder Alfonso says, we focus the mind and heart to continue overcoming the wounds of war, both in humans and in nature, and we manage to continue building and weaving, from the word of the abuelos, the ancestral knowledge. In the text we will present narratives and knowledge shared mainly in a three-day intercultural encounter, but also in many other conversations that occurred before and after the encounter, including the collective editing of this text that occurred in subsequent encounters. It was decided to use a third-person narrative form interspersed with quotations from some of the authors of the text.

Intercultural Encounter of Knowledge on Medicinal Plants

Throughout several years, both in formal and informal meetings and from the special ceremonial spaces of the three plots, "the maloca" at Elder Emilio's plot, "the house of healing" at Elder Raúl's plot, and "the house of knowledge" at Elder Pedro's plot, the feeling has been to generate spaces for knowledge exchanges between elders and members of the community of El Manantial. The elders had already discussed the importance of these spaces. The only aspect missing was

a coordination meeting. A meeting was held in the maloca of Cacique Emilio Fiagama, attended by the elders Pedro and Raúl, as well as some other members of their families and the research team, with whom they have been working for several years. The importance of generating knowledge continued to be discussed and it was agreed that, according to the available budget, a three-day meeting would be the most appropriate for this purpose. Relatives and people from the different communities of each elder would travel on a Friday and participate in meetings on Saturday and Sunday, organized in half-day sessions at the plot of each elder who would lead the dialogue.

The main objective of the meeting was to exchange knowledge about plants in the spaces of (MANORAYODA) Elder Raúl, DA+KAY+(nipode)-TA +KAY+ (m+nika) Elder Emilio, and in the forest near Elder Pedro's plot. Each elder took care of harmonizing the space to ensure success in the coming days and to take care of the space, the activities, and the people.

Learning by Planting: Intercultural Plant Education for the Good of Humanity

One of the main axes of the intercultural work in El Manantial and its green areas has been to rescue the knowledge of the Indigenous elders to strengthen their families and villages and for the youth to continue with their traditions, but also for non-Indigenous people to learn about the Indigenous world and how to live in harmony with their neighbors and with nature. A central axis of this teaching and learning work is medicinal plants. Through the planting and use of medicinal plants, families heal their relationship with the territory, strengthen personal and family care, and build community ties around the exchange of knowledge, plants and seeds. Understanding nature as medicine promotes a sense of human-nature reciprocity: we take care of the plants and the plants take care of us. This inter-species communal sense extends filial relationships with nature (see the Mapuche concept of *napo* in Alvarado-Cañuta and Huichaqueo in Chapter 1 of this volume. See also Veron and Guimarães on the sense of fire and water in the Kaiowá in Chapter 2). Plants, animals and other beings of the earth (de la Cadena, 2015) are part of our family. However, this process of teaching and sharing in the gardens has the additional challenge of generating awareness about the importance of caring for the land in a context increasingly permeated by the city.

As part of this effort, Elder Emilio Fiagama proposed the creation of a booklet of medicinal plants that would gather basic information about plants in order to disseminate and strengthen this knowledge. Following this proposal, monthly meetings of elders were coordinated (until the end of the project) in each of the three traditional areas that are part of the El Manantial Reserve. Cacique Emilio shared the importance of this type of meeting:

> By learning in the orchard we are promoting the articulation between the three cultures: the Uitoto people, the Korevaju people and the Manantial

> people. When we talk about the *huerta* or the place where we cultivate [DA+KAY+(Uitoto-nipode), TA+KAY+ (Uitoto-m+nika), SUKITACHEJA (Korevaju)] we are referring to a seedbed. There are no trees or large crops of coca or yucca, but weeds, that is why we call it *sanjear*. It is through this seedbed that we give the first education about planting. A boy, a girl, an old woman, everyone can learn there how to sow and move the soil.

"Moving the soil" is an individual and collective educational practice. Unfortunately, this practice is being lost. Cacique Emilio says "in the past, down in the territory, everyone participated, because that was how education worked. Nowadays it is not done, especially those who live near or in a city context." The meeting between elders, their families, and their community then allows to recover that teaching in which all the people of the community participate and learn in practice. As the Cacique points out, "TAK+Y+ is where the first teaching is given to the family, it is a learning process that becomes communal." And since it is an intercultural space, the teachings cannot remain in the Indigenous world. To understand the uses of medicinal plants non-Indigenous people must learn what the plants mean from the ancestral thought perspective. The Cacique comments that sometimes there is rejection due to the stigmatizing discourses of certain sacred plants and what the West has made of them, such as coca, but also, in many cases, it is due to ignorance of the uses and care of the plants. "To give an example," explains the Cacique, "when you don't know the properties of the plants you can fall into stigmatization. If you don't know what basil, coca, tobacco or marijuana are for, you can have a wrong perspective of what these plants are." The most important thing about this exercise of learning through planting and careful observation of the plants and their characteristics is to move from theory to practice.

> The idea is to socialize so that the three cultures get to a common place where we know the usefulness of what each one is doing and so, among all of us, we can learn about the value of each plant. That is what the seedbed is for. If there is a Korevaju plant that we do not know, then we visit them and bring the seedling and likewise with Elder Raúl so that we can all make this exchange, and we can share the plants when someone needs them. It is about serving others and replicating the usefulness and value of the plants.

To this, Elder Raúl adds that it is about guiding people from different cultures who come to our space to learn without discrimination. Everyone should know and participate, children, youth, elders, Indigenous, and non-Indigenous people, because this teaching is for the good of humanity.

Cacique Emilio shares with us the importance of revaluing historically what the Western world has done with plants. It is not only about sharing knowledge, but also about understanding their "value" as medicine, as knowledge and as a way of sharing in community. This exchange of knowledge can be so

profound and transformed that even *mambe* and *ambil* [4] have begun to be used by non-Indigenous people to sweeten and share the word. The Cacique says,

> how about if I pass the *ambil* and coca to someone, and that person receives me for not despising, but does not understand what it is all about? But if you teach the importance of the mambe and the ambil and give it in your own name, it will be received as something valuable.

Teaching implies the revaluation of plants, and that revaluation is both knowledge and practice. Knowledge alone is not enough; it needs to be experienced both when caring for the plants and when using them. Elder Alfonso points out that in the Indigenous world, education begins in the mother's womb and develops in stages throughout life. In this process, women play a fundamental role; they are the ones who transmit the knowledge to the following generations even before birth. The revaluation of plants from an ancestral perspective, from intercultural communalism, challenges the extractivist relationship toward plants typical of the Western human-nature separation and reconfigures the knowledge, uses and stigmatizations of plants by indicating that it is a relationship of mutual care that, in the words of Elder Raúl "is for the good of humanity."

The Pharmacy Belongs to Women and the Male–Female Complement

During one of the activities at Elder Pedro's plot, a hike into the forest to learn about wild medicinal plants was proposed. As the hike was arduous and required climbing a steep slope under the intense sun of the early afternoon, it was proposed that those who preferred could stay in the plot. In response, Elder Lucélida from the Muinane people, elder Miriam from the Muinane people and Ms. Gladys, Elder Alfonso's wife, stayed and agreed to share their knowledge about the role of women in the care and management of plants.

The conversation began by talking about the division between the plants that women take care of, those of the *chagra*, and the plants that men take care of, such as coca, tobacco, and yagé, as well as the difference between the uses of these plants. Faced with the question of who uses the plants that the women cultivate and care for, the abuelas Lucélida and Miriam complement each other by saying that the man always consults with the woman. For example, if they bring a patient, he first analyzes the possible illness of the patient and talks with his wife about the treatment and she is usually the one who prepares the medicine for the man to conjure, to complement it. In their words, "The pharmacy belongs to the women," although there is always consultation and complement. "The milder illnesses are treated by the women, the little babies when they are hot or have a cold; but then the *mambeador* is informed, so that he can pass it on to the father creator." The healing process is then complementary. The woman takes care of the plants, prepares the medicines, does

daily care and the man diagnoses and treats more complex problems, conjures the remedies and from the *mambeadero* directs the healing process entrusting the whole process to the father creator.

Similar to other processes (as, for example, what Akubadaura narrates in Chapter 6 of this volume) the complementarity between man and woman appears as another proposal of communalism. The *chagra* of the feminine sphere and the maloca of the masculine sphere are necessary to achieve healing, maintain and restore balance and prevent evils. Both the *chagra* and the maloca are places of knowledge. Abuela Miriam shares a narration from the Muinane people to explain

> We women had no right to anything. The woman had children, she worked, grew food, cleaned the cassava, and cooked. From that work she had many fruits, she had peanuts, she had yams (*ñame*), she had batata. She planted all kinds of fruits. He had the spells, he had the medicinal plants, he had the tobacco, the coca, the n+maira, the yagé. And the woman told him "what are we going to do? Look, food is being wasted," but he did not want to discuss that topic. He continued to accumulate knowledge until he fainted. She kept insisting, "What are we going to do? Look, I have a lot of fruit going to waste." And when she saw him passed out, she began to blow him with tobacco because she had seen that he used tobacco. With that he breathed again and came back to life. The father creator saw that the woman was wise, that she also had knowledge, no one told her what to do, it was from her thoughts that she knew what to do. And there the man said, "you are a woman, you are the mother of humanity." Since then she was known as "woman of production," "woman of work" or *gakabamogay* in Muinane. Then he sat down with her and they talked. The dialogue for the administration of each product was born. He told her "you were the one who planted, you are the one who has everything, so women will also have the right to administer tobacco, they will conjure and they will cure." The man continued to manage yagé, coca and tobacco and we also can manage tobacco. She handles chili, peanuts, fareka (sweet cassava), cassava brava, and tobacco. And the man said, "let's share what we have, let's make a *maloka*," and they made the *maloka* together and invited people to make the *maloka* and share all of her food. And since she is a working woman, she made a lot of casabe for everyone. They finished the *maloka* and again called the people to inaugurate it, share food, and exchange seeds. Seeds and bushmeat were exchanged.

In later discussions in the *mambeadero* about the words of the elder Miriam, it was pointed out that although narrations can vary in different Indigenous traditions, women and men are on equal terms to learn about plants and heal through them. Although this knowledge is not exempt from negotiation, as is reflected in the story of elder Miriam, the story speaks of the danger of

selfishly appropriating knowledge. In the words of Elder Alfonso, "We all have the capacity to learn." In this recognition of the capacity of all of us to approach knowledge also lies the sense of communality as complementarity.

Connections and Territories for Traditional Activities in Contexts of Displacement

In one of the parallel activities and with the help of maps of the department of Caquetá and the city of Florencia, we invited each person to identify with colored flags where they carried out planting activities, family and housing, culture and traditions, study or workshops, and work. The objective was to visualize where we come from, where we are, where we have relatives, knowing that the whole Amazonian territory is the territory of our ancestors, a great maloca, and we are their heirs and we are accompanied by them. As each person passed by, sharing and placing the colored flags, the map was filled with concentrated areas of multiple colors and the predominance of certain activities over others. Several conclusions were shared. Florencia, the capital city where many have been displaced to, is a very important place that concentrates family and housing activities and where traditional and labor activities take place. However, there is also a relationship with another municipality, La Montañita, where Elder Lucélida is governor and runs the only maloca in this territory. Even further downstream, going deep into the Amazonian forest, there are connections with the different *resguardos* and other Indigenous territories, the cradle from which these Indigenous peoples come. The conclusion is that there is a two-way process of support and strengthening: from Florencia the territories can be strengthened, but in Florencia the support of the territories is also felt. Looking at the map, Cacique Emilio shares:

> here is the trunk where we were born, our origin in the ancestral territories – in the reserves and further into the Amazon such as Monochoa, La Chorrera, El Chorro de Araracuara, places where our ancestors died, the places they traveled, where they hunted, where the ancestors are still taking care in their spiritual form – but here [in Florencia, in the El Manantial reserve] we are also sowing seeds.

Elder Miriam points out that

> there is a story where one of the ancestors said, my generations are going to walk through all of this, where my footprint goes you will go, see there it is [looking at the map], that is no lie. Up to here [Florencia and other more distant zones] the chief of us arrived and he arrived there and sat there and to that place we are arriving. So, it is not because one wants to go here, no, the spirit allows it. In this sacred, ancestral site, we go through the footprints where our ancestors passed, and we are going to stay where they stayed and we are arriving there.

> And they are not only footprints of one people [i.e., one Indigenous community], there are footprints of many peoples, where respect and knowledge must be maintained in order not to disturb those sacred spaces that were already sealed by the ancestors.

For the elder Ismael, it is very important to see that

> we do want to [maintain our roots] and that we have not forgotten because they say that because most of those who have been displaced have forgotten their roots. The spirit of the Indigenous people comes to pull them back, let's say they don't leave their context, we can say, because that's why you said, they were here, they were there, and the abuelos marked the sacred sites so that we all ended up here. Here we are, that is why we want to leave a legacy so that the same countrymen, the Indigenous people, understand that we are not talking about something foreign, but that we want to appropriate what is ours, that is why they said that education begins at home.

That is why the elders must explain all these teachings to the new generations.

Worryingly, the map shows that there are not many sowing sites and we know that the maloca and the *chagra* [5] are the sources of knowledge. "Without sowing there is no word," says an elder, "and without word there is no tradition." Participants from other Indigenous communities also joined this space and shared that they do not have a special place to practice their traditions and then the importance of supporting other peoples and welcoming them is discussed, in the words of an elder, "the family is growing." And it is highlighted how in a space as small as El Manantial, there are three very active ceremonial spaces: a maloca, a house of healing and a house of knowledge – MASICHE CHE CHE VUE (Korevaju), where much of the family activities and tradition are happening.

According to Elder Alfonso,

> what has just been done [the map activity] is very important because it is something that shows us [how we are] and gives us strength to continue working and fighting because wherever we are, we are all united. Things are more complicated the more distant you are. That is to say, there is more work to do. And it is also beginning to be more evident that what we are doing is interculturality, knowing about each other, getting to know each other, learning. We can also see the places where work on medicinal plants is happening and need strengthening, and that is what we are looking for: the Good Living. This can also help later to strengthen the life plan.

Pedagogical and Ritual Closure

For the closing activity, several activities were shared to reaffirm the knowledge that was built interculturally about medicinal plants. Supported by

drawings led by an artist, the intercultural group began a list of the plants identified in the tours through the gardens and the forest, adding their names in Uitoto, Korevaju, Muinane, and Spanish, their uses and ways of recognizing them through sight, touch, taste, and smell. As Elder Pedro taught in his tour, the plants of the forest should not be tasted, only smelled because they can be poisonous, nor brought to the houses, they are used only once, when they are needed, and are not sowed. Thinking about the intercultural brochure of medicinal plants that we are designing with this knowledge, it is discussed that it is important to mention that for the more specialized uses one must have the supervision of an elder, partly because of the extensive knowledge that is needed, because it can cause more harm than good, and partly because of the special conjures that are needed.

During the exchanges to complement the list of plants, the elders reiterated certain uses. One of the elders commented that in this space he came to understand that between the two Indigenous peoples (now three with the participation of the Muinane elders) this plant has the same function. "And what does that mean?, that we are of the same blood. And why?, because this is shared and we came to complement and share. Because we are Amazonian peoples." And about the role of non-Indigenous people in this process, Elder Alfonso links community with humanity: "You are our allies, we need each other in one way or another. We are family, we are children of Moo Buinaima."

To close, the participants were given a plant of one of the four native trees that had already grown in a nursery and were ready to be planted: juan soco, costillo, chestnut, and açaí palm. Happy with their plants, an elder shared with one of the young artists who was supporting the process with the photographs "with all the years I have lived, and no one had ever given me a tree. This is very valuable."

And finally, Elder Pedro, always short of words, thanks us deeply for the sharing, highlights the value of the space and what he has learned and invites the men who *mambean* to come to his house of knowledge for the closing. In the house of knowledge, he reiterates his thanks, says he is very happy and thanks Father Creator – *MOO BUINAIMA* (Uitoto) – MAI AI (Korevaju) – and mentions that it was a very successful activity of sharing and learning and we all had the opportunity to share our feelings, to hold hands and leave strengthened while the abuelos gave us their blessings. Abuelo Alfonso gave us these words:

> Mother earth suffers every time we cut down a tree. *Moo Buinaima*, God the Almighty Father, left us mother earth and she is perfect. He left her for us to take care of. And the welfare of mother earth depends on us. From here we give strength and bless all those who take care of her. If we know the plants, we learn to love and take care of mother earth. The care comes from the maloca and from here holding hands we pray for all the children, those who have not been born, those who could not accompany us, those

> who are in the reserves, those who are about to be born, everyone, all of humanity, so that together we can continue to strengthen this ancestral knowledge. From here we take care of everyone and protect mother earth. We ask mother earth to protect us in her womb, to protect all those present here, the teachers, the youth, the elders, the children, those who are about to be born, all of us, all of humanity.

And the guests said goodbye knowing that at night each elder from the *maloca*, the house of healing, or the house of knowledge was going to continue directing the space, taking care of all the participants, and planning future actions to continue strengthening intercultural communalism in El Manantial.

Conclusions

Similar to Simpson, Tapia, and Smith-Morris (Chapter 10 in this volume), there are various levels of communalism, from the most intimate of man–woman complementarity for the management and use of medicinal plants, to the communal in which the family and clan extends in a sense of intercultural kinship to the other families that inhabit the territory. Repeatedly the family relationship is used as a sense of community building where it is not only a practical way of inhabiting a territory, but a sense of creating an emotional community (Jimeno et al., 2015) where particular traditions are respected but different families come together through feelings of affection, commitment and care. The language of affection circulates constantly in the ceremonial spaces thanks to the familiarity and acceptance of the participants and in this way communalism is extended to these inter-Indigenous and non-Indigenous families. And the mapping exercise allowed us to see the extension of communalism throughout the different territories, the ways of connecting, worrying and acting for the well-being of each other, always concerned about mother earth, which is cared for through words materialized in action.

The importance of ancestral medicine based on the use of medicinal plants is of utmost importance not only for the Indigenous but also for the non-Indigenous world. In the words of the elder Myriam:

> We have to teach this new generation, but before, I say, it was very reserved, we could not say anything or show it or give it away, but not now. We have to be more open, we have to help each other, share, and so even the white people are already adapted to our medicine. Before, we kept knowledge of plants very reserved. Imagine that you who are studied, university students who have reviewed many books, where does it say that in the hand of which Indigenous elder a child or a woman in childbirth died, no one at that time, not even in operations. Our people died of old age or because of an accident. And now, because of lack of knowledge and education, due to the context in which we find ourselves today, we do not use our own medicines.

Ancestral medicine not only challenges the West in its therapeutic capabilities but also in its communitarian ways of offering what individualized and isolated medicine does not provide. Ancestral medicines are prepared in a complementary way, between man and woman. Not only are they conjured, but permission is requested and in many cases the plant is asked for new uses. Intercultural communalism, in this sense, also teaches us that communalism is also inter-species since we depend on the plants, and they depend on our care.

And as Elder Emilio commented at the close of the exchange day "the task [of this text] has been completed but the process continues."

Notes

1 Mambe: coca leaf roasted with ashes of the yarumo leaf. Mambe is a spiritual and physical medicine and a source of knowledge. Mambeo: is an ancestral practice of human-nature rapport in which people put a spoonful of mambe in their mouths. Mambeo is performed mainly at night, but also in daily, special, or ritual moments. In special moments and spaces, knowledge is acquired through mambe.
2 MAI AI (Korevaju). Also referred to as the Chief, Superior, Elder, Almighty.
3 McLachlan's (2020) doctoral dissertation offers several beautiful explanations of Uitoto's world sense making in the context of Colombian's violence and migration, including the importance of materializing words, or "making them dawn." Drawing from the work of Keane, Pineda, and Taussig, McLachlan clarifies that in Uitoto linguistic/semiotic ideologies to tell something is to (re)materialize it, to call it back or to give it material form and social life (pp. 5–6), which then involves the risk that naming something risks or invites materializing it (note 148, page 142). McLachlan's deep engagement with Uitoto communities allowed her to explain that "making dawn" also refers generally "to the magical/ practical process whereby one's intentions-as-speech are materialized in the world." (note 83, page 94.) Hence the importance of making sure that one's words are always sweet, so that when they "dawn," it is for the betterment of all.
4 Ambil: tobacco leaf extract with vegetable salt in paste or liquid form.
5 *Chagra*: Varied Indigenous crop and source of food, medicine, and knowledge.

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Part II

Communalist Entanglements with Modernity

5 Autonomy, Land Stewardship, and Indigenous Emancipatory Praxis through Legislative Activism in Costa Rica and Multilateral Institutions

Steven P. Black, Carolina Bolaños Palmieri, Cassandra Eng, Carlos Faerron Guzmán, Yanet Fundora, Leila Garro Valverde and Jose Carlos Morales Morales[1]

Introduction

In 1956, Brunkaj youth Don José Carlos Morales Morales left his home in Boruca – a small Indigenous town in the Brunqueña mountains of southern Costa Rica – to attend high school and later, the University of Costa Rica.[2] He was the first Indigenous Costa Rican to enroll in and graduate from a university. With about 3,000 residents, the town of Boruca and the area surrounding it now comprise one of 24 legally recognized Indigenous territories in Costa Rica associated with eight ethnic groups (INEC, 2013: 8). Outside the territory, Boruca is most well-known for its mask-making tradition – many in the community make a living by crafting and selling these intricate vibrant masks out of balsa wood. Some community members sell traditional woven tapestries (*tejidos*) and other tourist gifts, sometimes using natural dyes. Other key sources of income include farming and cattle ranching. Increasingly, residents also find employment in nearby towns and cities in various careers (Chaves, 1988; Garro Valverde, 2010; Stallaert, 2016).[3]

To make the trip to San José in 1956, Don José Carlos traveled along a newly constructed section of the Inter-American Highway – a road that winds through mountainous terrain along the Térraba River through what was once all Brunkaj land, making a 90-degree turn toward the coast and thus flanking Boruca on two sides. When one speaks to him about it now, Don José Carlos explains that despite the educational opportunity that the highway made accessible, the Inter-American Highway also connected Boruca to a host of negative influences for his community, from junk food to increased incursions by non-Indigenous farmers and developers to harmful aspects of social media.

While Don José Carlos was pursuing his postgraduate studies in agricultural economics in France (after receiving a scholarship to do so), he also made connections that paved the way for many years of important efforts as an Indigenous activist. This is how he later met the President of Costa Rica,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-8

Daniel Oduber Quirós (who was president from 1974 to 1978). Though Don José Carlos was working as a banker at the time of Oduber's presidency, he was able to provide consultation to the president on the subject of Indigenous communities in Costa Rica. Oduber spearheaded an effort to write and pass the Indigenous Law of 1977, a bill that "upgraded the legal status of indigenous reserves created by degree between 1956 and 1977" – including Boruca – and established the legal framework for the creation of additional Indigenous territories (Morales Garro: 5).[4] The statute states that Indigenous territories are "inalienable and imprescriptible, nontransferable and exclusive for the Indigenous communities that inhabit them" (Vaage, 2011: 22). Though some scholarship challenges the default status of the nation-state as a relevant level of analysis, in this case (as in others) the state used its power to define at least some criteria that would shape Indigenous communities' existence (discussed in the Introduction to this volume).

In the 1980s and beyond, Don José Carlos built upon his previous activist efforts. He was involved in work at the United Nations (UN) to craft what would eventually be ratified in 2007 as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. More recently, with his spouse, Doña Leila Garro Valverde (a non-Indigenous Costa Rican nurse and ethnographer with over 50 years of experience working with Indigenous communities), Don José Carlos established Kan Tan Educational Center, a facility in Boruca Indigenous territory dedicated to the promotion of education about Indigenous lifeways and perspectives.

This brief outline of Don José Carlos's life story fits a broader Latin American pattern, in which

> acculturation did not achieve the uprooting of Indigenousness … Indigenous elites have taken advantage of this modernizing trend and are now using the knowledge they acquired as their main (intellectual and ideological) weapon for linguistic and cultural recognition, human rights, and legislation of collective rights.
>
> (Gutiérrez Chong, 2012: 177; see also Akubadaura's chapter in this volume)

His activist and educational work is an example of Indigenous emancipatory praxis – defined as "survivance against ongoing colonial oppression whether those oppressive regimes are overt or insidious" (Perley, 2020: 978–979). Emancipatory praxis is, in part, a response to the slow violence through which colonial and post-colonial processes have devastated Indigenous ways of being in the world (ibid.). Here, slow violence is "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon, 2011: 2). Slow violence has often been paired with more direct violence that has been part of the exercise of colonial and post-colonial power.

Based on a recorded conversation with Don José Carlos, Doña Leila, and the other co-authors of this chapter, we explore Don José Carlos's role in the efforts of a Brunkaj Indigenous community to retain and, in some cases, return to, a traditional model of communal land stewardship; we examine how these efforts arose in the context of slow violence, focusing on emancipatory praxis amid the development of Costa Rican legal frameworks that delineated the scope of Indigenous autonomy within the national political system and global capitalism. We also identify moments when Indigenous activists were able to leverage developments at multilateral institutions (such as the UN) to support their cause. This provides a discussion of the political and social conditions in which Indigenous communalism becomes a viable possibility. Our conversation in conjunction with our fieldwork suggests that Costa Rica's Indigenous Law provided a legal framework for communalism and Indigenous autonomy but that this legal framework has not been supported by necessary policy changes and funding changes that would enable a fuller development of communalism.

About the Project

We audio-recorded our conversation about the Indigenous Law of 1977 and its contemporary impact at the conclusion of an ethnographic project on the topic of cultural sustainability in Boruca.[5] All authors were participants in that conversation. Carlos A. Faerron Guzmán and Carolina Bolaños Palmieri are the director and associate director of El Centro Interamericano para la Salud Global (CISG – the Interamerican Center for Global Health). CISG is a Costa Rican academic/research organization that specializes in study abroad courses, experiential learning, and research projects with local and international partners. Both Carlos and Carolina are Costa Ricans and global health experts with years of experience in the field. Soon after the creation of CISG, they began working with Don José Carlos and Doña Leila's son, Alancay Morales Garro, who is himself an Indigenous activist and scholar.

This led CISG to include stays at the Kan Tan Educational Center for some of their programs, including an anthropological field school led by Steven P. Black. Steven is an associate professor of anthropology at Georgia State University. He met Carlos and learned about CISG through a mutual acquaintance in the world of global health. Educational visits to Kan Tan in Boruca inspired Steven, Carlos, and Carolina to design an engaged research project in consultation with Don José Carlos and Doña Leila. Later, Carolina met with members of Boruca's Asociación de Desarrollo Integral (ADI – the development association), which is the official governing body of Boruca (more on this below). The ADI gave approval for the project and solicited statements of interest from potential youth participants.

In the summer of 2021, Cassandra Eng and Yanet Fundora (MA students studying anthropology at Georgia State University, both of whom have backgrounds in different aspects of youth counseling) lived with Brunkaj families in

Boruca for two months and worked closely with ten Brunkaj youth participants on an ethnographic photo-voice project about culture, heritage, environmental sustainability, and contemporary life. During the 2021–2022 academic year, the team completed inductive qualitative coding of field notes, photographs, and interviews. This led to the creation of a bilingual English/Spanish ethnographic photography booklet that includes sections on ancestral landscapes, livelihoods, cuisine, daily life, perspectives on land, and an important yearly Brunkaj festival (for which the masks mentioned earlier are made), "la fiesta de los diablitos."[6] Finally, we returned to Boruca in the summer of 2022 to provide a report on our work to youth participants and community leaders and to deliver copies of the photo booklet.

Indigenous land rights were a topic that was on everyone's mind during this project. At that time, conflicts between Indigenous land rights activists and local farmers had become increasingly violent, leading to the murder of two Indigenous leaders – one of whom was killed near Boruca (Villegas & Robles, 2020).[7] Indigenous activists were arguing for an immediate return of lands that had been demarcated as part of Indigenous territories but were occupied by non-Indigenous persons – either because the lands had been illegally sold to them by previous Indigenous occupants or, in some cases, because the occupiers' families had lived there prior to the establishment of the Indigenous Law. During fieldwork, Cassandra and Yanet heard a range of perspectives on land rights: some Brunkaj persons were in favor of Indigenous land reclamation; others wanted to be able to sell their land without restrictions; and still others were in favor of Indigenous land rights but also felt that some non-Indigenous persons, particularly poor farmers, were being treated unfairly as a result of the push and pull of various political and economic forces. Knowing that Don José Carlos had a long history of work in Indigenous activism, Carlos and Carolina set up a time for a meeting to have a conversation about this topic.

While we draw from our larger ethnographic project, in this chapter we primarily focus on the perspectives articulated by Don José Carlos. Through our conversation, three key conclusions emerged:

1 The socioeconomic and institutional structuring of communalism in Boruca, in Costa Rica's Indigenous territories, and perhaps worldwide, cannot be meaningfully separated from socioeconomic frameworks and institutions at national and global levels. Much of Costa Rica's economy is capitalist, providing distinct limitations and affordances for Indigenous persons and organizations. For instance, as in other post-colonial contexts, most wealth accumulation is rooted in land ownership. Indigenous land is excluded from this wealth-building system because Indigenous land cannot be freely sold, and thus cannot be leveraged for a bank loan (a bank cannot repossess Indigenous land due to non-payment on a loan). And government implementation of policy in support of the Indigenous Law has been lax and lacking (for instance, limited funding for land

repatriation and Indigenous schooling), allowing for a range of negative outcomes despite the ideals proclaimed by the law.

2 While the Indigenous Law has resulted in some positive outcomes, especially in the protection of the environment, this environmental protection should not be placed solely on the shoulders of Indigenous peoples, nor should the law be evaluated solely in terms of this outcome. Rather, the law should primarily be evaluated in terms of the possibilities offered for cultural and linguistic resilience and revitalization.

3 Costa Rica's Indigenous Law, and laws pertaining to Indigenous land rights more generally, need to be better integrated into a holistic approach that includes provisions for Indigenous-guided forms of support and development, particularly in education and in managing the interface between Indigenous territories and the broader economy.

We recorded our conversation (which occurred in Spanish) in two parts. Part 1 was recorded at a coffee shop in San José, Costa Rica, prior to our research team's follow-up visit to Boruca in the summer of 2022. Part 2 was recorded on Zoom after the conclusion of our follow-up visit. Participants included all co-authors for this chapter. In the excerpts below, the symbol "…" indicates that parts of the conversation are omitted here for purposes of readability, and all talk has been translated into English.

Land Stewardship Before and After the Indigenous Law

Though this chapter focuses on recent history, it is important (especially given our emphasis on the topic of land rights) to note that Indigenous peoples have lived on the lands now called Costa Rica for at least 12,000 years. Agriculture in the region dates back at least 3,000 years (Clement & Horn, 2001). Jade artifacts from Mesoamerica and gold artifacts from the Andes (South America) provide evidence of Indigenous Costa Ricans' participation in long-range trade networks since 1500 BCE (Snarskis, 2003). The exact relationship between pre-colonial Indigenous communities and contemporary ethnic distinctions is not entirely clear, but some early histories suggest that the Brunkaj had once been a local power, with a territory on the western side of Costa Rica that was over 200 kilometers (125 miles, almost half of the country) in length (Garro Valverde, 2010: 25; Stone, 1943: 75).

As in other parts of the Americas, colonization in Costa Rica was genocidal, leading to a dramatic reduction of the Indigenous population of the region. During the colonial period, Costa Rica was under the jurisdiction of a region whose capital was located in Guatemala. The southern part of Costa Rica was primarily significant for Spanish colonial leaders as a path to Panama. To clear the way for expansion, the Spaniards forcibly relocated Indigenous groups into smaller areas that they called "reductions" (Morales Garro, n.d.: 3). For the Brunkaj, this meant the violent restriction of their territory. They were also forced to become neighbors to two relocated Indigenous communities; and

later the colonial state responded to the rebellion by Térraba groups by forcing the entire Térraba community to also move to a territory bordering Boruca (Stone, 1948: 66). The effects of these forced relocations on cultural continuity, livelihoods, and systems of land tenure were extreme though mostly undocumented.

During the colonial period, the Catholic church and the educational system further disrupted and ruptured Indigenous cultural practices (there were also early intrusions into the region by the US-based United Fruit Company – now known as Chiquita) (Stone, 1943: 76). The church was a force in the region from the late 1500s onward, and in many cases soldiers and missionaries traveled together to "extend the dominion of the King and implant Christianity" (Alvarado Quesada, 1996: 71, our translation) and thus to supplant Indigenous religious and cultural systems. The first public school was established in Boruca in 1877 (Garro Valverde, 2010: 25). In other work, Don José Carlos explains that his parents and others of their generation (in the 1940s and 1950s, and likely before) were beaten in school whenever they were heard speaking Brunkajk – a brutal practice that played an important role in making the language dormant (Hanson, 2019: 390).

As mentioned, a more recent disruption of Indigenous life in Boruca came from the construction of the southern Costa Rican section of the Inter-American Highway in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The highway now runs from the north of Mexico to Panama City, Panama (this road is itself part of the Pan-American Highway). For Boruca, the Inter-American Highway greatly increased access to the outside world but also increased access to others in the community. In our recorded conversation, here is what Don José Carlos and Doña Leila say about the impact of the highway on communal land stewardship:

DJC (DON JOSÉ CARLOS MORALES MORALES): The year 1956 was when the construction of the Inter-American highway began, and that was when the external pressure came and each [person] began to defend their own territory; and those territories were no longer shared as they were before, but rather each [person] decided to have a plot. Let's put it that way – a farm, yes.The external pressure to which Don José Carlos is referring is the pressure on Borucans to sell their land. This pressure is an example of the slow violence of capitalism for many Indigenous communities. Doña Leila continues:

DL (DOÑA LEILA GARRO VALVERDE): Yes, well, to demarcate a bit how the land thing happened, there were communal lands and there were individual lands. The individual lands were defined by each head of the family, and [Brunkaj people] have respected those who had defined [those lands] many years ago. They have been inheriting them and the children get [them] or they decide to whom they give it while they are alive or what part each one of the children gets. And that has been respected. And the Indigenous associations have respected that family criteria. And according to the law,

it can be sold among Indigenous people.Here, Doña Leila explains that in Boruca as in various other Indigenous communities throughout the Americas, communal land stewardship previously coexisted with family-allocated plots. By 2022, however, communal management was mostly a thing of the past. Over time, communal lands had been purchased or otherwise occupied by non-Indigenous persons, or split into individually (Indigenous) owned parcels:

DJC: Communal lands have practically disappeared. Only the one from the school was left, the one from the church remained, and the ones recently recovered that are managed by the ADI.

DL: Yes, perhaps some associations are currently doing this with communal lands to recover this from Indigenous people who sold illegally. And … the development associations recover them, but they do not return them to the one who had sold it, because it would be rewarding the one who sold it and giving it back to them after they [already] received money [for their land].

It is ironic that the lands controlled by two colonially imposed institutions – the church and the school – remain communally administered (though Brunkaj persons now play primary roles in both institutions). However, there is a certain colonial logic to the idea that it would be most difficult to wrest resources away from these two powers.

Non-Indigenous occupants who arrived in the territory in 1977, as per Indigenous Law, are entitled to compensation for the land they occupied. However, those who arrived after 1977 do not have the right to receive payment for the lands. As Don José Carlos and Doña Leila mention, in some cases the Costa Rican government has purchased lands back from non-Indigenous persons in an attempt to support Indigenous land rights and enforce the Indigenous Law while also placating non-Indigenous occupiers of the lands. In such cases, lands have been turned over to the ADI (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral – the development association). Every Costa Rican community has an ADI, whose members are elected, as established by law. However, in Indigenous territories the ADIs take on added authority as a mechanism for local government because they are the only governance structure that has been imposed by the state. Alancay Morales Garro (Don José Carlos and Doña Leila's son) writes that the government issued a decree in 1978 that substituted ADIs for traditional Indigenous structures, something that actually contradicts the Indigenous Law passed just a year prior to that[8] – the Indigenous Law had indicated that each territory is to be governed by "the Indigenous people in their traditional community structures."[9] To the extent that Boruca had self-governance during the colonial and post-colonial period, that governance was performed by a group of elders. It is not clear what governing structures may have predated colonialism. The manner in which leadership in the ADI in Boruca is determined is opaque, though ADI members are elected.

As Doña Leila mentions, in Boruca the ADI has treated the lands returned to them by the Costa Rican government as communal in nature, with the ADI controlling their use. For instance, a huge property – a former cattle ranch – is being converted into a community center/hotel with a pool to be run by the ADI, while the surrounding agricultural lands are either being reforested (often with balsa trees used to carve masks sold to tourists) or planted and harvested in order to increase food security in response of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who help to sow crops and maintain the land receive a portion of the harvest. In this sense, this contemporary application of the Indigenous Law – though limited in scope by a lack of action by the Costa Rican government to reclaim more lands – has indeed supported (new forms of) communalism.

The Creation of the Indigenous Law

Before further discussion of the contemporary dynamics of the Indigenous Law, we would like to return to the law's beginnings and rely on the knowledge and experiences of Don José Carlos and Doña Leila to guide us in the telling of this history:

CBP (CAROLINA BOLAÑOS PALMIERI): Tell us a little about how the formulation process unfolded, how you participated.

DJC: From the beginning?

CBP: From the beginning, exactly.

DJC: Okay … I had a (concern) but I didn't know how to address it. And I had a scholarship in France for two years, and upon my return, I made a contact there that allowed me to have a relationship with the President of the Republic [of Costa Rica], Don Daniel Oduber [Quirós]. And, when we greeted each other, he was very happy that I could participate in some things, and he asked me for a list of the main problems that were happening in the Indigenous communities in Costa Rica. We had not even started all of the struggle that happened later in the United Nations, that is another stage, but … So, I saw that there was no territorial security for the Indigenous peoples. At this moment I was acting in a purely personal capacity because telephone and road communication were difficult, and we didn't have resources to gather other representatives in one place. So I brought [the president] eight points, I remember something about health, the improvement of education – because I saw it as it was, and not much was [being] done about it – and then the territorial issue. So originally in the years 1953–1954 three Indigenous territories had been established already, legally with registration in the property registry and everything, but [this was done] with the creation of what was then called elliptically the Institute of Lands and Colonization … But [the Institute] did nothing, absolutely nothing. Rather, they took the opportunity to eliminate the validity of those laws and were allowing the entry of non-Indigenous people. So I saw that this was a huge problem that was coming … I

explained all this to the President. And he tells me, I'm going to get two lawyers to draft a bill. And then, when the bill is drafted, we send it to the Legislative Assembly.

Here as elsewhere in our conversation, Don José Carlos emphasizes that the Indigenous Law should be understood within the context of Costa Rica's history, especially the development of laws and the treatment of Indigenous peoples. In particular, the promise of greater autonomy and security that came with the establishment of three Indigenous territories in 1953 and 1954 was erased with the creation of the Institute of Lands and Colonization (ITCO), which was part of a failed agrarian reform initiative in the early 1960s. This failure was widely attributed to the weakness of the laws governing the reform, to corruption and inefficiency in ITCO, and to the actions of conservative and biased judges who blocked application of the law (Rowles, 1982: 157). Don José Carlos explains that the result of this policy debacle was the erasure of Indigenous territorial control and the continuation of settlement of non-Indigenous persons on Indigenous lands.

Next, Carolina asks another question:

CBP: Don José Carlos, in those conversations with the lawyers, were you a representative for all the Indigenous peoples?

DJC: … There was no money to bring anyone.

Don José Carlos's comment that "there was no money to bring anyone" is a way of indicating that he was not representing all the Indigenous people; it was simply that he was the person who, through a serendipitous series of events, was able to talk to the president about the issues faced by Indigenous people at that moment. At the time of Don José Carlos's work with the president in the early 1970s, there were few, if any, telephone lines in most Indigenous communities (and in any case long distance phone calls would have been prohibitively expensive at the time). Furthermore, many areas were inaccessible by car. Communication and transportation infrastructure did not extend into these areas that were impoverished due to the legacies of colonialism.

After an extensive discussion about the politics involved in the process of shepherding the Indigenous Law through the legislature Carlos inquires,

CFG (CARLOS FAERRON GUZMÁN): What do you think was the true motivation of [President] Oduber?

DL: The national parks … [the president] did have the mentality of creating all the parks and he saw that the Indigenous people were those who [did the most for the environment].

Provisions for the establishment of national parks had been included in a 1969 Forestry Law, which was itself an impressive political and practical achievement; and in fact, the parks system was still being debated when the

Indigenous Law was formulated in the mid-1970s (Evans, 1999). President Oduber and others in the government took advantage of the political momentum of the national parks movement, recognizing that, on the whole, Indigenous communities (particularly those in the south, such as Boruca) practiced good environmental stewardship (ibid.: 212).

Indeed, the role of Indigenous peoples in environmental conservation, which should be recognized and celebrated, has served as an important political motivator for legal protections of the Indigenous Law. However, Indigenous autonomy and cultural sustainability should be a goal in their own right, rather than seen only as a means to environmental sustainability. From Don José Carlos's commentary, it becomes apparent that autonomy, environmental sustainability, and communalism are all interconnected with cultural sustainability. Autonomy provides Indigenous communities the space to govern and manage land in ways that are consonant with their cultural traditions and ways of life. In the case of the Brunkaj, as in many other Indigenous communities, those traditions and ways of life are rooted in a communal approach to governance and land stewardship where action and decision-making is tied to the long-term health and viability of the land.

Indigenous Rights on a Global Scale

After the passage of the Indigenous Law, Don José Carlos turned toward issues of Indigenous activism on a global scale, focusing on the twin goals of Indigenous autonomy and cultural sustainability. As histories of the Indigenous rights movement attest, the 1960s and 1970s "marked an early wave of transnational organizing as Indigenous groups used international forums, human rights law, and international conventions to press for their goals" (Warren & Jackson, 2002: 1). Don José Carlos was a part of this organizing. A number of countries, particularly in the Americas, had long been sites of Indigenous protest and activism. In the 1980s and 1990s, many Indigenous activist groups from around the world saw that they shared in common histories of colonialism, disenfranchisement, and socioeconomic marginalization (in other words, slow violence), and came together to form a broader transnational movement (Hodgson, 2011: 2).

Don José Carlos remembers Costa Rica's implementation of the Indigenous Law was intertwined with international developments to which he also contributed (for more on the intersection of regional, national, and international law, see Medina, 2016):

CBP: Do you remember a moment or a situation that marked the first time when the law was recognized as useful?

DJC: Well, with Salitre the situation began to become very tense. And there they took hold of the Indigenous Law, and later in Terraba also,[10] because they were threatened, [aggressors had] already killed a person and one in Salitre, and they had injured about five people, right? … A lawyer came

> out saying no, that [they] had all the rights because they were from Salitre, they were Bribri … So there it is. I think that the law was gradually being applied, or served as a basis for everything that came after.

Here, Don José Carlos describes a moment when Indigenous persons were being injured and killed during efforts to occupy Indigenous land, but in contrast to previous efforts, a lawyer was able to use the Indigenous Law to prove that the Indigenous groups had a legal right to that land. He says that the law served as a basis for everything that came after, continuing:

> DJC: Because when the [International Labor Organization] reform was created – which was not a gift either, we also worked with the ILO for a couple of years – and what is now ILO [Agreement] 169 came out. In ILO [Agreement] 169, there is already a bit of a start … and what I think they did not measure was the importance that the Indigenous delegates could have in this matter of the law and international agreements. It was the importance that those instruments were going to have, but those who were there did not pay attention to it … And when they realized that ILO Convention 169 comes above the law – the United Nations declaration supersedes it. And moreover, the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples is complete, which very few apply, but there are more developed articles in the American declaration than in the UN – the UN is global and there it is difficult to reach an agreement. 26 years working. We got the statement.

In the 1980s, the International Labor Organization (ILO) was the only international body that had a convention on Indigenous people (Convention 107), which was established in 1957. However, Don José Carlos explained to us that this convention was assimilationist in nature, with the explicit aim to "reintegrate" Indigenous peoples – and thus make them disappear, culturally. To him, the newer ILO Agreement 169, which he worked on, is significant as a piece of a larger global historical movement toward Indigenous rights, which was difficult for would-be aggressors to ignore after the core principles of that agreement had been adopted by multilateral organizations such as the United Nations. Don José Carlos is understated and humble when he explains this moment, but his persistence with other Indigenous activists (for 26 years!) is remarkable.

One reason Indigenous rights activism was effective in Costa Rica, then, was that it was paired with activism on a global scale. This resulted in top-down pressure from multilateral organizations such as the UN and the ILO – pressure that was created through the work of Indigenous activists working with those groups. Multilateral organizations and transnational non-profit organizations (NPOs) tend to exert stronger pressure on low- and middle-income countries, where the promise of funding and other assistance from those organizations is often too great to ignore (on the relationship between states, multilateral organizations, and NPOs, see Ferguson & Gupta, 2002). While

negative aspects of this top-down pressure are often foregrounded in terms of threats to national autonomy due to the influence of people from high-income countries, it is notable that Indigenous leaders were able to become a part of international efforts and then to rely on the leverage those efforts provided when conflicts developed. They were able to point to international statements and rules to try to counterbalance socioeconomic inequities in the development and implementation of Indigenous land rights legal precedent. Activist work at multilateral organizations yielded a general framework that groups could then use to protect and expand Indigenous autonomy, thereby allowing for the enactment of Indigenous communal traditions of governance and land stewardship.

Challenges in Application and Implementation

While Indigenous activists succeeded against overwhelming odds to pass the Indigenous law in Costa Rica and link it to global Indigenous activist efforts in multilateral organizations and NPOs, implementation of the law was hampered by a lack of political will to follow through with economic and social commitments. As mentioned, one pervasive problem in the implementation of the Indigenous Law has been the question of how to fairly relocate non-Indigenous families who feel that they "own" Indigenous land, either because their family's residence on the land pre-dates the passage of the law or because they (illegally) paid Indigenous persons for the land.

In our conversation, Doña Leila and Don José Carlos note that this issue has been impacting land rights activism since the creation of the law:

DL: The problem is that the funds were not assigned to recover the land, and they were approved at the time of [Rodrigo] Carazo [who was president of Costa Rica from 1978 to 1982] – they were approved and not-

DJC: They were not applied.

DL: And … now to return all those lands, it costs much more …

DJC: I just wanted to make an observation. Imagine that the law established that in order to develop and resolve the Indigenous problem, one began with 100 million colones.[11] We are talking about forty-five, forty-six years ago. It was a fortune. And today they designate, for example, three thousand million colones! that has no relation.

CFG: Of course! Because just one property there in Boruca cost three thousand million colones [around five million USD].[12]

From its beginnings, the Indigenous Law lacked the financial enforcement needed to implement it. Non-Indigenous persons were not compensated for or removed from Indigenous lands after the passage of the law. Over time, the economic problems stemming from this lack of enforcement grew exponentially as that land became more and more valuable, thus making future compensation and removal increasingly difficult.

Later in our conversation, Carlos revisits this issue of compensation for non-Indigenous occupants of Indigenous land, comparing the questionable moral underpinnings of compensating people for a colonial take-over to what happened in the US when former slave-owners were compensated after the conclusion of the civil war:

CFG: what do you think of indemnifying people? … Perhaps it is a bit of an extreme comparison – but when slavery was abolished, slave owners were compensated … It seems a bit like the same logic to me …
CFG: Do you think it is to appease people?
DJC: A little for that, yes.
CFG: Yes, because definitely people were going to feel that it is very unfair.
DJC: Yes, that is going to start a war [laughs].

While Don José Carlos laughs, the possibility of violence is very real (as mentioned earlier). At different points in our conversation, he describes threats to his life in particular and threats to other Indigenous persons – threats that were linked to the creation of the Indigenous Law. And also, as mentioned, violent clashes between Indigenous land rights activists and land occupiers in Costa Rica have been reported for the past several years in the country (Villegas & Robles, 2020).

In addition to the practical, economic, and moral questions about the issue of compensation of non-Indigenous occupiers of Indigenous land, a second issue was raised, this one related to education:

DJC: Many of the young people are understanding the issue (that) without land there is no future as a town, so there is a certain effect there. But it [is difficult] because the school did not help us to say look, this law was approved here, was sealed. Children are taught this whole process from a young age that when they grow up, we have to defend [the land] … But they do not have training in [the sense of education]. That is where education with Indigenous peoples failed.
DL: It is not a theme that they [cover] in primary school.
DJC: Nor in high school.

Here Don José Carlos and Doña Leila suggest that Indigenous youth need to have a curriculum that includes educating them about the legal structures of the Indigenous Law and their rights within this system, in order to better prepare youth to advocate for themselves.

From these and other recollections of Don José Carlos and Doña Leila and the other authors' experience in Boruca, it is apparent that the implementation of the Indigenous Law in Costa Rica has faced significant challenges. The issues surrounding how to return Indigenous land to Indigenous hands raises practical, economic, and moral questions, which highlight the fact that the struggle for Indigenous rights is ongoing. The prevalence of these issues also

suggests the importance of addressing the *de facto* and the *de jure* barriers in the fight for justice for Indigenous peoples in Costa Rica.

The Need for a Holistic Approach

Education more generally – in terms of preparing youth for life not just in an Indigenous territory but also in Costa Rica and in the world – is also one of several issues that continue to be a challenge for Indigenous Costa Ricans. Another issue is how to address the economic exclusion of Indigenous persons from participation in the capitalist economy. Both of these concerns point to the need for a holistic approach to law and policy – that the Indigenous Law should be a primary point of departure for supporting Indigenous autonomy, cultural sustainability, and revitalization, not an end point.

During our discussion, Don José Carlos turns to the issue of education in particular:

DJC: With education, I am very concerned for my people and for all the Indigenous peoples … A decree was made that gave preference to Indigenous people who had already been trained [as teachers] so that they could work in their territory when possible. And that has created more of a problem that certain families name themselves [as teachers] and they don't give others a chance, right? So, from there things don't go well. Then, see, those who arrive at the University are very few. Rather, the University of Costa Rica and the National University have [had to make] adjustments to the admission grades to facilitate the entry of more indigenous students …

CBP: Among the participants [of our research] there are several who are still at the high school level, several who continue studying at the University.

DJC: And there's potential [there among the youth].

As in other contemporary countries, there is a Janus-faced nature to how the state approaches the question of Indigenous autonomy: on the one hand, Indigenous communities are allowed space to structure politics, policy, education, et cetera; but on the other hand, this is sometimes used as an excuse to justify lack of investment in Indigenous communities at the national level. The educational system in Boruca is uneven at best, though as noted, there is much potential and some youth with whom we worked were able to attend the university or pursue advanced training in other professional fields.

With regards to the idea of a holistic approach to the Indigenous Law in Costa Rica, a second point concerns the economic relationship between Boruca in particular and Costa Rica as a whole. This was a difficult subject to broach, as during field work in Boruca Yanet and Cassandra had been part of conversations in which people were critical of the Indigenous Law's impact on the ability of Borucans to participate in the Costa Rican economy. In our conversation, Carlos raised a question related to this, hoping to hear Don José Carlos's perspective on the matter:

CFG: There are people who also told us that part of the problem is that they cannot possess the land as such, and the whole issue is that they cannot mortgage it, right? … In this sense, they have also heard people who complain about that. Let's say that when you have a normal lot and you go to a bank, you ask for a loan and the loan backing is this lot. We understand that the Indigenous population cannot do that because in reality the land does not belong to that person and the Bank will never be able to respond to a plot that does not belong to the person requesting the loan. Have you heard this complaint from some of the people who live in Boruca?

DJC: Well, not me, in Boruca – perhaps they don't tell me, right? But I have not heard of these things. And it could be that. But I see it as a bit difficult. And people who complain about the law – it is very, very difficult for that law to be touched. If that law is touched by a word that is in the Legislative Assembly, that law will disappear.

Here, Don José Carlos's perspective – as someone who lived in Boruca prior to the Indigenous Law and had experience observing the legislative process of the creation and implementation of the law – led him to an important if difficult conclusion. Namely, he feels that any attempt to change or improve the law would backfire due to political resistance to it, and that such an attempt could lead to it being repealed or significantly weakened.

It is in this context that the creation of the law should be understood as emancipatory Indigenous praxis in response to slow violence. Theoretically, perhaps the Indigenous Law is an imperfect solution in that it leaves open these economic and educational issues that continue to impact Indigenous communities. In terms of praxis, though, Don José Carlos indicates that the law was the only possible solution: something that was achievable at the time and with the means available to those involved, building on the successful creation of Costa Rica's national parks system and the burgeoning transnational Indigenous rights movement.

Conclusion

The Indigenous Law of Costa Rica is a precarious solution because the threats associated with settler-colonial ideologies and legal/political structures remain. The desire to grant land autonomy to Indigenous peoples is at the core of the Indigenous Law. However, the history of the Indigenous peoples of Costa Rica and their struggle for land rights reveal the lingering effects of colonialism. Toward the end of our conversation, Carlos asked:

CFG: Yes, maybe looking back Don José Carlos and collecting all these years since the law and all the effort you made looking back, if you had done something differently in the law, what would it have been if something?

DJC: How difficult, because if the law had not been made, the Indigenous peoples would no longer exist.

Don José Carlos's response is profound and is oriented to praxis. With the benefit of 50 years of experience as an Indigenous activist, he emphasizes that by the 1970s the slow violence of colonialism, post-colonialism, and associated capitalist enterprise had become an existential threat to the Indigenous Peoples of Costa Rica. Something had to be done, and Don José Carlos's statement implies that if the law had not been written the way that it was, no law would have been written.

The establishment of the Indigenous Law, led by activists such as Don José Carlos, was an important step to granting greater autonomy to the Indigenous communities of Costa Rica in the face of these existential threats. That autonomy was a precondition for the enactment of communalism in the face of ever-present erosion of communalism associated with capitalist development. Nonetheless, the implementation of the law has been fraught with challenges, leading to the loss of communal lands amid continued threats to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous territorial control. Our conversation highlights the importance of a holistic approach that prioritizes Indigenous-led development. Such an approach would include support for Indigenous self-sufficiency and cultural sustainability, in parallel with increased funding for Indigenous-led education and efforts to address economic exclusion that the Indigenous Peoples of Costa Rica face. Furthermore, there would ideally be an economic mechanism that responds to heterogeneous community interest in maintaining communal lands. (e.g., a government program might compensate families who want to sell their land, where the program would keep that land in the hands of the Indigenous community). Such a mechanism could further efforts toward cultural sustainability and Indigenous communalism without constraining those who do not wish to remain in the territory.

The work of people such as Don José Carlos, as well as the activism of other Indigenous leaders in Costa Rica, is an important reminder of the contributions of Indigenous peoples to the advancement of a just world. Despite the apparent imperfections of the Indigenous Law, Don José Carlos's story demonstrates the significance of resistance and resilience in response to slow violence and threats from colonial ideologies and hegemonic governance structures. It is vital to continue working and advocating for Indigenous autonomy and cultural sustainability, for the well-being of Indigenous communities and also for the promise of a more just and equitable society.

Notes

1 Garro Valverde and Morales Morales are listed as final authors to indicate their position of honor and expertise (as is conventional in many multi-authored publications); all others are equal co-authors, with each author contributing in distinct ways to the research process (see Liboiron et al. on equity in author order).
2 As with many Indigenous languages that were first written down by colonizers and missionaries, there are several different spellings and pronunciations of Boruca and Bruncajc. While the name of the town and the Indigenous territory is "Boruca," many outsiders today refer to the Indigenous group as Brunka. Some community

members prefer to refer to their people as Bruncaj (sometimes also spelled Brúnkaj or Bruncáj), and their language as Bruncajc (sometimes also spelled Brúnkajk or Bruncájc). "Boruca" is a Hispanicization of a pronunciation of the name, a legacy of a history of violence and oppression that has resulted in an almost total dormancy of the language spoken prior to the Spanish conquest.

3 In addition to the cited sources, some of this information also comes from conversations with authors Don José Carlos Morales Morales and Doña Leila Garro Valverde (more information on this and our project provided below).

4 www.un-redd.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/FPIC_costarica.pdf (accessed July 3, 2023).

5 This project was funded by *National Geographic*.

6 A digital copy of the booklet can be downloaded here: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/anthro_facpub/25/.

7 www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/12/costa-rica-urgent-reforms-needed-indigenous-peoples-rights-says-un-expert (accessed January 12, 2022).

8 www.un-redd.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/FPIC_costarica.pdf (accessed August 3, 2023).

9 www.asamblea.go.cr/sd/SiteAssets/Lists/Consultas%20Biblioteca/EditForm/Ley%20Ind%C3%ADgena%206172.pdf, page 3, author translation (accessed September 9, 2022).

10 Salitre (home to Bribri Indigenous communities) and Terraba are Indigenous territories in Costa Rica.

11 The Colón is the national currency of Costa Rica.

12 The property that Carlos is referring to here, which cost 3,000 million colones, is the ranch mentioned earlier that is being converted to a hotel and community center.

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Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
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6 Akubadaura

Resistance and Organization. The Struggle of Colombian Indigenous Women for the Conquest of Their Rights and the Defense of Their Communities and Territories

Akubadaura Community of Jurists and Fabiola León Posada[1]

Creating to Re-Exist

Faced with the historical and structural discrimination and exclusion of Indigenous peoples, which is reflected in low levels of schooling and the absence of knowledge for the defense of their individual and collective rights – among many other factors of inequity inherent to colonialism – two women lawyers from two Indigenous peoples: Patricia Tobón Yagarí[2] and Ana Manuela Ochoa,[3] decided to found Akubadaura, a political project to re-exist, in Mignolo's terms (2015), committed to the defense of the rights of Indigenous peoples, in an act of autonomy and free self-determination of the peoples.

Thus, accompaniment, a common proposal from Latin America in which organizations and communities work together to promote the goals of communities, has been carried out in light of the creation and consolidation of Life Plans of the organizations, such as the support provided for several years to the Chidima and Pescadito reservations, in Acandí Chocó, strengthening their internal processes toward the demand of claims to the state, and on the importance of women's empowerment in these communities.

Societies forged from the collective, with autonomy and self-determination, in a global system of neoliberal order, where, in many cases, individual rights take precedence. A paradigm that enters into permanent tension and contradiction, as we constantly see, as a result of cultural practices, the violation of women's rights in most Indigenous organizations. Therefore, understanding the collective as a whole is important, but the particularities of individuals, especially those with specific needs, should not be omitted.

By observing and living these local dynamics, these women (Patricia Tobón Yagarí and Ana Manuela Ochoa) grew up grounding their thinking in the din of the Indigenous movement which, since the 1970s, was forging its own path to expand the demands that the peasants had been fighting for, but which were not able to cover the thinking and needs of the more than 115 Indigenous peoples and communities of Colombia.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-9

Figure 6.1 "Life Plan" workshop with Pescadito and Chidima reservations, October 2023. Photo taken by youth from the community.

Thus, the Indigenous Regional Council of Vaupés (CRIVA), the Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca (CRIC), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), the Indigenous Organization of Antioquia (OIA), and others were formed from the Indigenous movement. At the same time, new concepts such as "unity" were added, "land" was replaced by "territory" and, later, the concepts of "autonomy" and "culture" were added as part of the Quintín Lame-inspired process of protest.[4] However, there are so many shortcomings in terms of rights that other support was needed.

There was a need for an entity that would allow for a deeper understanding of ethnic issues, that would support training, but, above all, that would provide technical support to organizations and communities in a more systematic way. Supporting the organizations to solve limitations such as access to information, the routes for the enforceability of their rights and the understanding of Western laws. This need is the foundation of Akubadaura, because it provides spaces, but does not replace national or regional organizations, and, of course, has a fundamental seal: a rights-based, territorial and gender approach.

Due to the cultural particularities of the Indigenous communities, hierarchical structures governed for centuries by men, many challenges were identified at the political and organizational level, but especially in the very radical practices regarding the relationship and roles of women within the communities (Akubadaura & ONIC, 2018). Assuming that there are positions in which women have a

role inside their homes and men outside. Coordinator of the gender and population line in Akubadaura, Nancy Haydeé Millán Echeverría, explains.

> So when we started in 2018 with Chidima and Pescadito, precisely one of the situations that we found is that those who attended most of the training workshops were men, women attended, but did not actively participate, they sat on the floor and did not say anything.

These revelations of local dynamics in organizations have a symbology of relationship with the internal and the external. In the first place, the man is seen as the one in charge of political decisions, plans, and budgets, who must go out and address these issues. On the other hand, the internal role of women is configured within the home and the community. In this way, logics have been configured in which women have been excluded from decision-making for the construction of collective Life Plans and as the political authority of the people. Although this has been changing, we cannot say that it is a constant today.

On the other hand, the deficient educational system that has kept them marginalized and the fact that they are voiceless subjects within their communities means that most women, unlike men, do not understand the Spanish language, which deprives them of a deep understanding of what is discussed in these spaces. "Women listen, but do not understand. So, we began to address specific issues with women, thinking of methodologies that include them and

Figure 6.2 "Life Plan" workshop with the Pescadito and Chidima reservations, October 2023. Photo taken by youth of the community.

facilitate their understanding, since women are the ones who have the least access to formal education," explains Nancy Haydeé Millán.[5]

In order to achieve a transformation in these dynamics, and without affecting the internal and collective logics, Akubadaura was born. The word *Akuburu*, in the Emberá Chamí culture, refers to those who support the traditional doctors, the Jaibanás. Our founders joined with others belonging to different peoples, such as the Emberá, the Kankuamo, the Pijao, and the Misak, among others, with the possibility of accessing higher education and began to discuss ways in which they could help make the proposals and hopes of the Indigenous movement, of which they were also a part, a reality. This is how the lawyer for the Pijao people, Rocío Caballero Culma explains it:

> … the decision was made to meet as sons and daughters of the Indigenous peoples to think about the best form of technical contribution, articulation and support to the organizations and community processes, for the defense of the rights of the Indigenous peoples, especially those who are more vulnerable; in this sense, it was agreed to work around some relevant issues for the original peoples: the defense of territorial ethnic rights, the right to peace, the rights of women, children and youth, displaced populations or in a situation of confinement, and peoples at risk of physical and cultural extermination.

As can be seen in Caballero's description, this initiative contains elements such as the collective, the other and women, which become resistance to a colonial matrix characterized by individuality, racism and patriarchy. Even the fact that women from peoples considered semi-civilized or savage (interview with Mayor Armando Wouyuri Valbuena, from the Wayuu People, 2018) had access to higher education is more than a challenge for cultures that have normalized discrimination, as explained by Lina Marcela Tobón Yagarí, who belongs to the Emberá Chamí Indigenous people and is the director of the Akubadaura Community of Jurists.

> Structural racism and inequality cause many of our ethnic communities to remain in conditions of poverty, in permanent violation of their rights because despite the apparent recognition, the reality is different. In the territories and with the communities where we accompany processes, the institutional disinterest in the processes of self-government, the needs and rights of Indigenous peoples is evident.

This imbalance between needs and reality is taken up by Akubadaura and, recognizing the important achievements that have been made since the 1991 Constitution in terms of the rights of ethnic communities, the law is assumed with a strategic use focusing on the defense of human rights, within a proposal to re-exist, in which respect for the cosmovision, the Law of Origin and the Major Law prevails.

Due to these particularities, we believe that the ideal is for the communities to be autonomous and decisive, based on their special Indigenous jurisdiction,

using their internal regulations and only resorting to the institutional in extreme cases. For example, in Chocó we have worked on strengthening the internal regulations of the organizations and on better understanding the special Indigenous jurisdiction, although it is a challenging issue due to the questions that exist about how to exercise it and how to deal with cases when the ordinary justice system does not provide inputs to do so. "The special Indigenous jurisdiction implies the exercise of restorative justice. It is not just about punishing, but about restoring harmony and realization to the person who committed an error, transforming it for the benefit of the community," says Nancy Haydeé Millán.

It is also necessary to see how women's rights, land restitution, the Peace Agreement, and the emphasis on the gender perspective, which should be raised in the framework of the Life Plans, relate to the special Indigenous jurisdiction. Nancy Haydeé Millán adds:

> In the case of violence, we believe that it is not always necessary to resort to institutionalism, but that the special Indigenous jurisdiction should be strengthened to address these situations. However, if the necessary inputs are not available, the exercise of justice may be insufficient. It is important to understand that, as Indigenous authorities, they have the obligation not to violate people's rights.

We understand law as a line that crosses multiple spheres of society. Therefore, and by way of example, we relate access to justice and women's equality before men with an understanding of the gender approach from the ancestral proposal of complementarity in order to, from there, build an agenda of mobilization for the protection of women and the family.

Another example of this cross-cutting approach can be seen in economic rights. We are working to improve the access and governance of Indigenous peoples to the resources they receive from the state, because managing their own resources and those derived from the General Participation System has been a constant struggle of the Indigenous movement and the communities, and being able to improve the management capacity of these resources strengthens the autonomy of the communities and their medium and long-term planning capacity. Access to state resources is part of a long struggle of the Indigenous movement to achieve autonomy and improve the quality of life of the communities.

> The Akubadaura Community of Jurists understands that in order to achieve equity, inclusion and reduce inequality, mechanisms are required that allow the members of society (with emphasis on ethnic peoples) to achieve their well-being with dignified conditions, that recognize their differences, contribute to the exercise of their law of origin, their own law, major law, cultural and ancestral practices and policies that redistribute the resources, goods and services of the nation with a differential approach; this being redistributive justice.[6]

Within this framework, Akubadaura has proposed four mechanisms for institutional adaptation, which include several points to support the viability of the budget allocation criteria: adaptation of existing programs with a differential ethnic approach; creation of ethnic programs; spaces for relations with ethnic peoples; and mechanisms for monitoring and transparency with an ethnic approach.

Peace is also our right, which is why we participate in its construction and follow up on the implementation of the Ethnic Chapter of the Peace Agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government signed in 2016. We believe that the construction of stable and lasting peace requires the reparation of Indigenous peoples and their territories. Finally, with communication we help to reduce discrimination factors by influencing public opinion, the legislative branch, but also by helping in the recovery of communication in communities and peoples, strengthening it with appropriate communication tools.

As the accompanying organization that we are, it is worth mentioning this clarification made by the coordinator of the legal actions line, attorney Caballero:

> We are a technical organization that from the different lines of work has bet on strengthening the communities, accompanying and supporting them in their own processes of enforceability, to the extent of the work agreements with the communities, regional or national organizations; always with the understanding that we are not a representative organization of the Indigenous movement, therefore our advocacy or enforceability work is of a technical nature and defense of rights, but not as spokespersons or authorities of the Indigenous movement.

In this sense, Akubadaura's work with the support and strengthening of communities is a form of resistance and struggle from an Indigenous women's organization in favor of the human and collective rights of Indigenous peoples.

Weaving for the Common

Colonial culture produces a subjectivation from which relationships are deconstructed, norms are defined, the world is understood and dominated. Therefore, strengthening the organizational environments of Indigenous peoples in initial contact or with little time of exchange with Western culture, such as the Nükak people, ends up being interpreted as a decolonizing action, of resistance and re-emergence, in Mignolo's terms. But from the work and position of Akubadaura, with a differential approach, it is more than that, it is a transcending with and for that other, as defined by Piñacué:

> It does not remain in the premise of otherness; it makes the exercise of dialoguing, relying on them, even appropriating technologies such as research tools, language, visual media, and the writing that the academy

> builds. Thus, having a notion of the other makes the Indigenous person inclusive, while the other named by scientific objectivity is excluded.
>
> (Piñacué, 2014: 173)

In this sense, Akubadaura highlights the dialogue with the other, with those others called academy, state, laws and sciences, because with them the institutional paths are also defined and the ways how the Life Plans that each people has built from their cosmovision can be implemented. Caballero indicates that the defense of rights is done within the framework of Western law, which is recognized as the profit of the demands of the Indigenous peoples, and it has been learned that from the socio-legal, formative, incidence, and communicative defense it is possible to help in the process of defense of the rights and survival of the Indigenous peoples.

The principle of dialogue is therefore established in Akubadaura's work, and consequently the themes, projects, and processes are not imposed or arbitrary, but the result of framework agreements with cabildos, associations of cabildos and national and international Indigenous organizations. An example of this has been the work carried out during these years, which is reflected in the following way:

> Although the Corporation was legally constituted in 2012, it was not until 2015 when, with the administrative support of the Lutheran Federation, it was able to carry out a first agreement for a project of legal support to the Emberá population of Alto Andágueda in the process of land restitution, an emblematic case that was followed for three years from the legal, training and empowerment of women.
>
> The team of Indigenous lawyers and professionals of the "Comunidad de Juristas Akubadaura" have been strengthening litigation cases of Indigenous peoples.
>
> - The case of the Tahami Indigenous reservation in Alto Andágueda, Chocó, belonging to the Emberá Katío people.
> - The cases of the Dogibi, Tanela, Cuty, Chidima, and Pescadito Indigenous Reserves of the Emberá Katío People in Northern Chocó.
> - The cases of the Indigenous reservations associated with the Regional Indigenous Council of Vichada CRIVI.
> - The cases of the resguardos of the Organización Indígena del Pueblo Kankuamo OIK.
> - Technical legal advice to the Bari people.
> - Legal accompaniment to the case of restitution of rights of the Ranchería River of the Wayuu People.
> - Legal advice to the Nükak People.[7]

Based on the guiding principles of the corporation, always centered on dialogue and autonomous construction from the Indigenous peoples, these

agreements are based, the scenarios of collectivity are organized, as mentioned in the communications policy of the National Commission of Communication of Indigenous peoples, Concip:

> … the assemblies, the unuma or mano vuelta, the minga, the activity in the chagra, the circle of the word in conucos, in the bonfire and in the kankurwa or the mambeo in the maloka, among other places of transmission of own knowledge, are scenarios and forms of own communication …
>
> (CIT, 2017, cited in Concip, 2018)

It is in these spaces where knowledge is built, where ideas are organized and decisions are made. However, Akubadaura knows that there are cases in which it is not possible to organize or maintain a circle of the word due to factors such as armed violence, as is the case of the Emberá of the Quebrada Cañaveral Alto San Jorge Resguardo, in southern Córdoba, or the Nükak of Guaviare. Francisco Giraldo, Colombian economist and teacher, explains:

> In the situation of the Indigenous people of Córdoba, during the days programmed to talk about economic rights, fiscal policy or the systems of participation and royalties, spaces were opened so that they could talk about community needs. They had not been able to meet for a long time.

In the case of the nomadic dynamics of the Nükak, who are also victims of displacement, the strengthening of these collective scenarios is also sought. This was the case in the fourth assembly of the Mauro Munu Council of Authorities, which not only provided space for the discussion of these issues, but also created circles of cultural transmission and conciliation.

> San José del Guaviare, February 27, 2021. We, as Nükak people, represented by delegations from our 13 settlements, met through our Council of Traditional Authorities Mauro Munu between February 21 and 26 (2021) in the Caño Cumare village of San José del Guaviare to celebrate our Fourth General Assembly to continue strengthening our organizational process, the relationship with the institutionality, with the peasant population, as well as to project our bets for the future. During this week, we elected a new Council of Authorities, the legal representative (webaka), and developed a collective work to structure the organization of self-government for dialogue with the institutions. Likewise, we elaborated an Action Plan to strengthen our autonomy and our relationship with the institutions, creating 5 coordination positions for the following issues: territory and environment, health, education and culture, humanitarian attention and human rights, women, family and generation.[8]

Determining then that dialogue is the guiding principle, and that the framework agreements outline the route, we define our work, crossed from the legal axis, to the extent that we accompany some of the peoples in which few speak Spanish; where knowledge about legislation or state functioning and the ability to dialogue with the institutionality is low; we understand that it is necessary to dedicate spaces for organizational strengthening issues, and training in rights with methodologies based on their own.

(1) **Walking Territorial Defense**

The landowning elites, businessmen who owned large tracts of land, considered that the rights inherited from the colony, on the lands of the *resguardos*, were a threat to the future expansion of their estates, so they successively generated legal actions to disregard these rights. In Colombia, the movement led by Quintín Lame, in the second decade of the twentieth century, is the beginning of a movement of vindication against land dispossession, on which some of the struggles of the Indigenous movement will later be based.

As a way of resistance against territorial dispossession, Quintín Lame proposes a strategy called "beating the flag," from which he promotes the recovery of territories and the connection between them (quoted by Gutiérrez, 2020). This thinking is taken up by Akubadaura to defend territorial rights.

A first exercise to put into practice the flag beating is the one built around the territory of the Emberá Katío community, Tahami *resguardo* of Alto Andágueda, in Chocó. This community had suffered the presence of various armed groups that, in 2012, as a result of bombing by the security forces, led to their displacement; however, the territorial conflict had been going on for several decades. The dispute over gold mining began in the 1950s with the heirs of businessman Ricardo Escobar, from the municipality of Andes, Antioquia, who gradually tried to strip the Indigenous people of their mining rights and, in general, of their ancestral territory. In the words of Quintín: "[t]hese lands are exclusive property given by the Omnipotent Judge to our first parents, of which they were owners and lords until October 12, 1492" (quoted by Gutiérrez, 2020).

As a way of resisting this abuse of power, this colonizing action, the Emberá took action. This is how the journalist Juan José Hoyos (2016) narrates it:

> On June 11, 1978, in the region of Dabeiba, next to a mining camp in Río Colorado, in the jungles of Alto Andágueda, a helicopter belonging to the Helicol company was attacked by a group of more than 50 Emberá Indians armed with machetes, knives, shotguns, revolvers and blowguns. (p. 19)

This unbalanced struggle, in terms of men, weapons, and access to justice, is prolonged over time leaving displacement and death, risk factors for the cultural and physical survival of this people. As a way to stop the humanitarian crisis they face, Akubadaura provided legal advice to the organizations,

achieving a landmark ruling in 2014 to return 50,000 hectares of their territory to the resguardo, in addition the ruling included actions to ensure the minimum conditions of health, basic sanitation and food security.

However, the authorities failed to comply with the implementation of the court ruling. Regarding this fact, Patricia Tobón, then director of our organization, stated on the platform of the Regional Indigenous Council of Colombia, CRIC, that part of the problem was also that "the institutions believe that they should only grant their institutional offer and do not take into account Decree 4633, which requires differential assistance that guarantees Indigenous people to return to their territory in dignified and safe conditions" (cited in Pardo, 2016).

This ruling specifies the return of all communities to dignified conditions and orders several state institutions to accompany these processes from different fronts. This has generated a fragmentation of the work and not an articulation. It is expected that the state institutions act together to guarantee that the communities have dignified conditions and can remain in the territory, something that rarely happens. Although it is not unknown that some productive projects, brigades, and schools have been implemented, there is no contextualized reading of the problem that would allow for a more effective and coordinated response.

According to Alejandra Amaya "his restitution judgment has been a milestone in the accompaniment of Akubadaura. We have followed the judicial process closely. Although the communities must continue to demand from the state and create an agenda to keep themselves informed, our accompaniment is focused on being at their side. We will continue to provide support throughout the legal process."

Akubadaura retakes and strengthens the fundamental right to Prior Consultation,[9] as a mechanism won by the Indigenous movement and recognized by national and international instances, which represents the fundamental axis in the defense of territorial and economic rights of Indigenous peoples. In conversation with the journalistic portal Rutas del Conflicto, the lawyer Fernando Herrera mentions some of the disadvantages of the application of this right:

> In addition to armed violence, we have other types of violence such as acts of disinformation; attempts by companies and public institutions to divide community leaderships in order to fragment the processes of social dialogues with the communities; attempts to stigmatize, to call the communities that enter into a minga as terrorists because a consultation is not going well or to say that a community is an enemy of development. In addition to the illegal armed groups, the companies themselves also contribute to generate factors of violence by stigmatizing the communities. There is a concurrence of armed violence combined with social and political violence that puts pressure on the communities so that they feel weakened and do not demand what they should demand. It is necessary to evaluate whether

> in Colombia when we talk about prior consultations we are talking about truly prior, truly free and truly informed consultations.

As an alternative to this reality raised by the lawyer, we have developed the National Information System on Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation – SNICPLI – a tool for the consultation and monitoring of Prior Consultation processes in the country. In addition, it is a way to reach dialogue, to the extent that any person and sector can interact with it, but it is also a mechanism for transparency, inclusion, and enjoyment of rights and with a differential approach.

(2) **Walking Complementarity**

For Nancy Millán, master in social anthropology and intercultural health, leader of the gender and population line of Akubadaura, the fact that the organization has been created by women and that they are the ones who carry out the accompaniment and training processes, constitutes the first motivational factor for the leadership of other Indigenous women and, in particular, for those of the peoples with whom the organization works, given their low possibility of social scaling:

> Both in Chocó with the Emberá and in Guaviare with the Nükak, the process of women's leadership was incipient. There is still resistance from the authorities due to machismo patterns, but the indicators show that women have made progress in their positioning, that they are more listened to. This is achieved, in part, by the methodology of the example, breaking schemes that have been handled in the Indigenous movement and it becomes a positive conflict that overcomes fears.

This weak leadership, which affects and accentuates the gender violence mentioned by the coordinator, is linked to the violence derived from the community's own dynamics, but also from armed and unarmed third parties that come to the territories and threaten the physical and cultural survival, ignoring life, history and collective rights.

Understanding these contexts, from Akubadaura we support the women of the "Women's Program of the Mesa Indígena del Chocó" to find routes and alternatives to access their own and Western justice. We share the joy for the strengthening of young leaders such as Nepono Carupia Domico, from the Emberá Eyabida people, who in an inter-ethnic communications meeting excitedly relates that her community sees her growth and asks her with innocence "where is she studying, to follow in her footsteps" (interview with Nepono Carupia, 2022).

From the different strengthening processes, we have reached communities that need to understand how ordinary justice works, but also how the relationship with the other works when it comes to demanding, defending, protecting, and teaching the rights, not only of Indigenous people, but also of

women and of the territory. This is how Luisa Fernanda Viatela Lozano, communication trainer at Akubadaura, narrates it:

> In these accompaniments and training we met women who were eager to learn, to understand how the world of "the free" works, as we are called for being campûgnía (if you are mestizo or mestiza) or torrô (if you are afro). In the first meetings, many of them did not speak or give their opinion, some even did not understand why they were in those spaces when "we cannot speak or say anything, that is what men and authorities do, not us," as Bienvenida, a young Emberá woman of approximately 23 years of age from the municipality of Unguía, mentioned to me.
>
> With the progress in the workshops, they are now questioning, proposing, speaking and teaching in their own communities, thanks to the fact that, as they themselves mention, "I learned a lot about the rights of women and Indigenous communities to defend. We are learning little by little, through these workshops we are opening our eyes … 'it is possible to make a change, we can go very far if we put our minds to it.'"

As mentioned by Piñacué (2014), this inclusive otherness is achieved with referents such as Alba Quintana Achito, a 33-year-old Emberá Dobida, today an Indigenous leader of the people, who re-emerged regardless of being a victim of displacement. She is now a legal professional and member of the network of lawyers of the Akubadaura Community of Jurists and accompanies training on access to justice for Indigenous women, as Alba Quintana says:

> … the process with the people is great because there is a lack of knowledge (and misinformation) from the women themselves, of their rights as women and as citizens and in the same measure we find ourselves with the stigmatization and rejection that we have received precisely because of the leadership we have, sometimes accused of leading the women of the community astray, that must change, we are starting, but there is still a long way to go.

Agreeing with Quintana, Luisa Fernanda Viatela expresses that there is still a long way to go, but highlights several phrases that await the pending journey:

- "We learned what we didn't know: women's rights. Before I didn't know anything, now I know something," Lita Chocho, a Wounaan woman from the municipality of Riosucio, after her classmates translated into her language.
- "I learned how to defend women's rights, we learned about women's rights and gender, we receive physical and verbal abuse, but not only among the community, but there is abuse from the institution, I learned that it is not only physical abuse, but that there are violations of our rights," Argenida Salazar Chamarra, Emberá Dobida, member of the

> Indigenous Guard of the community of Pescadito in the municipality of Acandí.

In the same vein, Dora Elena Sepúlveda Velásquez, a justice advocate in her community and replicator of these training processes in Chocó said:

> In matters of femicide and violence against women, there is total impunity in light of our governments, and even complicity in covering up these cases by the authorities themselves. There is evidence of a lack of knowledge of the internal regulations, and this is a general shortcoming of the process. It is necessary to strengthen the axis of women's own right, making women aware of their internal regulations, as well as the routes for articulation with the ordinary justice system.
>
> (Interview with Dora Elena Sepúlveda Velásquez, 2021)

In this context, women face greater demands than men, and both women and communities are not prepared to make decisions about the political leadership. Nancy Haydeé Millán says:

> If a newly arrived young governor is in training, the whole community understands if he makes a mistake, but when it comes to women, they are expected to prove their ability. There is no logical training for women, and instead, they are put on the spot and their ability is questioned. The expectation is that women will demonstrate what they know from the very beginning.

The accompaniment from the corporation has sought to empower women so that they can play a more active role in decision-making, both internally and in the invitations they receive from external institutions. This female empowerment has even allowed women to express their needs and reflect on the situation and organizational processes of their communities. Akubadaura has focused on recognizing the collective and, at the same time, not neglecting the specific needs of each individual, as is the case of women. It is a project that has succeeded in giving women a voice, although there is still much to be done to strengthen the organizations as a whole. Therefore, it is important to recognize the collective and strengthen certain individuals to make it stronger.

This gender approach, being women founders, makes them a reference for their communities, and at the national level. This has made visible the whole process they have had to go through to get to where they are, their struggles, resistance, and personal processes. They have shown all Indigenous women that it is possible, and this motivates more and more women leaders. "The idea is not to break with the culture, nor to say: 'up with radical feminism,' our work is a gender approach that has been respectful of these local and collective dynamics of the peoples with whom we work" (interview with Nancy Millán, 2023).

In gender work, men's perspective is also strengthened. Complementarity is the axis in the Indigenous culture, that is why we recognize that some governors, authorities and male leaders facilitate the opening to women's leadership, that, added to the change of roles when it comes to being in the territory, in which they are the ones who intervene and they are the ones who listen. This is what we experienced during a National Meeting for the exchange of experiences in Chocó, in 2022, where Plinio Brincha, leader of Unguía, spoke about the challenges in gender work.

> I have received a lot of training and I am one of the people who supports the women in the resguardo; there is a lot to work on. This is a very hard process, but nothing impossible. I think we should support them because they have all the tools, let's remember that the tools are in the territory, in the jungle, in traditional medicine, in the elders and mayoras.
>
> (Interview with Plinio Brincha, 2022)

This appearance of the complement between genders is different in each context and is explained by anthropologist Rita Segato (2018) in the video: "No patriarch will make the revolution" from what she calls a non-white feminism:

> that dialogues with their men because they have an alliance of peoples who are in common struggles of men and women. They know that they have to make their feminism for equality, because there is a political project of peoples and there the project of women is included, in a colonial universe of a decolonial struggle.[10]

Precisely because of this plural world, we gathered two opinions of Indigenous men who participated in workshops conducted by Akubadaura in 2022:

> It is necessary to promote exchanges of experiences within the same communities to strengthen and generate a network of Indigenous women, not only in Chocó but also in the country.
>
> (Interview with Jhon Jairo Tinay, 2022)

Joel Arturo Brincha, governor of the community of Citará de Unguía, concludes: "We want to lead justice training schools, but we want them to be led by women, as a strategy to prevent violence" (interview with Joel Arturo Brincha, 2022).

We also worked with the women of the Nükak people in order to empower them by strengthening their economy, that is, improving the production techniques of their crafts to make them more attractive to buyers. As mentioned by the geography teacher Mayra Gonzalez, of the team in Guaviare, "Patricia insisted on working on identity and self-esteem," two fundamental elements in the handicraft process with the Nükak because, as the designer and

anthropologist Andrés Huertas said, it was necessary to value the displacement and the difficulties of obtaining the Cumare palm for the elaboration of handles, baskets and hammocks. The sale of handicrafts as a form of subsistence requires the necessary learning to value the work and determine prices that compensate for the effort.

> Well, the women themselves are the ones who most practice the craft trade, so what we did was to get strategically involved in those tasks in which women felt confident and at ease, so it was a different way of transmitting knowledge. This works in two ways for the community, one, from the promotion and sustainable, fair and inclusive economic reactivation, from their knowledge, and the other as women's empowerment.
>
> (Interview with Nancy Millán, 2022)

María Alejandra Garavito, social communicator of the Nükak project to strengthen women artisans, reports from her experience, the evidence and results of the training processes developed in the department of Guaviare:

> During the training processes with the women of the Nükak people, the importance of strengthening handicrafts as a source, not only of economic income, but also as a means through which their culture and customs can continue and be transmitted to future generations and to those white people or people of other ethnic groups (Kawenes in the Nükak language), in order to avoid the extinction they have been facing.
>
> During each training workshop, the accompaniment from Akubadaura was based fundamentally on identifying the ancestral knowledge of the Nükak women with the objective of providing them with a new approach that would promote the leadership of the artisans within their community, since originally this Indigenous people has constituted women as a secondary subject, giving the spokesperson and leadership spaces to men. From these training spaces, Nükak artisan women began to call themselves as artisan leaders, wise women and to occupy the place previously occupied by men, as self-sufficient people who generate economic income for each of their families.
>
> On the other hand, in my experience with the women of the Nükak people and the accompaniment from Akubadaura, I have identified the structural transformations that have been achieved. The above, through financial, craft, and gender education, currently evidenced in spaces outside their settlements, in the urban area of San José del Guaviare, such as craft fairs, roundtables, and empowerment, where Nükak women show their leadership capacity in front of settlers, governmental organizations and other Indigenous communities. There they have generated dialogues that encourage the visibility of the problems faced by their people, the needs and demands they have and continue to undertake with traditional

> crafts focused on a fair purchase and sale based on their ancestral knowledge.
>
> (Interview with María Alejandra Garavito, 2022)

This path that we undertook, with both groups of women, proposes as a starting point our own cultural dynamics, our own ancestral communication, and from there elaborates what in the Western world are considered methodologies.

(3) **Moving Toward the Redistribution of Wealth**

In Colombia, in spite of the protection granted by the Constitution to Indigenous peoples, it cannot be said that there is recognition of the ancestral collectivity. Nor can it be said that our economic rights are respected when, in the government's budgetary execution, it is limited to low resources for Indigenous peoples. Even less are our social and cultural practices recognized when the matrix of spectacle pigeonholes us into exotic objects or poorly paid merchandise, and all this is possible because "colonialism does not reproduce a formless and kaleidoscopic heterogeneity of differences" (Rivera, 2018: 36).

By establishing general regulations that do not recognize or consider the particularities, the institutions end up revictimizing peoples such as the Nükak and the Emberá. Both are denied access to resources because they are not settled within their territory when the reason for not being there is precisely because of displacement due to violence.

The government also continues to violate these communities by ignoring them in decision-making. For example, the local institutions of Córdoba legalize the execution of resources corresponding to the Indigenous peoples that live there in coordination with the Zenú people, who are the majority and politically more representative, ignoring those of the Emberá de Cañaveral reservation, who are a minority; in the case of the Nükak, their forms of organization were not recognized.

Faced with these situations and impositions, such as the nature of representation in a single person and not collectively as is the functioning of Indigenous peoples, Akubadaura is a facilitator for peoples such as the Nükak to seek adaptive mechanisms, routes that do not violate their autonomy but that allow them to relate. It also provides knowledge about the General System of Royalties, the General System of Participations, the elaboration of Life Plans and projects, so that with these elements the communities and peoples have access to resources.

Therefore, Akubaduara delves into economic and redistributive justice because rights may be enshrined but the reality that these resources are executed for the benefit of the welfare of the people, continues to have the imperative that we must fight for this to be realized. Living, enjoying and enjoying the territory implies guaranteeing the resources and here the issue of redistribution is fundamental. In this sense, Ilich Ortiz, economist of the organization considers that it is:

> … of the utmost relevance to propose actions aimed at supporting productive initiatives of Indigenous peoples to strengthen their food sovereignty and the survival of ancestral forms of production, seeking to improve access to land, to public offers of support for production, and the financing of all processes associated with the production, distribution and commercialization chains.
>
> The aim is to influence the achievement of material conditions for greater autonomy and the allocation of adequate, sufficient and timely public resources to enable ethnic peoples, in their territories and in accordance with their customs and traditions, to choose their own collective course.[11]

Conclusion: Walking Toward Coexistence

The reality of Indigenous peoples is characterized by a continuous and serious violation of human rights despite the provisions of Article 7 of the Constitution, which recognizes Indigenous peoples as a collective subject of rights, and that was be believed to provide protection; however, in the last five years, after the Peace Agreement, according to the Indepaz report, published in December 2022,[12] more than 1,240 human rights defenders and leaders have been murdered. Of these, more than 336 were Indigenous leaders, that is 23%. In January 2022, Breiner David Cucuñame, a 14-year-old boy who accompanied the Indigenous Guard of Cauca, was murdered.

The Constitutional Court issued Ruling T 025 of 2004 and Order 004 of 2009, recognizing that in Colombia there were 34 Indigenous peoples at risk of physical and cultural extermination, a figure that by 2020 increased to 39 and we should note that about 35 peoples have less than 200 inhabitants. Among the communities suffering from these conditions are the Emberá and Nükak, who are also experiencing acculturation.

Precisely seeking to stop these violations, the ruling also ordered the development of a program to guarantee rights and an ethnic safeguard plan for each of these peoples, however, to date there has been minimal compliance, especially when the armed conflict continues without respect for the civilian population, confining or displacing communities, who upon reaching the cities do not find guarantees for their return. For example, in 2019, 95% of the Indigenous communities in Chocó found themselves confined to their communities, and experienced an increase in the recruitment of children and adolescents by armed groups. In terms of security, Indigenous people face armed conflict, environmental conflicts and structural racism.

We understand that moving toward peace requires addressing structural issues and therefore we participated in the construction of the Ethnic Chapter of the Peace Agreement and, as a result, we follow up on its fulfillment.

The corporation aims to materialize the line of "Governance for peace and reconciliation," one of the team's main concerns. The challenge is to make information an accessible tool for communities, as it is fundamental for their citizen participation. To achieve this, Akubadaura must democratize and

guarantee access to information and communication through various methodologies, such as pedagogy, exchanges of experiences, and talks with experts and discussion forums. In this process it is necessary to have a gender approach to include Indigenous women in the political agenda. Akubadaura must also strengthen its technical and strategic capacity to face current challenges, including the peace process with different armed groups.

The updating of its strategic plan allows Akubadaura to work on four strategic lines, which reflect part of the current agenda of the national Indigenous movement and the current context of the country. The lines of work are related to: 1 – Governance for Peace and Reconciliation, 2 – Territory, Climate Change, and Environmental Justice, 3 – Gender and Populations, 4 – Economic and Redistributive Justice. With these strategies, still under construction, from Akubadaura we are preparing for the new challenges of a country on the road to peacebuilding, with an important bet that points to Environmental Justice and Climate Change.

For the communities and for Akubadaura, peace becomes not only an ethical imperative, but the only alternative to guarantee the survival of the communities in their territories, as well as to recognize and respect the experiences of self-government and autonomy in territorial control developed by the Indigenous peoples and other social sectors of Colombia, as a contribution to peacebuilding. In this regard, we are in agreement with Bolaños, Chapter 9 in this volume, and his explanation of the need for different historically marginalized peoples to come together to fight for their rights. Just like in our case, self-governance, communication, and expression are key tools to seek justice and promote dialogue among different cultures and cosmovisions, challenging domination structures and promoting reciprocity.

Thus, one of the constant lines of work, which will continue to be promoted by the corporation, is the strengthening of women in the Indigenous territories. The role of women is key in the collective construction of the organizations, their empowerment in issues related to the knowledge of collective rights is something that strengthens the organizations. Akubadaura's commitment is to accompany women's organizations and programs, facilitating management capacity processes with the state and other external actors.

Akubadaura has managed to advance and position the work of education, training, empowering local leadership, and the defense of Indigenous rights, with emphasis on working with women and youth, through participatory methodologies and respectful of ethnic processes. Making a commitment to cross-cutting issues in the struggle of the Colombian Indigenous movement, such as territorial rights, access, management, and management of their own resources and those generated by the state; the defense of Prior Consultation, being a legal mechanism that guarantees not only the participation but also the autonomy of communities, the defense of women's rights and the right to the environment.

In a journey of more than 12 years, the Akubadaura Community of Jurists has managed to position its technical work and accompaniment in strengthening Indigenous governance on the national stage, showing important

advances in research and national and international advocacy on the issues of Prior Consultation and the defense of territorial rights, work done from a territorial approach marked by the conflict, and the presence of armed actors in the territories.

Akubadaura's work, mostly carried out by women, marks an important milestone in the participation of Indigenous women in the technical-professional discussion spaces, which gathers and encourages female leadership in communities and organizations, this fact is relevant as a starting point and breaks the patterns of ethnic leadership in the country.

Notes

1 Communications coordinator of Akubadaura Community of Jurists, 2021–2022.
2 Find more information at https://akubadaura.org/promotora-del-dialogo-interetnico-y-multicultural/.
3 More information at www.servindi.org/actualidad/27/09/2017/kankuama-ana-manuela-ochoa-arias-unica-indigena-magistrada-en-el-tribunal-de.
4 Quintín Lame, was the most influential Indigenous leader in the 20th century in Colombia and a promoter of Indigenist thought for the defense of ancestral rights, the inclusion of indigenous political representation in Congress and for being a motivation for Indigenous people to become interested in the study of law. The Lamista Movement, founded by his followers, followed Lame's thinking and sought to vindicate the rights of Indigenous peoples, which bore fruit in the 1991 Constitution. Among his proposals was the creation of a Republic governed by the Indigenous people to confront the great Colombian State. His self-taught vocation and continuous legal practice gave him the title of the first indigenous lawyer. https://akubadaura.org/catedra-indigena-manuel-quintin-lame/.
5 More information can be found at https://akubadaura.org/category/genero-y-poblaciones/.
6 Akubadaura Community of Jurists, 2020. "Redistributive justice and ethnic peoples." https://akubadaura.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Informe-Justicia-Redistributiva-y-pueblos-%C3%A9tnicos.pdf.
7 More information at https://akubadaura.org/historia/.
8 Communiqué of the Council of Traditional Authorities of the Nükak People "Mauro Munu." With the support of Akubadaura. https://akubadaura.org/cuarta-asamblea-de-autoridades-tradicionales-del-pueblo-nukak-mauro-munu/.
9 "Free, Prior and Informed Consultation (FPIC) is a fundamental right of ethnic peoples. By transitivity – being a fundamental right – it is enforceable and justiciable. FPIC is enforceable if the laws are clear and precise about the obligations of the State and who are the holders of this right. In turn, FPIC is justiciable in the events in which the obligations are breached, and therefore gives rise to legal claims either in domestic law or in international law. However, in Colombia, FPIC is still polysemic; that is, there are various interpretations and debates as to the scope and criteria to be applied." Read more: Scope and legal evolution of Free, Prior and Informed Consultation https://akubadaura.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/INFORME-Alcances-y-evolucion-juridica-del-derecho-a-la-consulta-previa-en-Colombia-1-1.pdf.
10 Rita Segato, "No patriarch will make the revolution," www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqdFtS208T8&ab_channel=RosaluxAndina.
11 Category: Economic and Redistributive Justice, Akubadaura: https://akubadaura.org/category/justicia-redistributiva/.
12 https://indepaz.org.co/lideres-sociales-defensores-de-dd-hh-y-firmantes-de-acuerdo-asesinados-en-2022/.

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7 Countering Modernity Through the Purko Maasai *Olpul* Healing Retreat

Kristin Hedges and Joseph Ole Kipila

The *Olpul* forest retreat is a ritual that has fascinated outsiders for over a century. One of the oldest written accounts by a foreigner dates back to the early 20th century (Merker, 1910). One clear point of fascination has been the large consumption of meat that occurs. While the consumption of meat is a key component of an *Olpul*, it is misleading to only focus on one of these elements. *Olpul* needs to be understood holistically, as a comprehensive community-based healing system that intertwines mind–body connection with a focus on physical, psychological, and spiritual healing. The essential component for success within the system is the communal relationships it fosters. The power of this healing retreat truly comes from community members taking time to spend together in the quiet forest focusing on supporting and healing a loved one which gives them hope to live. Our goal for writing this chapter was to articulate the holistic and communal mind–body connection that occurs within the *Opul* healing ceremony. It is important to recognize that while Indigenous Maasai are a well-known pastoral society in East Africa, this ethnic group is an extremely diverse community split across nations due to colonial impact in the region. In this chapter, we will be discussing the local expression of communalism through the practice of the *Olpul* ritual Purko, Maasai living in urban communities surrounding Narok, Kenya. This chapter contributes to this edited volume by discussing how a communal healing ritual can counter the stressors of modernity through gathering in the community in the forest, consuming meat and traditional medicine, and passing along ancestral knowledge. We want to begin offering the locally contextualized definitions of a few terms. We use "communal" in reference to sharing support and resources among wider community members. In this context, "individualism" refers to limiting support and resources to only the household level. Locally, "modernity" refers to the switch in livelihood from pastoralism to wage labor with increasing demands for consumer goods in the capitalist market and decreased reliance on traditional knowledge.

> The year was 2018, Joseph and Kristin sat in the early morning in the warm kitchen next to the morning fire on his homestead in Naisuya, situated at the foot of the Mau Forest in Narok, Kenya. As smoke from the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-10

cooking fire filled the air, we slowly sipped on a sweet cup of Chai. We started talking about the different pressures that Maasai families are faced with. Joseph discussed the struggles one of his brothers recently faced. His brother's child had been in the hospital and they lived far away from Naisuya. Since land was so scarce in Naisuya, their father bought his brother land far away. While this allowed him the ability to earn a higher income by being on more land, it also meant being separated from his extended family. When his child got sick this also meant he had less family support to help while they were in the hospital. The bills started piling up, his brother sold cattle to try to pay some of the bills, but debt increased daily. Tragically the child died. The grief of losing a child was also impacted by medical debt and income loss, all of this weighed heavily on his brother and was beginning to significantly impact his health.

And he didn't have that money. The child passed away. And he already used a lot of his resources, so he did not have his child or his wealth. So, we saw as if he was seeing the end of life, what next, he didn't have a child, he didn't have animals, the wealth.

The brothers were very concerned seeing this continuing burden that their sibling was carrying so they organized a Maasai *Olpul* healing ceremony. The primary goal of organizing an *Olpul* was to give him a chance to take a break from this stress, walk away, retreat to the forest, and focus on nutritional and medicinal consumption. However, Joseph emphasized, that just as important as the nutritional and medicinal consumption was the communal social support. Being surrounded by loved ones who were also taking time out of their now busy lives to sit, to talk, to counsel, to pray, to sing, and be in community together. This was the magic of *Olpul* healing retreat that continues today.

Relationship Context

Joseph and Kristin have been working together for the past 23 years on various community-based projects. Collaboration throughout the production of knowledge has been a key focus at each level and throughout all projects, including this chapter. Due to limited access to electricity and the internet in Narok, Joseph asked Kristin to take the lead role in writing this chapter. To understand the analytic focus of this chapter it is important to begin with a bit of reflexivity of the relationship between Joseph (JK) and Kristin (KH).

JK: I requested a Peace Corps Volunteer because there are so many health-related issues. Then, in 2000, we talked of community development. And community development without health-related education is not complete. Then I said I really need a health technician. So, that is why I requested a public health volunteer, because by then I had the natural resource forester volunteer and business volunteer, so there was this sector that was lacking. I remember

traveling to the Peace Corps training center; after having breakfast, I was told okay we are going to a cross-culture talk. And after the class, then I was told the students are going three days from now, they have already been assigned stations. And I also wanted to see who I got. So, I saw your face. Your face. I don't know, you were sitting in the middle row, almost in the front, but not really the front. That is now when we met after, then I saw you, and I saw a very faithful face. And I said okay, I'll be able to work with this one. She is not complicated. So, for sure, I got interested in you. By then the Peace Corps had also given me the ability to be a supervisor. And for sure, we have continued working together since.

KH: I moved to Kenya as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the public health sector in May of 2000. Peace Corps Kenya's program has in-country training for three months before being sworn in as volunteers. For those three months I lived with a family and Naivasha Kenya. The training focused primarily on the Ki-Swahili language and educational training for the sector you were assigned to. I was a public health volunteer primarily tasked with HIV/AIDS education and awareness. About one fourth of the way into the training we found out our assigned sites. I learned I would be moving to Narok, Kenya, a district primarily occupied by the Maasai ethnic group. Halfway through our 12-week training our future site supervisors came to the training center to meet us. Each of us trainees were extremely nervous that day to meet our Kenyan supervisors and counterparts. As I anxiously awaited in the training center, in walked Joseph. With one introduction my nerves were settled, his kind, gracious, and large smile quickly put me at ease. From that day forward Joseph has been a mentor, guide, and counterpart. We have continued to work together long past my Peace Corps days on numerous projects all revolved around community health.

Historical Context of *Olpul*

The *Olpul* healing retreat practiced by the Massai of East Africa is a well-known example of holistic Indigenous primary healthcare (Nankaya et al., 2019; Burdford et al., 2001). During this time, usually, men will construct a temporary dwelling in the forest and reside at this location for a few weeks. Merker (1910) was one of the earlier written accounts drawing attention to the ritual of *Olpul* (sometimes spelled *Orpul* or *Olbul*, depending on the local dialect of Maa language, we use *Olpul* as is common for Purko Maasai). Different researchers have focused on individual components of the ceremony such as medicinal plants (Merker, 1910; Mallett, 1923) or preparation for circumcision (Cermak, 2013; Ole Saitoti & Beckwith, 1980; Ole Saibull & Carr, 1981). The large consumption of meat has been a focus of many researchers (Århem, 1989; Thomson, 1959; Sharman, 1979). Århem (1989) even used the term "meat-eating feast" to describe *Olpul*. As Burford et al. (2001) stated "the most noticeable feature of the ritual is the consumption of vast quantities of meat" (547).

It is important to place the *Olpul* healing ritual within the overall Maasai health system. In general, Maasai disease etiology attributes illnesses to pollutants that block or inhibit digestion (Bussman et al., 2006). Many prescribed treatments are herbal purgatives with the goal of cleansing the patient (Bussman et al., 2006). Beyond treatments for illness a large component of Maasai ethnomedicine is comprised of preventive health (Johns et al., 1999; Kiringe, 2005; Kimondo et al., 2015). This holistic healthcare model is not reacting to illness only, instead it is comprised of regularly consuming herbal treatments through "soups" or milk in order to build up a person's overall health (Johns et al., 1999; Kimondo et al., 2015; Maundu et al., 2001; Orech & Schwartz, 2017). The important connection to *Olpul* is the mode of transmission for consuming these important herbal treatments. Consuming meat and traditional herbal medicine has always happened on a regular basis, outside of *Olpul*. Historically a primary mode of processing and consuming traditional medicine within a Maasai community is during communal slaughters at the manyatta. The "soups" are made by cooking the fat and made of a slaughtered animal. Currently, since living on individual plots this is done at the household level (Hedges et al., 2020), many times matching the school schedule, which limits it to three times per year during the school breaks (Hedges & Ole Kipila, 2022). The herbs are cooked with animal meat and fat and consumed for building strength and boosting the immune system.

Olpul goes beyond the regular consumption of meat and traditional medicine for preventive health purposes, there is a focused reason for conducting an *Olpul*. Additionally, there is a higher consumption level of meat and herbs and it is usually conducted in the forest at the community level. Early descriptions of *Olpul* described this ritual as "only for men," however, recent publications in collaboration with Maasai authors have described how women and children have always been involved in *Olpul* healing ceremonies (Burford et al., 2001). While many descriptions of *Olpul* in the literature focus only on men's participation, there are smaller, similar ceremonies that happen closer to home in which men play the active role of preparing herbal soup and meat for women and children (Hedges & Ole Kipila, 2021).

There have been numerous shifts within Maasai culture that have impacted the time and resources available to participate in *Olpul* healing retreats. One of the most dramatic shifts in lifestyle is linked to urbanization connected to loss of land throughout Maasailand, which can be traced from historical colonial acts of land tenure shifts. Loss of communal land has resulted in incremental transitions to forced sedentary lifestyles which have threatened the sustainability of pastoralism as a mode of livelihood (Serneels et al., 2001; Hedges et al., 2020) and forced families to shift to wage labor work in urban areas. Living an urban lifestyle limits the time a person has to go for an *Olpul* forest retreat and resources for a retreat without owning livestock. Even 20 years ago, Burford et al. (2001) documented an increase in Maasai employed in urban areas returning home to their village to attend *Olpul*.

Joseph and Kristin had the opportunity to sit down at his house in Naisuya on May 7, 2023, to reflect on the process of *Olpul* healing retreat and shifts in

the practice over his lifetime. Correcting misrepresentations and highlighting the continuation of the ritual within contemporary times was our priority for writing this chapter

JK: Yeah. *Olpul* had always been, since time immemorial, the Maasai have had that as a system of healing and giving hope to the sick. So the essence of *Olpul* is to give hope to live, when one has seen the grips of death or thinking that he is going to do. *Olpul* itself is a gathering where people, between 4 and 5, up to even 15, contribute their cattle. Fat bulls, fat sheep, or fat goat. They go and slaughter them in a specific place, far from any other noise … But *Olpul* itself, anyone can go to *Olpul*, elders, men, youth, children, women. People have never written that women go to *Olpul*, children go to *Olpul*. But they go, except that children and women do not reside in that place. They just go during the day. Stay the whole day there, from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, then they go back home. On condition that they also don't eat any other food.

KH: That is the important part?

JK: That is the important part. Yeah, so everyone goes to *Olpul*. The bottom line of *Olpul* is to help build strength and relieve stress-related problems. Or a prolonged sickness and assistance with recovery. Most cases you find that people who have gone through several stages of sickness, other than being sick, their mental health also deteriorates with them. So, *Olpul* is one of those places that help people have hope in life.

JK: Far from any other noise. What is so important is closeness to the water, closeness to the firewood, and a quiet place, where there will be no interruption whatsoever. Unless one of the people staying there seeks interruption outside. So, *Olpul* itself is a place where people go and take meat, they combine meat with herbal medicine … So, *Olpul* is a place that people go and they eat meat, drink soup, drink that herbal medicine, exclusively, without mixing anything. Without any other food whatsoever. We do believe that once you have soup alone, and meat alone, for two days then your mind will be sobering, your mind will rest, and start focusing on real issues.

KH: So, It helps with your mental health along with your physical health?

JK: Yes, mental health along with physical health. So, that is how it is.

The power of an *Olpul* healing retreat is the focus on the mind–body connection within community support. It is a gathering of your community members to support you physically, mentally, and socially. Trusted family and friends have taken time and resources of out their busy lives to support a loved one and give "hope to live." While the consumption of meat and herbal soup can heal the body physically, that is only the beginning because next the mind needs rest and healing. Retreating to the forest gives people a chance for rest and quiet, to be away from outside interruptions. This communal resource is open to all genders and ages.

Shifts in Land: From Communal to Private Property

Currently, the Maasai occupy less than two-thirds of their original pre-colonial territory (Spear & Waller, 1993). During British Colonial rule, the Maasai were forced onto reserves on the southern border of Kenya. Loss of land continued even after independence, due in large part to changes in tenure systems. In 1964, the newly formed independent nation of Kenya subdivided Native reserves into group ranches (Graham, 1989). The government enacted the Group Ranches Act that legalized the ownership and occupation of land by a group of people (Republic of Kenya, 1970). One of the government's goals was to shift the nomadic pastoralist group to a commercial livestock production system (Graham, 1989). Land privatization polices have since encouraged further sub-division of group ranches onto individual family plots. By 2010, over 80% of Narok District group ranches had been sub-divided (Gicheru et al., 2012). In Naisuya, the home village of Joseph, the group sub-divided the property in 1975. While the group ranch was sub-divided the property title was held in trust until 2021, years later this acted as a protective factor against selling the land. For the past two decades, Narok Town has grown substantially in large part due to the construction of a highway that serves as the main thoroughfare connecting Nairobi to western Kenya. The rapid explosion of growth in Narok Town has resulted in a capitalist headquarters with pressure on the land. Although Galaty (2013) has questioned the legality of land sales, Narok Town's increasing urban sprawl puts increasing pressure on families who face the decision of whether or not to sell their land. Within many families and communities, selling their land has become a survival strategy to lift themselves out of decades of impoverished livelihoods.

In Narok District, with over 80% of group ranches have been sub-divided (Gicheru, 2012) this has led to shifts in economic strategies, with more families living on individual plots of land, relying on wage labor for income (Homewood et al., 2009), and seeking new ways to participate in the cash economy (Serneels et al., 2009). Increased dependence on wage labor and the cash economy has also impacted family dynamics, as children are increasingly attending day and secondary schools rather than participating in traditional livelihoods (Hedges et al., 2020). The drastic historical and political shift in land tenure resulted in a drastic cultural shift. Additionally, shifting climate and unexpected weather patterns over the past 30 years has made sustainability of pastoralism as a mode of livelihood difficult. Sending younger Maasai to urban centers searching for wage labor work.

In Purko Maasai communities, this became one "push" factor for migrating to urban centers and turning toward wage labor work for subsistence (Burn-Silver, 2009). With increasing demand to enter the wage labor economy, there was an increasing need for formal education. Each of these shifts in political land tenure, increasing reliance on wage labor, and increasing need for formal education all coalesced in reduced time in rural homes. These changes in land tenure and locality have limited time spent in rural home areas (Hedges et al.,

2020). Living on individual plots has significantly impacted many aspects of Maasai culture. For some, individual identity and social progression led to easier living on a privately owned plot. Many others lost the social security of communal living (Hedges et al., 2020).

With more and more Purko Maasai living away from their rural homes, working wage labor jobs in urban centers, and living as a nuclear family unit, there has been increased stressors that come with modernity based on a capitalist economy. These harms of modernity include stressors such as paying rent, accessing food, cost of childcare, limited leisure time, etc. In conversation with elders, the temporal references are described as the Manyatta (communal living) days and after. Throughout all of these drastic shifts to a modern capitalist model in which cash is essential to obtain resources, a continuing communal practice is the *Olpul* healing retreat. However, while *Olpul* is a continued practice the shift to labor positions has impacted who can go and for how long. Joseph reflected:

JK: Yeah, it happened [changes to *Olpul*] because people are more preoccupied. People are more thinking of finding money, money, money. So, they don't have that time of going to *Olpul*. Now there is a constant daily need for cash. That means if you are the breadwinner of a family, you can't go and stay more than five days. Yes, so that is what is actually limited. But still, it is happening. So despite the current engagements, still people go there for a purpose.

Contemporary Continuation

Historically one function of *Olpul* was used by Moran warriors to prepare, build strength, and map out raiding parties. The quiet retreat into the forest allowed for no interruptions and focus time to prepare as a group how to move ahead with their plans. In this way the retreat gave hope to the warriors for a successful raid.

JK: A long time ago, groups of youth went to *Olpul* to strategize on how to raid other communities. To strategize on how to invade. Because you can't go to war when everyone knows you are going because you will be stopped, information will leak out. So, the only place to go to think of those issues is to go to a secret place, strategize, map out, know what you will do. So, that you raid a certain community.

Contemporarily the benefits of the quiet retreat into the forest are the same. The reasons for needing the retreat have shifted. The time allows for no interruptions and focus time to prepare as a group how to move ahead in life with the increasing spread of capitalism. In this way, the retreat continues to give hope to the community for succeeding in life. It continues as "communal

ways to build life plans," as discussed in the introduction, within this ever-changing landscape. During these contemporary times, Maasai find themselves facing urban afflictions needing the *Olpul* forest retreat to remove contemporary toxins or "harms of modernity" as discussed in the introduction. Three examples Joseph talked about was the side effects of taking Western biomedicine, rising rates of alcoholism, and stressful lives of the urban lifestyle

JK: Yes, side effects [Western biomedicine], so to remove out that acidity or those chemicals, you have to drink soup to remove those medicines. We believe, I believe, that most medicines are harmful to the body and I need to flush them out by going to *Olpul*.

While the consumption of meat, fat, and herbal soup is a key focus of the healing ceremony, just as important, if not more important, is the component of "retreat" from daily stressors. The forest is the ideal place to hold *Olpul*, because in the forest it is easier to limit interruptions. However, if a person is too ill to go to the forest, *Olpul* can be conducted at home as long as the entire community commits to "retreat" from distractions. In the modern day, those distractions tend to come from TV, radio, and cell phones. There is an increasing use of *Olpul* being used to treat the side effects of Western biomedicine with the continued focus has been on mind–body healing of the trauma that the patient underwent. While Western biomedicine is readily available in this area, many families use a form of medical pluralism. Community members will begin using traditional medicine, if an illness does not resolve they may switch over to biomedical pharmaceuticals to treat the illness. However, in our research documenting Maasai traditional medicine (Hedges & Kipila, in process), we have had interviewees repeatedly tell us the side effects of biomedicine are too harsh on their bodies. After taking Western biomedicine to heal from an infection, many community members return to traditional medicine at the household level to heal from the side effects. In extended cases of illness in which the patient has to take pharmaceuticals for an extended time, *Olpul* is organized to heal from long-term use.

JK: My own wife, Agnes Nootetian Kipila, was diagnosed with stage 1 throat cancer in early 2020. She went through six months of chemotherapy and radiation treatment in Nairobi. She completed treatment and returned home at the end of April 2021. Thankfully she has been cancer-free since that time. However, the side effects of the cancer treatment significantly impacted her body. We took two weeks to organize a home-based *Olpul* healing retreat for her. A home-based *Olpul* is common when the focus is on women. We called her mother and daughters to come and support her. We slaughtered four goats and cooked the fat with herbal medicine. We made sure to not turn on the TV or radio to ensure that was quiet and no distractions from of news of current events. Being home, surrounded by loving family, and fed soup with medicine, helps her significantly in her road to recovery, both physically and mentally.

Other examples of contemporary use revolve around new issues that have developed from living in urban centers, surrounded by capitalist markets, such as stress management and rising rates of alcoholism.

KH: So even if they don't go to *Olpul* as much, because maybe they are pre-occupied with their jobs or money, they still go. Before when we have talked you said that living in town, having all the bills, it brings a lot of stress. That's the town life; sometimes people come back to do *Olpul* to help with the stress of town life.

JK: Exactly. My friend and I, I might not have told you, but a friend of mine who knows nothing about *Olpul* wanted us to facilitate the retreat with the slaughter and cooking for them. So we benefited by being able to participate fully in the *Opul*. They really wanted help. One was told they should stop drinking, so they wanted a way out, two weeks without seeing any alcohol. So, he wanted to go out, and the only way out was to go to the forest. To go far away from town to the quiet forest, we explained they must not bring their cell phones to ensure no distractions and keep the focus on healing. The other man was struggling with gout, he had pain all over, he also thought that *Olpul* would help. And definitely it helped. For the first two days, the one who was drunk couldn't stop shaking in the morning. Two days, we made him vomit, we induced him to vomit, and then we again induced diarrhea. Then we started giving him the soup. We weren't sure he could take meat without throwing up. So, we slowly gave him small bits of meat. They eventually came out okay, after two weeks.

JK: So, people do recruit other people to go and do *Olpul* for them, because they do not know which part of the meat is boiled, which part is cooked.

KH: Were they Maasai?

JK: Yes, they are Maasai, but they live in town, they have never attended an *Opul*. They even don't know how to remove the front leg, separate them. Because every part of a sheep or cow has a name. So, there are several names, several meats that have names, and they are numbered to last four days. So, say in the arm, there is the upper and the lower, there is that meat attaching it. So, that lasts people one day. The other leg one day. So, if you don't know how to cut them, you won't have enough meat to cover the days it was calculated for. So, people, I am one of those people who have been recruited to do *Olpul*. So, people in town just get fed up with life in town and seek refuge in the rural forest. Seek *Olpul*.

Land privatization policies highly encouraged sub-division of group ranches, which meant a shift from living communally among 20 to 30 families on a manyatta to living on individual plots among just your nuclear family. The increased reliance on wage labour, and consequential move to urban centers, has resulted in a cultural shift to individualism in labor tasks and resources are shared within the nuclear family only. Urban living has a completely different pace of life, impacting all components of life. Similar to what Dorothy

Hodgson has found among Maasai in Tanzania, significant changes over time have shifted "leisure time" to "labor time" (Hodgson, 2016). The increased urban stress and decreased "leisure time" has resulted in some urban Maasai seeking *Olpul*. Additionally, In our own research, the temporal shift in time within the urban Maasai community has impacted the transmission of traditional medicinal knowledge from one generation to the next (Hedges et al., 2020) and has limited the number of slaughters and consumption rates of traditional medicine (Hedges & Kipila, 2021). Additionally, the urban lifestyle brings new and different stressors (i.e., dependence on cash income, noise, air pollution, and separation from extended family).

JK: Yeah, they are now all living on their own. Yeah. Now compared now, there is this now the issues of individualistic life. I have my home here, my brother has his home there, so we share literally nothing. The only place we share is the river, when we take our cattle to the river because we have one drinking spot. Other than that place, they stay alone. Anybody else stays alone. There is that lack of communal togetherness. A neighbor could be a neighbor, but you can even go to market before you pass by to say hello. *There is a very big shift in the Maa I knew and the Maa I am now*.

Yet still, when you are called from your individual properties or urban houses to come and participate in *Olpul* to support a friend or family who is struggling, you come. The Maasai value of relational power as a key strength to any healing is evident in *Olpul*. It is your closest friends and families investing their individual time and money into the community ritual. If you don't have your own fat livestock to contribute you must buy a fat sheep, goat, or cow. The importance is on the fat of the animal because the herbal medicine must be cooked with fat. So, it is either contributing your own wealth in the form of livestock or your wealth to purchase livestock. And the minimum amount of time is five days in the forest. The secluded location of *Olpul* is essential so that all participants can focus on the task ahead of healing.

KH: But, is *Olpul* still happening?

JK: Yeah, *Olpul* is still happening. *Olpul* is happening. That is why I told you Olpul is happening in the selected target group. So, you feel there is that need. You have the same need as mine, I have the same need as you. So, if one could, can we … it is also what you wanted, what I wanted, we find ourselves the same, doing it, because we have the same common need.

KH: It is coming together?

JK: Yeah, coming together.

KH: In a way that living on individual plots can't

JK: Yeah, yeah. So, you find yourself that you really want to go refuge. To the old ways.

KH: Do you think that is it? The forest retreat is a refuge to the old days?

JK: Yes!
KH: Those days when you were still communal?
JK: Yeah. Because in *Olpul* you talk of the old days. There is no new topics you are going to talk about. Maybe I have gone almost ten times, ten different *Olpuls*, with different people, and there is nothing ever been said of the present. It is the *Olpul* old days. All old days. We are reminded, when we are seated and discussing things during the *Opul*, trying to map out our current problems, that the old lessons are still relevant and can teach us. We wish the good old days would return.
KH: It is a time to remember and be together
JK: Yeah! Yeah!
KH: Like the old days?
JK: Yeah, like the old days.

Survivance: Communal Values in Modern Times

The struggle of Maasai identity is real in the midst of so many changes, "*There is a very big shift in the Maa I knew and the Maa I am now*" (Joesph Ole Kipila – Conversation about *Olpul*, May 7, 2023). Even amidst these clear struggles of Maasai identity in a modern world, the Maasai value of healing within the relational lifeways persists in contemporary times through *Olpul*. In our research, we have documented that regular slaughters and consumption of medicinal plants have reduced due to living on individual plots versus a communal manyatta (Hedges & Ole Kipila, 2021). Since the primary mode of consuming medicinal plants happens during the processing of slaughtered livestock, this reduction has impacted the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next (Hedges et al., 2020). "There is that lack of communal togetherness" (Joesph Ole Kipila – Conversation about *Olpul* May 7, 2023). The struggle to find daily communal relationships is present in everyone's minds as the land and neighbors continue shifting during the present era of "land grabs." However, at the same time, *Olpul* healing retreats continue to happen. Retreating to the forest to participate in *Olpul* gives people the "communal togetherness" that is hard to find in a modern capitalist world. This mechanism of communalism continues to carry Maasai values of the land and mind–body healing through relations persists. Within the retreat itself, ancestral knowledge is passed down to the next generation through stories and songs. This is a perfect case study of how the individual self and community are not at odds; instead coexist and inform values simultaneously in different venues (Smith-Morris, 2019). This retreat continues among the Purko Maasai, while its uses at have been shifting from traditional to meet contemporary needs.

Communal healing is a key part of Maasai identity. This is exemplified through slaughtering livestock together, processing meat and traditional medicine, and consumption as a community. These examples can be found across the lifespan from healing young mothers after childbirth, circumcision of adolescents, to celebrating new marriages. While many of these mentioned

examples now happen at the individual household level, *Olpul* continues to happen at the community level, reinforcing belonging and resisting modernity through retaining *Olpul* as a communal healing practice. Within the *Olpul* healing retreat, it is the ancestral knowledge through historical stories and songs that guide the healing process. It is these ancestral teachings and relationship lifeways that are a key component to successful healing. Contemporarily *Olpul* is being used as a mechanism to counter the stressors of modernity, harms of modernity. As Burford et al. cited "Illnesses with a psychosomatic basis, or those aggravated by stress or fatigue, are likely to respond well to the relaxed and supportive atmosphere of *Orpul*" (Burford et al., 2001: 549). It is important to understand *Olpul* ritual holistically; it is a combination of psychological, biological, and spirituality that offers the power of healing. As Århem (1989) described "to be part of a community implies, for the Maasai, cooperation and sharing, congeniality and generosity" (p. 9). Living in an urban center, working wage labor jobs, has altered many components of "community" away from the urban Maasai, returning to their rural homes to participate in an *Olpul* is a way of restoring communal benefits. "To eat meat together has to the Maasai the very explicit connotation of peace and unity" (Arhem, 1989: 9). The focus of *Olpul* giving "hope to live" for handling modern Maasai life, parallels the notion of "Living Well" discussed in Chapter 5. Uitoto et al. describe within their Amazonian community, intercultural communalism has resulted in the notion of "Living Well" that supports community members' healing and prevention.

The ability to hold an *Olpul* is an example of survivance in itself. The key needed components for *Olpul* are fat livestock, access to water, and access to a quiet place. The Maasai resisted the colonial government's attempts to shift into a commercial livestock production system (Graham, 1989). It is through generations of resistance to commercial livestock production and continued transmission of ancestral knowledge that has allowed the survival of *Olpul* healing retreat. Each *Olpul* held offers the chance to pass the knowledge to the next generation, arguably the most "important practice of communalism" (Introduction in this volume).

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Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
Format: 234_x_156_mm_(6.14_x_9.21) (156 × 234 mm); Style: A; Font:
Sabon;
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8 Who "Communitizes" Whom? The Countercommunal Models of the Forager Nayaka and Modern India

Nurit Bird-David

Small-scale Indigenous communities exist today within large-scale nation-states. They are increasingly subjected to the state's political administration of collective identities, guided by Modernity's ideas of society, ethnic group, and communal identity, which developed during the modern era (19th–20th centuries) as part of a mindset summed up by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman as "modern order-making project" that aims to order the world through separations, categories, and binaries (Bauman, 1995: 135).

In this chapter, drawing on my long-term involvement with a forest foraging people (known as Nayaka or Kattunayaka; *kattu* means forest) living on the slopes of South India's Nilgiri Hills, I attempt to explore other "modes of being many." I use this general term to create space for going beyond the currently dominant senses, and shades of senses, of "society," "group," "collective," and "communal." I use it to unsettle any inclination to regard "collective" and "group" as universal, simple givens, and to open a door for exploring indigenous alternatives as multiple and diverse processes that are always in the making. I examine alternative models of what I will dub "communitizing," a term that calls attention to the fact that we are dealing with processual projects – that is, communities as something that participants create and form, shaping their own ideas and models of them. My purpose in this chapter (following my previous work: Bird-David, 2017a, 2017b) is to elucidate a forager mode of "being many" that counters the ruling state's mode, which threatens to change it. I maintain broadly that we want to recognize and learn from indigenous projects and models of "being many," of "being community," both for our own sake and our unfolding future, and for their sake as they battle with their respective nations and the global world that reaches and alters their lives.

In the nature of the discipline, anthropologists study indigenous communities within large-scale frameworks of inquiry. Motivated by these frameworks and dependent on them for their careers, they adjust the results of their close work with intimate communities to fit the frameworks. Studying indigenous modes of "being community" is no exception; moreover, it is even more susceptible to large-scale biases (Bird-David, 2017a). My project is therefore paradoxical in that it tries to examine alternative models of small

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-11

Indigenous communities within large-scale frameworks. This chapter, for example, develops work presented at a large American Anthropological Association conference held in a large American city. I write this in Israel, send it to the editors in the US, who send this chapter, and chapters by my co-writers written in far parts of the world, to anonymous referees and then on to commercial production and global marketing. No doubt my project of writing about the communal mode of an intimate hunter–gatherer community within this framework is paradoxical, yet it is not impossible, and it is needed, as I hope to show in this chapter.

True, as anthropologists we are trying to figure out alternative group models, while the impetus, terms, and ontological framework of our inquiry are deeply embedded within Modernity's framework and sensibilities. Also true is that anyone identifying small communities by ethnonyms, and inevitably by members' common traits – geographic location, language, culture, descent, ethnonym, and so on – builds from the start on Modernity's ontological configurations of whole and parts, imagined communities, nation-states, category and members, identity/alterity, and so on (e.g., see Strathern, 1992; Anderson, 1991; Bauman, 1995; Baumann & Gingrich, 2005; cf. Bird-David, 2017b). And true, this approach implicitly premises and perpetuates a model of given separate individuals sharing the same identity, however defined, as part of, and the condition for, constituting a "group." While all of this is true, I believe that by recognizing the paradoxical nature of our anthropological inquiry we can partly overcome it – in the same way that anthropology has always started pursuing other lifeways through its Western (including capitalist, individualist, colonialist, and neocolonialist) terms, interests, and perspectives. The importance of conceptually and practically exploring the richness of human ways of configuring "many beings together" justifies taking on this challenge.

In this chapter I offer an anthropological conceptualization of what I learned from and experienced with the forest people with whom, as a major part of my research, I lived, and who incorporated me into their midst as a "daughter" (in their sense of daughter). My conceptualization attempts to convey their complex and challenging notions of "being community" in terms that my readers can understand (an act of translation that has its limits). I previously examined manifold aspects of their lifeways, culture, epistemology, and ontology, ranging from their animistic perception of their environment through their attitude toward children and concepts of illness, to their mode of "being many." These people had not been ethnographically studied prior to my work with them beginning in the late 1970s. Yet they live on the lower slopes of the Nilgiri Hills, a district that has attracted an extraordinary volume of administrative and scholarly attention since the early 19th century (see Hockings, 1996). Before then, the Nilgiri had been relatively isolated from the inhabitants of the plains surrounding the steep Nilgiri Hills, people of India and colonialists alike, because the belt of forests at the foothills of the Nilgiri was known to be malarial, and because the tops of the steep hills were seldom visible,

usually hidden by clouds. In 1819 two British explorers climbed the hills and published a letter in *The Madras Courier* (February 23, 1819) to report their surprise and delight at finding in the midst of the clouds a rolling countryside reminiscent of their cool English countryside. After this "discovery," rapid British colonization of the hills began, and in its wake a migration of Indian people from the plains to the hills. Convalescent homes were built for military personnel and missionaries. The seat of the government of the Madras Presidency moved to the hills every year for six months. Tea and coffee were planted on the plateau, then expanded down the slopes. A principal hill station, Ootacamund, was built and became the main health and recreational resort for Europeans in South India, as well as a major site for the administrative, military, and social headquarters of British rule. Consequently, the Nilgiri tribal inhabitants were repeatedly surveyed and mapped by explorers and British administrators, and some of them were later studied by anthropologists who contextualized their study within overviews of the hills' tribal scene.

Based on these reports and studies, the Nilgiri forager Nayaka/Kattunayaka were included by the Government of India in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. This list is the basis for affirmative action toward "Scheduled Tribes," including the reservation of government jobs and places in higher education. A flood of claims for this tribal identity began, spreading well beyond the Nilgiri Hills and their forager dwellers. Claims to their "identity" were fought in court, with local anthropologists providing specialists' reports (see examples below). One claim reached the Supreme Court in New Delhi. The rapidly growing number and geographical spread of these claims eventually led to a central government investigation. Efforts in independent India to control affirmative action toward the foragers, much like the efforts in colonial times to survey the Nilgiri tribes, provide fruitful contexts for exploring three communitizing projects: colonial, republican, and forager. The first two are modern variants, and the third is a counter-forager mode.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine the colonial phase. In the second, I examine independent India's evolving approach as it continues to deal with the flood of claims for recognizing tribal identity in a bid for the attendant state's benefits. In the third part, I elucidate the forager mode of being many. In the conclusion, I abstract from these discussions two countermodels of communitization, dubbing them "classificatory" and "connective," and outline directions for developing their study.

Colonial India's Project of Grouping Tribal People

After the Nilgiri Hills were "discovered" and colonized by the British, their local tribal populations became a popular object of exploration and identification. Of particular interest were the colorful populations living at the high altitudes: the pastoralist Toda with their polygyny and red-white-and-black cloths, and the agriculturalist Badaga with their elaborate rituals. Driven by assuming, without proof, that people live in ethnic groups, the observers

repeatedly tried to name and distinguish between the forest people at the lower elevations. A few examples suffice to give the gist of the observers' flawed attempts, based on assuming that people live in bounded and named groups. Despite their field observations and what the local people told them, the observers I name below persisted in their efforts to apply their model of separate collectives/groups – identified by ethnonyms and distinguished from one another – to the local tribal populations. For lack of space, I provide only a few of many examples.

James Wilkinson Breeks's impressive report *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments in the Nilagiris* (Breeks, 1873) is an excellent example of the oversimplified nature of British scientific views. Breeks entered the Madras civil service in 1849, rose through the ranks to the position of private secretary to the governor of Madras, married the governor's daughter, and took the new position of the commissionaire of the Nilgiris.[1] He traveled widely with his wife in the Nilgiris and wrote his monumental report, which was edited posthumously by his widow. In the report, he dwells on the hunter–gatherer Kurumba, struggling to figure out their divisions. He writes: "It is difficult to get a complete account of the tribal divisions recognised by them. One man will name you one (his own); another two divisions; another three, and so on" (p. 48). Moreover, he continues, they lived so dispersed over the slopes and base of the hills "that the inhabitants of one locality know nothing of those at a distance" (p. 50). This did not deter his efforts to identify their divisions by ethnic names. On the basis of names given to him by one "headman," and despite all the signs that these people may not have perceived themselves in this way, he proposes four divisions: Botta Kurumbas, Kambale Kurumbas, Mullu Kurumbas, and Anda Kurumbas (p. 48).

H. B. Grigg, also of the Indian civil service, published his massive edited handbook *A Manual of the Nilagiri District in the Madras Presidency* (Grigg, 1880). He reports the local lack of knowledge about their societies in fewer words than Breeks, stating that "they are said to have no traditions of any kind" (p. 213). All the same, he figured out six divisions of the "Kurumbas," and names them – Eda Kurumbas, Karmadiya Kurumbas, Kurumbas Proper, Kurumba Okkibiga, Male Kurumbas, and Pal Kurumbas (p. 210) – describing six instead of four divisions, with each name differing from the names Breeks had reported but seven years earlier.

A new edition of the *Manual*, edited by W. Francis and published in 1908, serves as my third and last example. By that time, administrative and colonial presence had expanded to the Wynad-Nilgiris on the lower hills of the Nilgiris, closer to the forests where the foraging populations I studied lived. Some of the forests were cleared and planted with coffee, tea, and rubber. The closer access to these peoples did not change the approach or the attempt to sort them out by named kinds/groups. Francis distinguished between three kinds of Kurumbas: the Kurumbas "proper" of the plateau, the Ur Kurumbas, and the Jen Kurumbas, also named by him Shola Naikan (*shola* means forest) of the Wynaad.

These three of many attempts to collectively categorize, classify, and list the Nilgiri tribal populations express the observers' models and projects of communitizing people. Their projects and models identify individuals as members of a community, understood as a group/class/category of sorts. The members of these collectivities, in their models, share traits, which is what counts – not their "being-with" or even just "knowing" each other. As I put it elsewhere (Bird-David, 2017a), what counts is that the members are alike, not that they like each other. Therefore, their spatial spread and number are not limited, and outside observers can communitize them by choosing the traits that (for the observers) determine whether or not an individual belongs to the community and is "like" its other members. Possibly, some individual civil servants of the British Empire did as best they could, literally risking their lives wandering through the region in their efforts to understand and map the composition of local populations. However, through such models, they served the colonial mechanism of approaching and governing tribal people. Their own cultural and ontological tenets drove their work, reflecting the needs of large-scale knowledge and governance. Their assumptions mattered for their quest more than local perspectives, local scales, and local histories.

The model driving these three (and other) undertakings continued to drive the mammoth Census of India throughout the subcontinent, reaching a national scale by the 1860s. The census was conducted prior to independence, from 1865 to 1941, once every ten years, and was continued in the same format after independence. Sixteen censuses were carried out by 2021, eight before and eight after India gained independence. The censuses, which assisted British and later independent India's governance, totalize throughout India the modern sense of a "population" divided/dividable into "groups," with each group being a composite of members who share the same collective identity. The Census of India grants what Zygmunt Bauman described as the modern "order-making project." Its aim, as mentioned, is to order – and, meanwhile, constitute! – the world through separations, categories, and binaries (Bauman, 1995: 135). This model was applied widely in India, in all its areas, right down to out-of-the-way jungle areas inhabited by tribal people. Their habitat logistically challenged field surveyors working for colonial Britain and later independent India, but it seems that so did the tribal peoples' resistance to and confusion regarding the surveyors' assumed universal communal model. Independent India continued working with the colonial model, indeed, expanding its reach and intensifying its political power and influence, as we will see in the next section.

Independent India's Project of Communitizing Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Two years after India's independence, the government introduced the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order of 1950. Its aim was affirmative action to benefit members of tribes in need of "uplifting"; these tribes were denoted STs, short for Scheduled Tribes. The order granted officially recognized members of these tribes various benefits, including employment quotas in government posts

and reserved places in institutions of higher education. Qualified STs were listed in the order by their ethnonyms, ignoring problems of mapping and naming tribal collective identities (as described in the previous section) and generating much confusion and action, as will be described in this section. Applications for official recognition of belonging to STs, known as "community certificates," have since been submitted in alarmingly increasing numbers. How these applications are examined and processed provides a superb window onto the state's project of communitization and its underlying model. The arena in question is highly complex, and it keeps evolving and changing into the present. Just recently (2022) one case was referred to the full bench of the Supreme Court of India, drawing much public attention (Shilpa Vishnu Thakur v. State of Maharashtra and Others). The case was directed to the full bench because it was felt that clarity and an authoritative decision-making are required after decades of evolving practices and principles for officially accepting (or denying) applications for ST community certificates. Why is this arena complex, and what evolving practices have led to the state's need for greater clarity?

The official list of STs is managed and controlled in New Delhi. Authority to amend it is given to the central government, in consultation with local states. Adding a new ethnonym to the official ST list, or even a differently prefixed name, is an immensely difficult administrative, legal, and political feat that can take decades (in some cases, over 40 years; see Kapila, 2008 on the Kangra Gaddis). The process involves all ranks of the state's hierarchy, from state-level research institutes, welfare departments, and chief minister's offices, through the federal-level Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, and Ministry of Finance, up to the upper and lower houses of Parliament and the president of India. Notably, anthropologists play an active role in ST claims as government officers and as expert witnesses (see Middleton, 2011, 2013).

An apparent easier strategy under these circumstances has been widely gathering momentum: instead of collective claims for adding newly named groups to the Constitution ST list, individuals claim that they belong to an already listed one. They apply for a "community certificate" that acknowledges this status. The number of claims for such certificates has grown wildly over the years, raising increasing concerns regarding fraudulent claims and raising demands for clarifying standards needed for determining them. The more complex and contentious the claims, the higher up the ladder of local, state, and all-India administration and legal courts they go. In some extreme cases, an individual's claim just to be recognized as a member of a tribe already *listed* in the Constitution Order can wind its way through the courts for 20 years. In terms used in India for the process, the applications are "scrutinized" to determine whether a claim for ST status is "genuine," "doubtful," or "spurious"; whether the claim is "falsely" or "wrongly" made; and whether a certificate is "falsely" or "wrongly" issued. "Fraudulent claims" are an offense and lead to prosecution, disqualification, and withdrawal of benefits granted on the basis of those false claims.

Applications for existing ST "community certificates" are made and judged on the basis of two criteria – with either one or, when needed, both coming into play. In the first case, the applicant maintains and must prove that the community's ethnonym is similar to a name included in the Constitution Order's original list (the origin of these names often goes back to colonial surveys). In the second case, the applicant must prove that the community's culture is similar to the culture of an originally listed ST in terms of specified "cultural traits" such as primitive technology, deities worshipped, modes of marriage, ceremonies of death, and so on, the rubrics commonly appearing in administrative reports and surveys going back to colonial times.

To pursue the "nomenclature" avenue, applicants provide official documents such as school reports of themselves or of close relatives. In these records, one's ethnic affiliation is noted. The applicant shows that the ethnic name appearing in these documents is the same as a listed ST name. This route may seem simple, yet it is anything but, because of the plethora of tribal names produced and instituted in colonial and post-independent India. The official list of STs includes variously spelled names with different prefixes or suffixes. "Nayaka" and "Kattunayaka" (forest Nayaka) provide a good example. Variously spelled and prefixed or suffixed, these names appear in four states. "Kattunayakan" appears in Tamil Nadu's list (item 9). "Kattunaykan" and "Naikda, Nayaka, Chollivala Nayaka, Kapadia Nayaka, Mota Nayaka, Nana Nayaka" appear in Karnataka's list (items 20, 38). "Kattunaykan" appears in Andhra Pradesh's list (item 13). "Naikda, Nayaka, Cholivala Nayaka, Kapadia Nayaka, Mota Nayaka, Nana Nayaka" appear in Maharashtra's list (item 35). "Naikda, Nayaka, Cholivala Nayaka, Kapadia Nayaka, Mota Nayaka, Nana Nayaka" appear in Rajasthan's list (item 10).[2] The number of officially recognized ST Kattunayaka rapidly arose from 5,042 in 1971 to 26,383 in 1981, with more than half of the latter living in cities far from the Nilgiris, and only 1,245 of them in the Nilgiris (Singh, 1994: 483). The number continued to accelerate, doubling to 45,221 in 2001 and raising deep concerns about the adequacy of similarity of nomenclature as a valid, adequate criterion for recognizing a communal identity.

A second track through which to claim ST status is known in India as "the affiliation test." Here, "scrutiny committees" (as they are called in India) try to verify the genuineness of a claim on the basis of similarity between the above-mentioned cultural traits of the applicant's community and those of a listed name in the Constitution Order. To pursue this avenue, applicants and the authorities who scrutinize and judge the applications, and their contested approval or refusal, rely on anthropologists' reports. The two routes of applying for ST status often intersect, as the following case demonstrates.

This case was reported in a national newspaper. A lower-ranking official had issued a Kattunayaka certificate that was later canceled on the grounds of "a negative opinion" given by an anthropologist who pointed out that the applicant did not speak his community's language. The Chennai High Court did not accept the cancelation on those grounds, instead giving priority to the

voluminous community certificates held by the applicant's brothers, sisters, and other relatives, giving particular weight to an older brother's early primary school certificate that stated his ethnic affiliation as Kattunayaka. The court endorsed the position that there could be many reasons, such as educational advancement and migration, for a person being unable to speak the language of his "native" community. The court gave priority to the similar nomenclature evidenced by previous official records over the cultural difference that it attributed to the effects of migration and modernization on claimants' sociocultural life.

Another illustrative case is that of an applicant living near Maduari, 350 kilometers from the forager Nayaka forest in the Nilgiri Hills, whose community was known by a name that included Nayaka, though with a prefix not included in the Constitution Order list (for details, see Bird-David, 2017b: 212–214). A local anthropologist from a government tribal research center in the Nilgiri Hills was appointed to provide an anthropological report on the applicant's community's culture. In 2003 the anthropologist submitted a four-page report to the court, titled "A Report on Community Tribal Status (Case Study)," with a findings section subtitled "Ethnography of the Community and Other Particulars of the Case." From this report we learn that the anthropologist spent a day in the applicant's village. During that day, he visited the applicant at his house, toured the area with him, and then went with him to another house to meet 14 informants (all men individually named in the report). The informants were interviewed as a group about "their culture and society." On the basis of what they said, the anthropologist reports that the community's members were once nomads who gradually became seminomads after settling in villages and towns. They speak the Telugu language but read and write in Tamil. The men append the title "Naicken" to their names. They use traditional hunting implements to catch birds and jackals. The anthropologist testifies that he inspected each house and found everyone to have hunting implements. The report goes on to describe their social structure (e.g., division into endogamous groups; exogamous marriage; child marriage; marriage by capture, elopement, service, and sometimes negotiation), their political system, their life rituals, and their Hindu beliefs. He then concludes:

> The above narrated ethnographic details of the studied community, in cultural anthropological framework, reveal the fact that this community is having many characteristics of the Scheduled Tribe. The studies conclude that the community people are eligible to get Scheduled Tribe status under the name of Kaatu Naicken.[3]

The many such cases brought to public attention the problematic accelerating rate of "collective identity" claims and resultant benefits to people other than the intended "disadvantaged" tribal people in need of "uplifting." In its 2022 discussion of the matter (in *Shilpa Vishnu Thakur v. State of Maharashtra and Others*), the full bench of the Supreme Court summed up the situation:

> Attempts were made over a period of time by certain persons belonging to non-tribal communities to claim tribal status, on the assertion that their community is synonymous with a tribal group which is specified in the notification, or that their tribe is subsumed in a tribe which is specifically notified. The nomenclatures of the communities of such applicants were similar to those of designated Scheduled Tribes, often with a tribal prefix or suffix … Decisions of the Supreme Court laid down that the entries contained in the Scheduled Caste or the Scheduled Tribes Order have to be taken as they stand and no evidence can be led either to interpret or to explain those entries. A tribe which is not specifically named as a Scheduled Tribe cannot lay claim to inclusion, either on the basis of a similarity of nomenclature or by contending that the tribe in question is subsumed within a designated Scheduled Tribe.[4]

The judges also noted that given decades of tribal people's modernization and migration, the "affiliation test" (scrutinizing the similarity of cultural traits) is problematic. The "affiliation test," they stated, has been too often abused throughout India, and high courts in different states gave it different interpretations. All the same, the full bench concluded that surnames and tribal names are not enough and that the "affinity test" must remain an integral part of the determination of the correctness of the claim. The judges embraced the view that religious beliefs and ceremonies are ingrained in tribal people and speak for a genuine claim to their status. Indeed, they recommend that the administrative and judicial personnel dealing with these claims should be provided with the appropriate infrastructure for carrying out the "affinity test."

Leaving aside much that can be said about these issues, I want to point out that the use of the underlying colonial model of communitizing people is ongoing in independent India's project of Modernity: the modern state of India. The same ontological template is premised: a community composed of individuals who share a name and cultural attributes. The model continues to develop in terms of *which attributes are* the determining attributes – similar nomenclature or similar socioreligious beliefs and practices, or a combination of both. What so far has altogether been left outside public attention and discussion in India, and outside of scholarly work, is how the listed ST people *themselves* figure their communal models. With a focus on the Kattunayaka/Nayaka, I turn next to examine their project and model of communitization.

The Foragers' Project of Communitizing "Many Beings"

While identified by India as the scheduled tribe Kattunayaka, and by their neighbors as Nayaka, these foragers call themselves *sonta*. This word, which is broadly used in South India, translates at its simplest as "family." However, this translation begs caution. We should not assume that its meanings for the foragers are the same as its meanings elsewhere in South India, and certainly not the same as the meanings of the English word "family" for English-

speaking British and Americans. What does *sonta* mean in the foragers' usage? In this section, I elaborate on the foragers' senses of *sonta*, which underlie whom they include as members of their community. I suggest that *sonta* (hereafter used in the foragers' sense) assembles all those who are "*with* us," rather than those who are "like us." This concept alludes to "many beings" who interact and engage with one another. Perhaps a succinct way to describe them is "inter-beings," as they exist in and through their interaction with each other. Key features of the *sonta*, I propose, include open-endedness, inclusiveness, and heterogeneity. "Becoming a member" involves continuous performative action, that is, constant interconnective interaction with others. This sense of belonging is embedded in and interconnected with other aspects of the traditional lifeway. It continues to deeply influence the changing contemporary lives of these people, yet can be best elucidated within the traditional context that I focus on here.

Traditionally, these foragers lived in small, unfenced hamlets, each comprising a few simply constructed huts. The huts were spatially close to one another and had flimsy walls, or no walls at all. Often, they built a framework, thatched it, and left it wall-less for months at a time. The dwellers spent most of their daytime, and often also their night time, outside their huts, in the open space between the huts, in one another's presence. Notably, these foragers mastered building solid-walled houses from forest materials, with fences around the houses, and inner wall divisions within them. They occasionally were paid to build such houses for migrant forest and plantation workers who wanted to settle in the forest area. For themselves, however, they built huts that minimally divided between them, if at all. To one degree or another, this domestic lifestyle continued even as government and nongovernment development agents built for them, in their forest hamlets, brick-and-mortar buildings. These were poorly built, but their interior space was divided into designated "kitchen" and "bedroom," and they had a lockable door to the outside. The foragers used those built spaces for storage and continued to spend most of their time outside them or in open lean-tos that they added to the structures, so important was it for them to be with others (see Bird-David, 2009, 2017b: ch. 1; Lavi & Bird-David, 2014). Such resistance to the social ontology inscribed into (indeed often literally cemented into) the modern house design is variously described regarding other indigenous peoples with hunting–gathering traditions (for a fine ethnography of Aboriginal Australians, see Thurman, 2022).

These foragers performed their domestic activities in the open space between the huts, in each other's presence. Even when they pursued their own family and personal tasks, they talked with each other and occasionally shared food. They also demanded sharing. Demand-sharing was a way to express that one regards oneself as closely connected to the others, and sharing in the wake of the demand assured and regenerated the connection. Sharing and demand-sharing expressed the foragers' sense of communal responsibility, responsiveness, and respect. Those who so interacted with one another, in turn, were considered members of the *sonta*.

The core of the *sonta* were close family members who lived in the same hamlet. But *sonta* was expandable to include a wider circle of people, those who now and then shared domestic activities through practices of visiting. As reported about other hunter–gatherers (see Kelly, 1995), these foragers constantly and extensively visited other hamlets. Anyone could leave their hamlet, visit another hamlet and stay there for days, weeks, or even months at a time, sharing everyday life with everybody in the visited hamlet. On these visits, the visitor shared space, food, presence, and so on with everyone – not only with their hosts, because everyone lived in this manner, open to engaging with everyone, co-living with them in the hamlet.

New arrivals to the foragers' hamlets were incorporated into the *sonta* as they were sharing and by sharing, with the other members, spending everyday life with them, in one another's presence, giving and demanding food from each other, and so on. This included even those arrivals who in modern terms could be left outside the community as non-Nayaka, as people of different ethnic groups and nationalities. For example, some men from neighboring ethnic communities and from among the migrant forest workers married women from the forager community. When they lived-*with* their wives and their relatives in the hamlet, following the local open, shared-life, they became *sonta* members. This applied to myself as an anthropologist who lived with them as an essential part of a "participant-observation" study for more than a year in the late 1970s, and to my former students who studied them later, Daniel Naveh in the 2000s, and Noa Lavi in the 2010s. We were all regarded as relatives and members of the *sonta*, which in the foragers' sense encompasses all beings who *live-with* each other, sharing and demonstrating mutual care and concern. We were integrated as "children" of those we *lived-with*, and as "younger siblings" or "older siblings."

The openness of the *sonta* did not stop at human diversity. It expanded to other-than-humans too. The most counterintuitive feature of the *sonta* as a project and model of communitization, from the viewpoint of Modernity's model and project, is its extension beyond humans to encompass other-than-human beings, including animals, plants, environmental features like hills, dead predecessors, ancestral beings, and whoever lived in "our home area" in the past. These foragers are animists who approach specific other-than-human beings with whom they engage as "who" rather than "what," and they engage with them in a way that the foragers experience as mutually responsive and respectful. This was not merely an abstract concept; it was expressed in everyday life practice. For example, on encountering an elephant on a forest path one might say, "You are living in the forest, and I am also living in the forest; you come to eat here, and I am coming to take roots (fruits, firewood, etc.). I am not coming to do any harm to you." One might even turn to a poisonous snake, when suddenly coming upon it, and say, "We did not know you are here. We are coming here to collect firewood. In the days to come we shall not come here again. Leave us today only" (see more in Naveh & Bird-David, 2014). This manner of approaching other-than-humans has its

epistemological benefits, advancing knowledge of both beings-in-relations and how to relate to them (Bird-David, 1999).

As part of social and ceremonial gatherings, these foragers also sustained constant connections and interactions with other-than-humans, which constituted them as *sonta* members. Yearly social gatherings were held in each Nayaka hamlet. On these occasions, all the visible and invisible other-than-human beings who co-shared the forest with the foragers were ceremonially invited to visit the latter and spend a few days with them, eating together, dancing, and singing. The visiting spirits were invoked through trance performers, by which means the foragers talked with them continuously, day and night (Bird-David, 1999, 2017b). The ongoing domestic and discursive engagement between the foragers and their spirit-visitors resonated with the daily engagement between hamlet's co-residents and contributed to constituting the human and nonhuman co-dwellers as *sonta*.

The project and model I describe here was (and continues to be) potently expressed by the foragers through their local kinship idioms. *Sonta* members were figured as relatives. Terms of relations were used by them to refer to and address each other (father, mother, aunt, older brother, younger brother, grandparent, etc.). While each term may have outwardly referred to one person, it foregrounded multiple related others – for example, "father" invoked interrelated father and child, but *ipso facto* also multiple other interrelated pairs, such as father–mother, father–father's sister, child–aunt, and so on. In fact, each term invoked for these foragers a whole community of relatives, as it potentially and often actually evoked multiple relations derived from one another. The kinship terms were extended to other-than-Nayaka who lived with the foragers, and to other-than-humans who did so also. Other-than-human interlocutors were often referred to as grandparents (see more in Bird-David, 2018, 2019), much as various other kinship terms are used for other-than-human interlocutors among other indigenous peoples with hunter-gatherer traditions (Bird-David, 1995).

On the one hand, these foragers' mode of addressing each other manifested and perpetuated their model of themselves as *sonta* members who were all related to each other, as "being kin" rather than "individuals." On the other hand, "being kin," in this foragers' model, was about living together, sharing presence, food, leisure, and care. Expressing and perpetuating "being kin" was practiced through sharing, often instigated by demands of sharing food and such other requisites as knives, clothes, and so on. Through sharing and demanding sharing, these foragers expressed and demonstrated their moral commitment to care for each other while simultaneously expressing and perpetuating living as kin and, moreover, "being kin." The kinship idiom of this model of communitization is so powerful here because mere knowledge of descent and affinal ties is neither sufficient nor a necessary condition of "being kin." As anthropologists have reported regarding other indigenous groups with hunter–gatherer traditions (e.g., Myers, 1986), "being kin" is contingent on performing "being-with" each other – this, to the extent that one can cease to be kin or can become kin, pending the performance of "being kin." "Being

kin" ends when former-kin move apart and lose contact. It is possible to become "kin" with diverse others who "live-with us" as kin do.

While these foragers lived in small communities – in the late 1970s often comprising intermarried siblings and cousins, and their children and parents (see Bird-David, 2017b, ch. 3) – their sense of *sonta* expanded outward to encompass other beings in the way described above. Their sense and practice of *sonta*, I suggest, can be seen as expressing what I analytically bracket as their project and model of communitization.

The Foragers' and the State's Countermodels: Concluding Remarks

The projects of communitization – colonial and independent India's, and the foragers' – that have been discussed above can be viewed as countermodels, which needless to say involves abstracting and simplifying models from complex projects and realities. These projects show us two models of communitizing "many beings," or two models of "being many." The state's model rests on classifying beings into kinds and grouping them by preset attributes, such that a group includes separate members who are *alike*, regardless of whether they directly interact at all. The foragers' model, instead, assembles beings who "are-with" each other, who connect and engage with one another. All of the "who-are-with-us" in this model, regardless of their classificatory kinds, are included. In the first case, classificatory labor of identification, inclusion, and exclusion is required, which is, crucially, done by observers. In the second case, participatory labor of interaction and connection is required, labor carried out by the participants. The first model involves homogenization, and the second accommodates diversified members. The first model rests on the decision-making of authorities with the power to decide who is "in" and who is "out." The decisions are enforced through extensive and contentious administrative and judicial processes. The result is lasting and static, until it is contested and decided otherwise through the same, even more complicated administrative and judicial procedures and decision-making. The second model rests on participants' acts and performances of socializing and connecting. The participants' actions *ipso facto* constitute participants as "us," as *sonta*, yet not in a lasting manner. The situation is dynamic, the status provisional and dependent on continuous actions and performance.

Tellingly, kinship metaphors are employed in both models, but to different effect. We have seen that the foragers regard themselves as "being kin." "Being kin" for them is constituted and reconstituted by acts of living together, engaging, and sharing with one another that also communitize them as *sonta*. Kinship idioms are often used in nation societies, but in a different way. The nation is imagined as family, though a family of members who share a likeness, a family in the logical sense of the term as it is used in the domain of knowledge, and their interrelations are of no concern.

Marilyn Strathern (1995, 2020) has noted how, since the 16th and 17th centuries, words like relation, family, and affinity have been co-used in the domain of knowledge and the domain of kinship. While terms such as "family" and

"relations" may have initially been borrowed from the domain of kinship and brought into the domain of knowledge, meanings also moved in the opposite direction. Strathern elaborates on the case of "relation," which can gloss how people relate in the sense of engaging with each other, living together, sharing space, and presence in one another's everyday life. But from the domain of knowledge, "relation" has borrowed a sense of known links of one type or another between two entities. This meaning moved into the modern domain of kinship, where "relation" can gloss over the known link between individuals. It is not something they do and perform; rather, they are "in" or "have" a relation that is known. As Strathern puts it: "Kinsfolk are bound together by the idea of their relationship" (1995: 9). "Knowledge creates relationships: relationships come into being when the knowledge does" (ibid.: 37). "Family" in English can nowadays refer to a group of interrelated people, but equally to "a group of things that are related or have similar qualities" or a "large group of related types of animal or plant" (Cambridge Dictionary "family").[5] The state's model uses the sense of members sharing similar qualities; the foragers' model foregrounds family in the sense of members who relate to and share life with each other. The former sense is perpetuated in using the term "affinity test," the test described above of cultural similarity in claims for a tribal "communal certificate."

We can designate these two models "classificatory" and "connective," and raise two questions for further research. The first is: in what ways do other indigenous peoples around the world show us the connective communal model or variations thereof? It seems likely that they do. Many Indigenous people across the globe, whom outsiders distinguish by proper ethnonyms, call themselves by vernacular words that translate as "our people," or "our kin" (Bird-David, 2017a). These Indigenous people are often animists and regard other-than-humans, present and/or ancestral, as kin of sorts (Bird-David, 1995, 2018).

The second question is: how do states other than India subject their indigenous populations to their own modern projects of communization when encountering the Indigenous countercommunal models? Whereas India, as we have seen, resorts to nomenclature and culture, the US turns to genetics with its "blood quantum laws." The US's recognition of membership in Native American nations is based on the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which variously stipulates one-half, one-quarter, or one-eighth genetic identity (Spruhan, 2006). We can learn more about counterprojects of communitization by comparing diverse indigenous and states' models, or in other words, by developing a comparative field of models and projects of "being many."

Notes

1 www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG8583; https://whowaswho-indology.info/952/breeks-james-wilkinson/?print=print.
2 The "Nayaka" case is this complicated possibly because the name derives from a Sanskrit word meaning "leader" or "chief," and it was the name of various ruling dynasties in South India in the 17th century. Various castes are known in modern

South India by this name with one prefix or another, and they exploit the similarity of name to claim ST status.

3 https://vakilsearch.com/judgments/m-sudharshanam-vs-district-collector-w-p-no-23340-2019/5daf7b65599841dff0b11552. This citation is taken from a court document, and it slightly differs from the same quoted in Bird-David (2017b: 213), which was taken from the anthropologist's report that was provided to me by ACCORD, a local NGO. I thank Deborah Schwartz for her help in locating the court source.

4 www.casemine.com/judgement/in/575fd363607dba63d7e6e2a3.

5 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/family.

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9 Between Conformity and Nonconformity

Challenges for Weaving Community Life Among the Nasa Indigenous People from Cauca, Colombia

Yaid Ferley Bolaños Díaz

Introduction

While walking to the sacred hill of San Lucas located in the ancestral territory of Tumbichucue, municipality of Inzá-Cauca, and inhabited by Nasa Indigenous people who are the referents of the mobilizations and struggles for the vindication of the rights to life and the *defenåse* of the territories as living entities, I thought of a territory of encounters, of reciprocal relationships, of respect among the inhabitants, of collective work to create short-, medium- and long-term projects for the common good.[1] While this came to my mind, my eyes observed the small towns where great tensions are concentrated, administrative, political, cultural, social, and territorial; also, one can observe the trails within the towns that seem to fragment the social relations that have been built throughout the existence of Indigenous groups, peasants, Afros, mestizos and settlers on the slopes of the imposing mountain ranges of the Colombian Andes.

On the plains and slopes, a handful of people can also be seen clearing stubble for the planting of corn, coffee, fruit trees, and pasture as part of the adaptation of pastures and the subsequent implementation of small livestock as the axis of the economy for survival. These spaces are divided by live fences that indicate the limits between plots, or also exemplify the existence of lawsuits between the Indigenous and Indigenous peasants and vice versa.

Meanwhile, the school children, whose schools are located far from their parents' homes and workplaces, get together at break times to receive snacks and play soccer, Mecca, spinning top and hide-and-seek. The fourth and fifth graders play "combat" where they pretend to be the guerrillas of the extinct FARC-EP and men of the National Army. The protagonists of this game indicate that the members of the FARC are the ones who lose the bet they make moments before the game, while the members of the army are the winners. The bets are very simple: a leader – the most experienced of all and often the oldest – points with his right index finger to the two children who will command the game; then, once the captain is chosen, the rest of the children

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-12

are distributed equally to each side. After the teams are formed, the leader asks some questions and those who do not know the answers – the losers – will form the game teams. But, for them, "it's more fun to be FARC because we run all over the mountain and we don't let the soldiers catch us." At the end of the game – which lasts about an hour – they all greet each other, because at the end of the day it is only a game and it is just a way to turn the times of *real wars* fought by the two groups mentioned above into pleasant moments, into moments of meeting and crossing hands to continue living as what they are: children from the countryside who seek to turn their territories into territories of peace and life. The children do not seem to care about these "disputes" of the elders, so without any problem they converge in public spaces with the intention of building, surely, even if unconsciously, the collective identities that seem to be broken and have led in time, to the total destruction of the "community." Everyone plays. When I say everyone, I mean Indigenous children and peasants.

While this is happening, I ask myself: if at the end of the 20th century both peasants, Indigenous people, and Afros fought for the same cause (vindication and recognition of rights, for life, for territories), why are they now in confrontation with each other? If sharing territories allowed the Indigenous, Afro, and peasant subaltern groups to feed their knowledge, how come they now underestimate the natural and authentic inhabitants of the earthly paradise? From these and other characteristic components of diversity, arises this vast writing that has as its epicenter the conformities and nonconformities of the rural populations of the Tierradentro region, in the department of Cauca. In order to understand these disputes, I will bring up the way these populations conceive the concepts of culture, community-unity, interculturality, and identity.

First, I will talk about the origin and the ancestral vision of the unity of the Nasa people; then, I will provide general aspects of interculturality to then discuss the confrontations between the Indigenous people themselves to have political territorial control and control of the administration of the resources of the Special Allocation of the General System of Participation for Indigenous Reservations. These resources are intended to improve the living conditions of the Indigenous people in terms of education, health, drinking water, and decent housing; however, in recent years these resources have been used for other purposes, thus generating internal clashes that contradict the collective work promoted by the Assembly and the Indigenous Authority of the Nasa People, especially in Tierradentro. Further, I will debate the symptoms of exclusion of Indigenous people from peasants and peasants from Indigenous people. These weaknesses do not only occur in the territory of Tierradentro, but usually happen at the level of Colombia; inter-group rejections that have become evident since the signing of the Political Constitution of Colombia (CPC) of 1991. While it is true that the CPC recognizes the rights of ethnic populations, it also hides the rights that peasants should have as Colombian subjects. Article 7 of the CPC determines that Colombia is a social and

democratic state based on the rule of law, pluriethnic and multicultural; undoubtedly a very important recognition. However, from a critical point of view, it generates political identities based on neoliberal power technologies that dismember community and solidarity struggles.

Place Where These Contributions Sprout: Tierradentro

Tierradentro is made up of 25 Indigenous territories, called *resguardos*, distributed between the municipalities of Inzá and Páez, in the southwest of Colombia. These territories are dominated by Indigenous people, but also noticeable is the strength of the peasant and Afro-Colombian communities. Tierradentro is the land of:

> Deep canyons; sacred land; land of the living memory of diverse people; land of resistances and common struggles; land of vindications; land of the shelters of the ksxa'wesx that protect and give life to the ancient and recent settlers; it is the Eden of a glorious pre-Hispanic past; as a mountainous system of undulating paths through which rivers and roads wind and unite Indigenous, Afro and peasant peoples, who, organized in *resguardos, capitanías* and population areas, build collective life projects to move forward from exclusion and state abandonment
>
> (Bolaños Díaz, 2020: 12–13).

Tierradentro is a land of claims of peasant rights as collective subjects of special protection; it is the land of the black communities that were liberated by the Nasa Gullumus cacica in times of slavery during the colonial era.

Cultural Aspects: Vision of the Nasa and the Elements of the Unit

The Nasa are people, but we are also a reflection of light and darkness; we are the walking spirit on earth. We are children of the sweet waters and the stars of infinity. We are spinning children of the earth. We are the sacred summits where the toasted coca leaf and the humid *çxayu'çe* plant are consumed to live healthily like the condors, the hummingbirds and the millenary frailejones of the moors. We are rocks of wisdom, trunks of knowledge, and rivers of resistance. We are children of the calm and turbulent waters; we are children of the arid and fertile lands. We are rooted with the wisdom of the hot and cold plants that heal the *phata'z* (dirt) that permeates our bodies, souls, and hearts. For us, the dirt is to live with hot blood, to live as if we were violent waters that sweep away everything in their path. As if we were arid lands and hot plants that provoke the anger of the self, the emotional instability. The dirt is to live in disharmony, it is to live sick; it is to live constantly doing evil things. To live with dirt is to live with loneliness, to live dead in life.

People who commit disharmonies live with the spirits of *kansx ksxa'w* and *ewme Î'khwe'sx* that lead to the spaces of *ipxh kücx* or the burning fire of

Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
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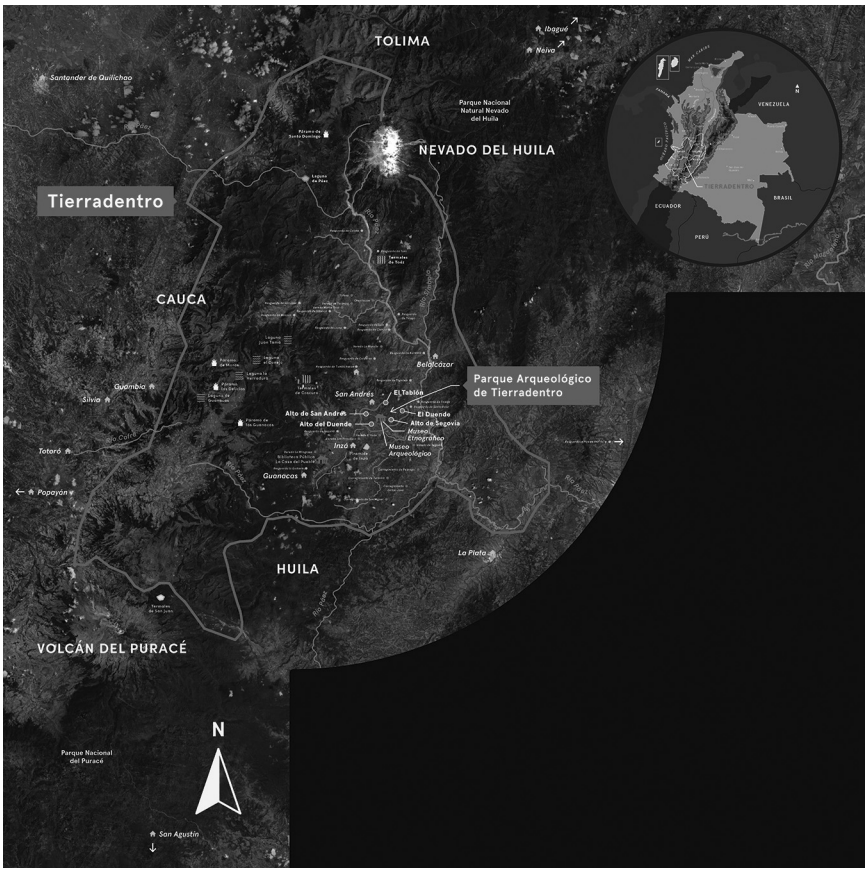

Figure 9.1 Map Zona Tierradentro, department of Cauca. Prepared by the Museology group of ICANH, 2019.

darkness where the evil that comes and goes in remembrances, in the memory, predominates. These acts can be stopped, they can be healed. The physical and spiritual evil can be eliminated through the encounter with the power of the word, plants, waters and with the origins of the guardian spirits that watch over our behaviors from their abodes located in the sacred places. Finding ourselves in unity with human forces, plants and with those beings of the infinite, allow better understanding for healing and resolution of disharmonies that help to weave the *wëth wëth fxi'zenxi* [2] which translates into living full and happy between two different essences, between two parallel and combined cosmoses. That is to say, within the Indigenous peoples everything is dual, everything is unity and, therefore, everything is collective.

Otherwise, the thunderous lightning, the unstoppable winds and rains severely punish those who commit disharmonies. Then, the light of the stars and the fire will be invisible. But, in addition, the cold and dirt take over and

begin to eat away the territory, it becomes unbalanced, sick, and generates chaos: the bad death.

For this reason, the Nasa speak of healing and harmonizing the body and spirits of people who disharmonize social and territorial life through the use and practice of ancestral medicine and the good advice of the *thë' sawe'sx*. We must find the wisdoms of medicinal plants so that they permeate the hearts of the people, so that their wisdom allows us healthy and mature communication among humanity.

Medicine is jealous, sometimes it makes us see the future, sometimes it only lets us see the darkness; but when it lets us see, it opens the way and shows us what we were looking for. It shows the way of life, of harmony. It makes us find the greatest word converted into a mandate of life. These are times to heal us all and are times to walk with the steps of the moon, the sun, the stars. These are times to walk with justice, with the healthy force of Mother Earth and of the places that the Nasa call *ksxa'w yat* (home of the first inhabitants of the universe) and where it is possible to configure unity through the notion of *Pi'tx Yuwe*, which alludes to the forms of ancestral collective works that require physical, spiritual, sentimental and mental effort. During *Pi'tx Yuwe*, the systems of exchange of words, ideas, feelings, sensations, and reciprocal and spiritual dreams are revealed. It is the meeting of worlds to build society, and fundamentally it is the space for the cohesion of memory and the construction of the community fabric that respects, recognizes and values the different other.

The *Pi'tx Yuwe* call for the word of the community members to be heard by all the attendees or assembly members. Thus, women and men express their concerns and make *memories* highlighting that the struggle of the people to shape the territory and to stay alive has gone through several paths. In order to put the word, memory must first be made because memories come and go, sometimes proposing, sometimes warning or advising, other times with a hard voice, with demand, with power (CNMH-ONIC, 2019). The memories of the people have summoned to learn and unlearn; to express that we are peoples with identities, histories, knowledge, wisdoms. That we are peoples who respect the views, approaches and contributions of the *thë' sa we'sx* (men and women of experience, wisdom and knowledge; authentic leaders, leaders who seek the welfare of the community), because only in this way is it possible to weave the world ahead that looms with difficulties and challenges.

Another setting of the unit is the *Ipx Ka'th*, a representation of the great Nasa family. The *Ipx Ka'th* is made up of three stones. The stone located toward the eastern side of the house represents the father; the one located toward the west represents the mother; and finally, the one located between the two (northwestern side) represents the children. Each one of them has smaller stones that support and provide firmness, the latter are the representation of close relatives such as grandchildren, nephews, cousins, uncles, grandparents, brothers, and sisters-in-law. It is the root of life, where we guide and share the experience with our sons and daughters, it is the central nucleus

Figure 9.2 *Ipx Ka'th* – the fire stove to keep the communitarian oral tradition alive. Personal archive, Tumbichucue, October 2021.

of the life of the Nasa people and there the *ju'gthê'wesx* (our ancestors) share their ancestral wisdom with the new generations.

It is the space of oral transmission of knowledge, advice, remediation and the ancestral memory of the *thë' sa w'esx*-grandparents of the people. It is the symbol of dialogue and the source of wisdom that illuminates our minds and hearts through the living words; therefore, the *Ipx Ka'th* must remain lit and harmonized to illuminate the path of the times and the ancestral identity of the Nasa.

From the *Ipx Ka'th* people project so as to walk the word, to build unity for the defense of life, rights, dignity and ancestral lands. In addition, it is a term that refers to social and community resistance from where it seeks to "build a country, the country of the oppressed peoples" (Cometa, 2010: 78). In this order, Escobar (2011) highlights that from the unity of collectivities "worlds, knowledge and practices emerge that differ from the liberal, state and capitalist forms of Euromodernity" (Escobar, 2011: 310).

The Notion of Interculturality and Inter-Ethnic Conflicts

For "Indigenist" anthropologists, the interest in defining culture and interculturality that emerged in the 1970s in the Latin American countries of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia became the central focus of research. The term interculturality was coined in the discussions on bilingual education programs in

the aforementioned countries, and at the end of the 1980s it was placed in the configuration and vindication of Indigenous movements and organizations as part of their decolonizing purpose (Rodríguez, 2013).

In the Colombian case, the term was adopted by the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian sectors and, fundamentally, by researchers who sought to establish a "dialogue between cultures" in conflictive spaces inhabited by diverse and dispersed population sectors. This is the case of the communities in the southwest of Colombia, especially the Indigenous peoples, who, influenced by the policies of territorial defense and the recovery of the ancestral legacies left by their ancestors, united with the peasants and Afro-descendants in a true collective struggle for the mobilization and vindication of the rights of the underestimated, the invisibilized, the landless, the violated, and the politically persecuted. Thus, interculturality allows us to dialogue among humanity; but also, according to the cosmovisions, it allows us to establish a dialogue with the supernatural forces that provide the infinite energies and forces of the earth for the relationship between cultures, knowledge and different lives.

Interculturality should be the axis for changing the structural forms of domination, and should make it possible to break down the prejudices of possession of the truth. "Interculturality highlights the necessary transformation of reality in order to overcome these asymmetries and favor dialogue under conditions of equity. Asymmetries are caused by the coloniality of being, power and knowledge" (Osorio, 2022: 381).

In the case of the Cauca Indigenous movement, interculturality is expressed in the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), an Indigenous organization that was born on February 24, 1971, with only seven Indigenous cabildos, but over time more peoples have joined and today there are 139 cabildos of ten Indigenous peoples with different worldviews, knowledge, and wisdom.

These peoples come together in strategic physical spaces to consolidate life policies such as health, education, economy, territory, etc., under the principles of Unity, Land, Culture, and Autonomy; guiding principles of the organization that flourishes with successes and failures that will be analyzed and discussed in the following pages.

To speak of interculturality is also to open doors to create discussions aimed at rethinking the treatment we are giving to the territory in which we live. The territory is the first creative and defining element of culture, that culture which in terms of contemporary anthropology implies generating "webs of meaning" and social fabrics for the harmonious existence of collectivities (Geertz, 1995). In such a way that from the principle of mutual respect and reciprocity, the Indigenous Nasa almost always offer medicine, food, and drinks to the earth, through the notion of *pu'de*. Likewise, the notion of interculturality unites the spiritual knowers (*thë' walas, taitas, mamas*) of different cultures to trace the paths of harmony and spiritual balance for the social benefit of the organization; It unites the weavings to nourish the collective thought, but also the cultural, political, legal and administrative relationship as part of the recovery of

Figure 9.3 Woman in authority in the crowd weaving the living memory represented in the backpack. Photo: Yaid Bolaños, February 2021.

the identity under the respect and tolerance to the difference that calls for weaving diversity.

Interculturality allows us to learn and unlearn, to accept different thoughts and ideologies. An Indigenous wise man from Tierradentro states that

> the notion of interculturality for us must be very ambitious; we must be willing to give a lot to other cultures and for this, the more identity we have, the more we can contribute and be benefited towards a good development in all fields for a good living.
>
> (Piñacue, interview, 2022)

Figure 9.4 Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and women artists walk the lands of Tumbichucue. Intoning melodies for encounters with the forces of the earth. Photo: Yaid Bolaños, Tumbichucue, August 2021.

Likewise, it is a process to realize how hard life in the countryside is, but in spite of this, we always look for ways to live happily; because life on earth is beautiful and life is much more beautiful when we want to learn, know, recognize, and respect so that our existence lasts on earth. We must offer respect to the earth, we must take care of it because it also has life, it has customs, it has identity; in it is the most natural essence of what we call interculturality. When the animals of the earth meet, they intelligently move away from each other to avoid tensions and conflicts. The animals and the forests that cover the layers of the earth form us, because they lead to the protection of what the ancient inhabitants left behind. So, we say that the earth is mother, why do we say this? We, from the thinking and feeling of the people, who is the mother, what does she do, how does she take care of us, how does she feed us, how does she heal us, how does she raise us? The earth is the mother because she is the one who gave birth to us, and she is the one who breastfeeds us from the time we are children until our time to leave comes. Now, when we are old, we continue to suckle, no longer the milk but the water that is born from the intimacy of the earth. That is why Mother Earth also heals us, nourishes us, but fundamentally teaches us to respect what exists in her, including humanity. Respect must be mutual, it must be reciprocal.

I

The documentary entitled *Sangre y Tierra: resistencia indígena del norte del Cuaca* (*Blood and Land: Indigenous Resistance of Northern Cauca*),[3] starring the Indigenous Guard of the Nasa People, articulates different moments of the struggle of the Cauca Indigenous movement, among which the progress of the process of the Liberation of Mother Earth, the defense of autonomy, the exercise of special Indigenous jurisdiction, and social mobilization to dignify community life in the territory stand out. The documentary shows how a handful of Indigenous people confront large landowners in Cauca to liberate the lands historically occupied for the planting of sugar cane and ethanol production, and with evident labor exploitation of blacks and peasants in the region. In the face of so much discrimination and humiliation, the Indigenous people are rising up indignantly to recover the usurped lands as legitimate owners and are in the struggle for the state to give them legal recognition so that the Indigenous people can implement and strengthen productive initiatives, which will have an impact on the local, departmental and national markets. Land is fundamental because "an Indian without land is a dead Indian. It is therefore a matter of obtaining land for the people" (Arango & Langa, 2016).

Since the 1950s and with greater strength from the 1970s onwards, the underestimated people got together and formed the National Association of Peasant Users, ANUC; later, part of the Indigenous people broke away and formed the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca, CRIC, and another group of Indigenous people created the Indigenous Authorities of Southwestern Colombia, AISO. From their shores they proposed platforms of struggles focused on unity for the vindication of differential rights and for the defense of territories, the recovery of Indigenous reservation lands, the strengthening of community councils and, finally, the configuration of Peasant Reserve Zones. The latter has generated conflicts that, from the media and academia, have been characterized as inter-ethnic conflicts.

Inter-ethnic conflicts in the country have their origins in the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia. After the recognition of the rights of the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian territories, they came to be named by Colombian policies and laws as ethnic groups with a differential policy. In order to guarantee their existence, the national government, through Incoder (today the National Land Agency), ordered the process of land adjudication as legal recognition of the settlement of members of ethnic groups. On the other hand, however, these groups initiate the reclamation of lands that were occupied by peasants or other groups (generally armed) that use the lands for the production of illegal economies.

After certain state recognition, the Indigenous people and, in some parts (especially in the Colombian Pacific), the Afros became involved in the claim and/or demand for more land, which generated serious disputes and ruptures over territorial control. A clear example of this discord is what happened in

2007 in the vicinity of Santander de Quilichao where Incoder and the Ministry of the Interior awarded lands that historically belonged to the Afros to the Indigenous, for which the affected community took de facto actions and blocked the municipal mayor's office and finally led a hunger strike at the end of August 2011.

In addition, there were "machete" confrontations that left several injured and one dead. This led the national government to admit that there was a failure in the land adjudication procedure for Indigenous peoples. Moreover, the situation would become complex, given that young people from both sides voluntarily join armed groups, in order to retaliate against the sectors fighting for the legal return of the lands. By joining the armed groups, they have caused anxiety in the families and in the political, administrative and spiritual leaders of the Indigenous territories.

The land conflict is a situation that has put us at risk of physical and cultural disappearance. In recent years, Indigenous, Afro, and campesino grassroots social organizations have lost their main leaders and interlocutors due to the land conflict.

For example, in the ancestral territory of Las Delicias, municipality of Buenos Aires, Cauca, the territories that were once scenarios of life and peace, in the last two decades have become scenarios of the worst war that civil communities face in order not to be bled and, as children of the earth, that their roots not be ripped away. Within this complex situation, there are voices

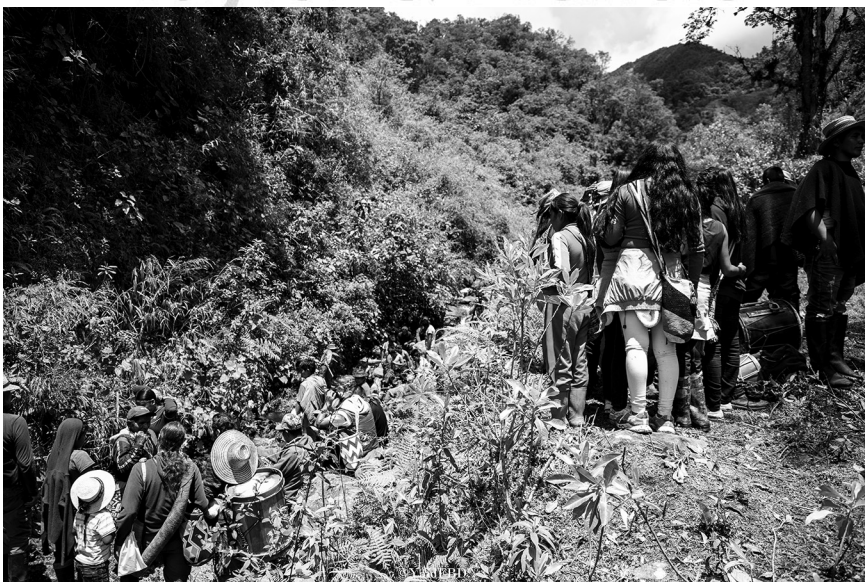

Figure 9.5 Territorial tour in Indigenous community lands with the participation of children. Recognition of the territory for its protection. Photo: Yaid Bolaños, Tumbichucue, August 2021.

that invisibly bring and carry the word, which ultimately puts the lives of the leaders at risk. The Indigenous guard who are armed with courage, with their CRIC flag – red and green – chonta cane, their comb, their backpack with their toiletries, have been harassed (even by the Indigenous themselves) of being informants for criminal gangs that threaten the peace of the people. Alveiro Camayo, leader and one of the founders of the Guardia Indígena, was harassed and branded by both society and the media, which benefits those in power, as an important guerrilla commander. However, as his close friends and leaders of the Las Delicias territory remember him:

> He was a natural, authentic leader who walked the territories carrying the importance of the unity of the people to defeat the armed forces. One day he told me: they tell me that I am a guerrilla, but I am not. Look in my backpack to see if I have weapons; when I saw the backpack I only had the insignia of the guard and his old identification card. I laughed, we talked, we talked. That day we were informed of the presence of armed groups in the vicinity of the town center, we walked and voiced our opinion, they threatened us. And then the tragic news of what you already know. That Monday, at 6:15 in the afternoon, they took him out and took him away (silence of pain … Guard, guard … applause) This is hard, I have cried so much that even my tears dry from crying so much. For the militiamen who listen to me, these are not tears of cowardice, they are tears of pity for what you are doing.
>
> (Chocué, Br., interview, 2022)

Our murdered comrades accompany us from above. They continue to give the light of hope to continue fighting in collectivity, in unity, in *minga* to live with strength for the community process and not of the process. Living from the process is harmful, it brings corruption, clientelism, bourgeoisie. The territories are houses, they are spaces to share our joyful and vital daily lives; but, as noted, they have become scenarios of war and, therefore, scenarios of silence due to the fear generated by the rifles, which are manipulated even by the same young people of the territories. Some of the lands where these situations have happened have been recovered. The Las Delicias territory, for example, is made up of 90% of recovered lands. Thirteen farms were recovered from Cauca landowning families such as the Mosquera and Medina families, and each piece of land is given symbolic names.

The landowners have washed away the ancestral mentality of the people, which is why it is urgent to make history and memory, because a people without history is a people without memory and tends to disappear. Most of the old people were day laborers and those who had small land possessions worked for the benefit of the landowners; that is to say, there was indebtedness and the encomienda. For example, if the Indigenous raised 12 pigs, ten were for the landowner and two for the one who raised them with patience, but when the landowner got bored with the pigs, they opened the fences and the

animals damaged all the crops. They got bored and left the territory to start a new stage of life. However, this situation has had gradual changes within the Indigenous territories in the last 40 years. These changes, as already indicated, have been with blood and death.

Another important element to note here is the existence of private lands within the collective territories of the Indigenous peoples. At the time there were offers of sale (i.e., that the Indigenous people bought back the lands), but the stubbornness of some Indigenous leaders did not allow their acquisition and it is precisely here where the armed actors are currently concentrated to carry out their military intelligence, and then the operations that have ended the lives of the leaders. The farms were not purchased at the time, arguing that they were not large enough for community distribution. As an Indigenous movement, the need to buy farms of more than 500 hectares has been raised, but neither has been done. If the farms had been purchased, perhaps all the Indigenous territories would be cleaned up today.

On the other hand, non-Indigenous traders from southern Colombia have arrived to buy the land, which at the time cost 500,000 pesos per hectare and now costs 12 million pesos. The purchase process has been through promises of sale. That is to say, the buyer has used the names of the Indigenous community members on the grounds that when they have to leave the land for whatever reason, it will remain under the ownership of the person who lends the identity. This modality is known as "*testaferría*." The worst and most worrying aspect of the matter is that these lands have been used for planting illicit crops and, consequently, the forests have been indiscriminately cut down. In some places, they have also implemented the practice of illegal mining.

As part of the illicit business, they have used different ways to link community members to their businesses. For example, with the loan of money, the community members buy work tools such as scythes and chainsaws, not for the purpose of working on the family properties, but to work as day laborers on the farms acquired by the front men. The resources earned during the day labor are discounted by the front man. Likewise, when the Indigenous guards and the entities in charge of safeguarding the Colombian forests control the territory, they find Indigenous youths cutting down the forests and clearing crops for the illicit use of sacred and medicinal plants such as coca and marijuana. Indeed, this leads us to think that something is wrong within the Indigenous organizations. In other words, in order to avoid the involvement of young people, the territorial, departmental and national grassroots organizations must create policies that guarantee intellectual and productive production in agricultural terms.

The different elements of domination that the actors of the conflict have implemented against the communities that inhabit and shape the rough, diverse and biodiverse territories, is clearly an attack against humanity. They seek to exterminate all life that is against the politics of death, and it is in the face of this that the strength and dignity of the people appears to mobilize and confront the armed groups and criminal gangs (landowners, front men, cartels)

Figure 9.6 Woman weaver of life and millenary knowledge. Photo: Yaid Bolaños, Inzá, 2020.

that with guns and money seek to divert and silence the voice, the word and the collective sentiments that emerge from community life expressed in the art of living together in the past, present and future.

Administration of the Resources of the General System of Participations

In other Indigenous villages, the disputes are not territorial; they are merely administrative and economic. Since 1994, the Colombian state has allocated the resources of the "General System of Participations" to the territorial entities and the Indigenous grouped in *resguardos*, which receive considerable amounts for health, drinking water, basic sanitation, and general purposes. At the same time that the economic value was growing, in some "lazy" people's minds (say the critics and the most radical leaders) the interest to take the reins of the *resguardo* year after year was growing. That is to say, to manage the *resguardo* and therefore the economic resources, which finally turn out to be destined for private benefits. The misappropriation of resources is an issue that affects the situation of the ancestral peoples, since it leads, due to lack of basic sanitation and the precarious health situation, to the mortality of the new generations (called seeds of life, seeds of origin and identity for the survival in time and space) and especially to the death of the elderly, whose age is barely around 55 years old.

Furthermore, it must be admitted that politicking is eating away at the foundations that determine the unity of a people. With the purpose of

obtaining particular benefits, some Indigenous leaders have sought in every possible way to become members of the cabildo, a special authority within the ancestral territories. In some territories there are leaders who have been administering the political and organizational life for more than 20 years; a situation that clearly evokes political and administrative corruption.

The resources transferred by the state insert logics of capitalist corruption into the dynamics of Indigenous peoples' own government, and threaten communalist forms such as autonomy and community struggles. The struggle becomes specific, familial or individual. In order to fully comply with such pretensions, in some moments of the process of resistance and collective life, I will highlight the following:

In the months of October and November all the Indigenous people meet and through a general assembly, the community (Indigenous people 14 years and older) elects a group of people for the political, territorial and economic administration of the *resguardo* or territories of life of the Indigenous peoples. In the last five years, this dynamic of election where the community had the voice is slowly declining, because now a group of people meet to define the future governor and also determine the rest of the members of the cabildo. In some Indigenous reservations, it seems that the assemblies for the election of new *cabildantes* are only camouflages to prevent investigations by the national control entities, since the assemblies are only to ratify the names chosen by what I call Indigenous aristocracy, and that very stealthily recognize themselves as leaders, as elders and majors.

In other *resguardos*, where the crowd gathers to define the *cabildantes*, some community member cautiously nominates an Indigenous man or woman to represent the people, suddenly another group mentions the name of another community member and then, another name sounds from the corners of the communal houses; the young people chant from the center of the crowd the name of another Indigenous person, and so on …

When no consensus is reached, they all argue, verbally abuse each other, and even beat each other up both inside and outside the assembly. When the situation worsens, the scene of the assembly moves to the *chicherías* [4] where they confront each other with stones, sticks, machetes, and even shoot into the air with short-range firearms. Women intervene in the disputes to prevent murders, their children cry from afar to see drunken confrontations that in the scenario of the assembly were not able to elect their next governor, the leader should raise awareness that the fights between the community members are something that should not continue to happen, because it unbalances the resistance and the deep processes of collective struggle that traced the ancient inhabitants of the lands considered millenary and sacred to the Indigenous people.

In order for the land disputes not to have negative effects in the future, it is urgent, taking advantage of the resources granted by right by the Colombian state, to invest in the consolidation of the Indigenous community life plans, whose purpose is to plan the common visions based on a participatory process

of self-recognition and self-diagnosis of the daily problems that weaken the resistance process; it is also a guide that shows the interrelation of cultural, social, spiritual or cosmological, political, environmental, and economic aspects.

In the absence of a convincing proposal and in the interest of managing economic resources, community members with no administrative experience, on the one hand, and community members with extensive experience in the political and administrative scenario, on the other hand, have thrown themselves into the political arena (or have been elected by the community), but they "make and unmake community resources in land purchases for the benefit of a few," says an Indigenous community member from the Tierradentro region.

In addition, it is also important to highlight that a large part of the resources transferred by the Colombian state are allocated for large projects that promise substantial changes in the way of life of the populations, but in reality the situation is different: "the resources are kidnapped by our leaders, by those who follow the great politicians of the region, who undoubtedly were only trained to swindle the people of the ruana, hat, machete and hoe" (former Nasa leader and authority).

This situation is worrisome for the new generation of young leaders and for former cabildo governors, to the extent that the entire community is called to an assembly to establish short and medium-term projects, but some time later the collective proposals that seek alternatives for life remain in limbo due to lack of action and lack of good administration of the economic resources that enter the Indigenous territories.

The Indigenous community members consider themselves good administrators of the lands and of the ritual practices within their territories but, on the other hand, it is considered that "we are not project people and that is why we are very bad administrators, we do not execute well what should be done for the people and the resources that arrive pass to third hands," affirms a former governor of the Tierradentro region. In his opinion, those who benefit are the members of the work committees, private companies, merchants, and transporters who are not part of the Indigenous communities.

So, the problem that has led to the misunderstandings or, as some Indigenous people would say, "to the social imbalances" lies in the lack of suitable personnel for the creation and execution of the projects. In that order, looking for protagonism, many Indigenous have postulated themselves or have been postulated as governors, but when the time comes to exercise the function they do not know which path to take. For this reason, in every community meeting space, it is suggested that the best thing to do is to appoint people with experience, but the disagreement of part of the population is total, precisely because of the cases of corruption that have occurred in recent years in the different Indigenous territories of the country.

The communities are clear that state policies and welfare policies such as the allocation of resources from the General System of Participation cannot derail

community life and exercises of autonomy. Given this, the spiritual authorities and authorities of political and territorial character, in addition to academics who are Indigenous peoples themselves, in the 15th congress of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), held in the Yanacona Indigenous reservation of Rioblanco, municipality of Sotará, department of Cauca between June 25 to 30, 2017, mandated to restructure the colonial figure of the cabildo; because its hierarchical and patriarchal order is, in part, responsible for community disharmonies.

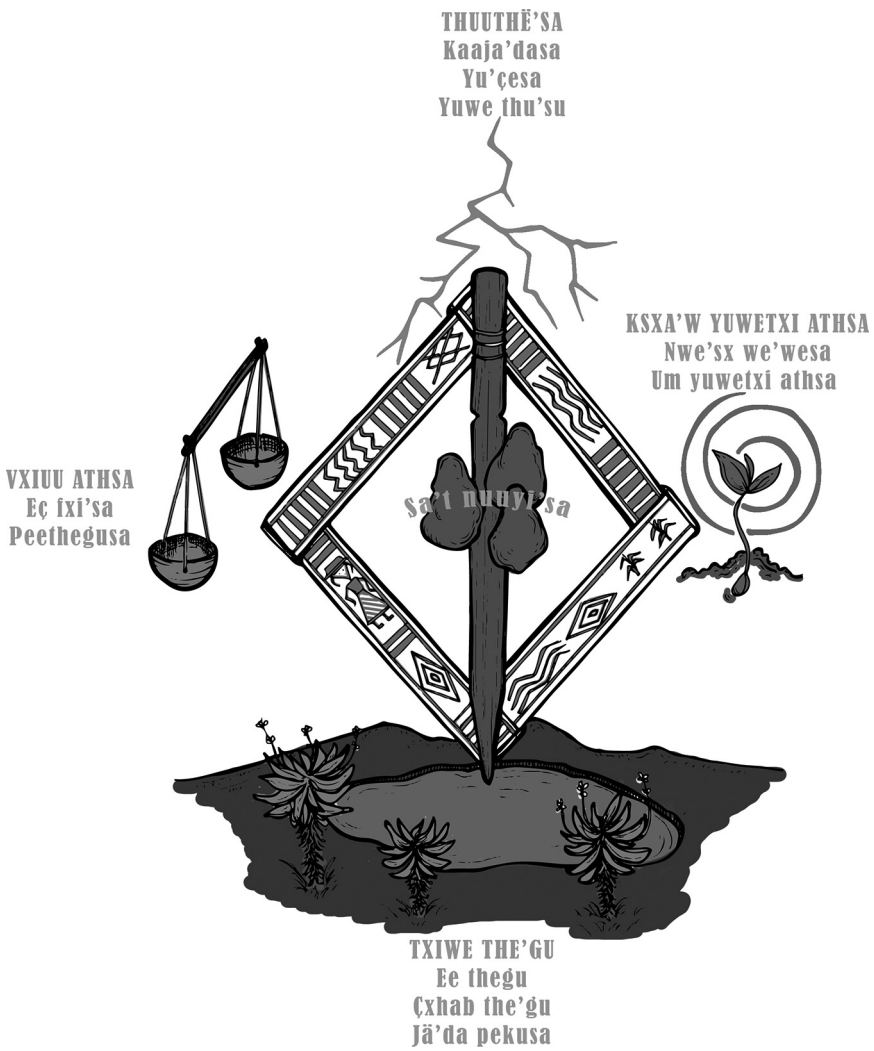

Figure 9.7 Representation of government structures in Tumbichucue. Elaboration: Authorities of Tumbichucue, 2022.

The restructuring should recover and strengthen self-government systems such as spirituality, family unity, respect for the ancestral word and self-justice that establish "social and spiritual harmony among community members [and are responsible for] defending the territory from foreign peoples as well as the community from the dangers that arise" (Bolaños, 2020: 73).

The exercise of autonomy and self-determination plus the process of vindication of Indigenous peoples' rights has led to the conformation of their own institutions and the modification of imposed political-organizational institutions such as the cabildos. In territories that conserve the ancestral, identity and community bases, it has been proposed of *sa't ne'jwe'sx* (skilled men and women, with ample knowledge, with integral and equal wisdom) of *nuyi'sawe'sx* or those who politically and spiritually guide all the people from the place of the *Ipx Ka'th*, the house. They have the mission to protect from within their territories and community practices. Those who conform to it are spiritually wise people (thë' wala or in their absence a religious authority), leaders (women and men) of the local organizational process and women-mothers weavers with the capacity to lead the territory's own affairs. In addition, the above are conformed and protected by the *thuuthe'sawe'sx* who have the following community functions: *ja'daçx yuwetx nuyi'sa we'sx; nes fxiwtxi atsaa we'sx; kiwe eethegsae'sx ki' eka yuwetxi athsawe'sx*.

This document does not have a definitive closure, there are still elements and contributions that deserve more depth. With what has been said and affirmed, I do not intend to hurt the sensibilities of my people, my authorities and advisers; on the contrary, it is an invitation to straighten our political and administrative paths so that neoliberal, welfarist and paternalistic state policies do not harm our dreams of community life in the territories.

We are mountain people, and for that reason, we have been called guerrillas, but it is a notion that if it lands in Nasa Yuwe (the language of the Nasa people) corresponds to *yu'khsa* which translates as those who sprouted from the mountains and the moors; it is equivalent, therefore, to owners and protectors of the mountains. For this reason, from the innocence of childhood, the most enjoyable and enriching thing to do is to travel on the backs of the territories to emancipate oneself, to free oneself from the negative stereotypes and the absurd war that we have had to live through.

From the recognition of the exercises of spirituality we seek to awaken the essence of community that transcends earthly and human frontiers. The respectful dialogue between cultures, between the beings of the earth, between thoughts and feelings to build the total and integral peace that we long for to continue surviving as peoples that walk in mass, in *minga*, in spirituality must become a custom and a policy of life of those here, and of those who left naturally or atrociously to the world of the dead. For this purpose, from the bets of self-government, the community directions must not be lost; on the contrary, from each structure and from each territory, the social bases must be accompanied by proposals and projects that transform the communities and the territories to consolidate and implement the collective dreams.

Notes

1 From the Nasa perspective, the common good is all that is found within the ethnic territory: the *páramos*, the water sources, the lands and other "proper-characteristic" elements that define Indigenous life. It is often believed that the common good is specific to Indigenous groups, but we must accept that this concept occupied a central place in the political philosophy of the first great "Western" thinkers such as Aristotle and Aquinas.
2 In Kichwa–Aymara–Puquina languages, the concept is Sumak Kawsay. Suma is equivalent to fullness, complete fulfillment, beauty, excellence. Kawsay is life, existence. Luis Eduardo Maldonado, Indigenous of the Kichwa nationality of Ecuador proposes that Sumak Kawsay "is a full, balanced, harmonious, modest form of existence that is reached collectively, based on the cultivation of reciprocal relationships with all living beings."
3 General Production/Direction/Editing: Ariel Arango Prada.
4 Place or dwellings where the indigenous people sell guarapo or cane chicha, pineapple, arracacha, and other staple foods for the community.

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Part III

Contending with Scale: Communalism across Different Audiences

10 Levels of Communalism in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Combating Modernity with the Help of Indigenous Radio

Nicholas Simpson, Andrés Tapia and Carolyn Smith-Morris

Introduction

Communalism is expressed in myriad ways, at multiple levels in the lifeways of Indigenous peoples. The communal processes that shape the foundation of Indigenous communities, such as the social entrenchment of the priorities of the collective, are endangered and thus merit deeper examination. The continued existence of these processes, often made invisible under the dominance of imperial modernity and liberal individualism, is testament to the resilience of Indigenous peoples and the commitment that many of them share to asserting their lifeways amidst structural oppression. Voices from rural and more remote Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon portray how Indigenous radio and Ecuadorian Indigenous political organizations promote and are simultaneously formed by expressions of communalism. These communalist expressions occur on multiple levels including: (1) within the family unit, (2) between families and within the local community, (3) between communities belonging to the same Indigenous nationality, and finally, (4) within a larger, politically organized "Indigenous movement," one that transcends borders and nationalities, often accompanied by pragmatic and affective ties between Indigenous communities and nationalities.

Our arguments here draw from the two-year relationship between Andrés Tapia, a member of the Kichwa community of Unión Base and the wider Kichwa Commune of San Jacinto del Pindo, who serves as the Director of Communications for the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE), and Carolyn Smith-Morris, a non-Indigenous, Anglo anthropologist based in the US. They first collaborated virtually to report on digital mapping efforts by numerous Indigenous communities around the world during the early COVID-19 pandemic (Smith-Morris et al., 2022). From there, they began efforts to document the impact of CONFENIAE's radio station, La Voz de la CONFENIAE as an Indigenous communal effort. It was during their initial impact study that Nicholas Simpson, then an undergraduate student in Carolyn's medical

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-14

anthropology class, was brought on as a research assistant. Several other members of Andrés' Amazonian Kichwa community of Unión Base, in the Ecuadorian province of Pastaza, were also crucial in the efforts behind the conversations we share below. For this chapter, Andrés speaks not only as director for this radio station, and elected member of CONFENIAE, but as community member. Carolyn and Nick, both of Euro-American settler descent, speak as invited outsiders and grateful witnesses to the workings of communalism of the people and peoples with whom we have spoken. In the pages ahead, we designate shared authorship and voice with "[All]" while individual speakers, both ourselves and quoted participants in research interviews, are indicated either by initials (e.g., [AT]) or by descriptors (e.g., a 25-year-old woman in Unión Base).

We begin with a clarification about the levels of communalism outlined here. While these proposed levels of communalism are contiguous, even overlapping, the expression of communalism in each is necessarily different. We do not argue that these levels are structurally predicated upon one another – such architecturalism would be an oversimplification of the complicated emergence of these large-scale social and political phenomena in spite of the repressive forces Indigenous peoples face. Communalism is, however, reified on the local scale, suggesting that local expressions of communalism may impact how it is expressed more broadly. It is the relationship between these scales that we want to discuss. Thus, when speaking of Ecuador's Indigenous movement, we do not understand large-scale organization to be entirely separate from local experience. Discussing such levels of communalism can offer insight into how Indigenous peoples defend their livelihoods from the colonial attacks of modernity. Further, an understanding of these levels urges a reconsideration of how colonial society recognizes (or fails to recognize) the communal agency of many Indigenous peoples globally.

By looking beyond the individual as the fundamental unit of sovereignty, we hope to contribute to the discursive space created by authors in this volume for the collective as a legitimate actor in the socio-political landscape. By respecting this space, we can highlight the ways in which some Ecuadorian Indigenous peoples exhibit communalism and community engagement from the local to macro levels of scale. Particularly, we analyze these levels or scales of communalism as they are expressed through, and protected by, Ecuadorian Indigenous community radio.

Recognizing that the individualist-communalist spectrum cannot be reduced to a binary typology (Smith-Morris, 2019), we adopt a multidimensional analytical framework, building upon the idea that Indigenous identities and senses of belonging are reconstructed at various levels, from the micro to the macro (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Studying these mechanisms of identity, social organization, and resistance to hegemony gives insight into the multiple ways in which power structures and lived experience intersect (Kauanui, 2017), which is especially relevant in the wake of Ecuador's civil and political unrest of 2022.

Communitarian Indigenous Radio in the Ecuadorian Amazon

> EL PODER DE LA PALABRA (THE POWER OF THE WORD): A true word is more powerful than an entire army. The word illuminates, awakens, releases. The word has power – this is the power of the powerless.
>
> (Havel, 1985)

[**AT**] La Voz de la CONFENIAE is an Indigenous community radio outlet owned collectively by the 11 Indigenous nationalities located in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The project has nascent roots that stretch back to 1983, when a group of Indigenous broadcasters produced several programs under the name *La Hora de la Voz Amazónica* (The Hour of the Amazonian Voice) contracted through *Radio Mía* (My Radio), a non-Indigenous commercial station operating the 99.9 FM frequency at the time. Having never attained their own dedicated frequency, the project was discontinued after some years.

In the organizational world of CONFENIAE, processes are continuously remade to adapt to the needs of the present. Radio has been a passion of mine since a very early age. Having learned of the existence of the historical radio project *La Hora de la Voz Amazónica*, which emerged in the same year that I was born, I became interested in giving life again to that exciting communicative process. Building on the pioneering experience of my colleagues 40 years prior, I assumed the role of Director of Communications for CONFENIAE for the first period in 2016 and the second one in 2020. The need to recount this experience stems from the continuous demand for transparency in these types of community organizations; a demand which has risen from internal dialogues between families, between communes, and from the visions of leaders. As the nationalities emphasized the need to have their own media, a slogan of the struggle emerged: "Community media now!"

It is worth emphasizing the importance of having a radio station belonging to the organizational structure of CONFENIAE, because the central demands of an Indigenous movement are communication and, consequently, the democratization of the radio spectrum. Thus, almost four decades after my colleagues, the radio project returned as an online radio station in May 2019, hosted at voz.confeniae.net.

The radio officially reopened on May 11, 2019, in the same year as the October uprising (Iza et al., 2023), during the CONFENIAE general assembly, a democratic process marked by the presence of the 23 presidents of the 11 Indigenous nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The date and community-oriented framework in which the launch was carried out are of singular importance, both for the medium itself and for the communal processes that produced it. One way in which communalism is expressed is in the popular communitarian effort (such as the regional assembly) to address the acute social and political needs of the community, or of the larger organizations and confederations (i.e., CONFENIAE). On May 11, 1992, the same day as the radio launch, only 27 years prior, the Amazonian nationalities achieved legal rights over more than 1 million hectares of central Amazonian jungle. This

great victory, achieved by the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP), a subsidiary of CONFENIAE, was the result of a massive popular effort: a 30-day march of Indigenous peoples from the Unión Base community to the Government Palace of Quito, known as "*Allpamanda, Kawsaymanda, Jatarishunchik*" (for land, for life, let us rise up!) Symbolically, the achievement of our radio platform and our land reclamation have much in common.

At the beginning of 2020, an application for an FM radio frequency was submitted to state authorities, and in August of the same year, it was awarded by the Ecuadorian Agency of Regulation and Control of Telecommunications (ARCOTEL). This was no simple process. Obtaining a radio frequency presupposes a methodical and systematic process, evaluated against technical and communicational criteria, by which the competitive award of a radio frequency is decided. This process is a result of the provisions of the current Organic Law of Communication (LOC) and the Political Constitution of Ecuador, which require 34% of the radio frequency spectrum to be allocated for community media. In the case of La Voz, after the logistical requirements were met, a competition was initiated by ARCOTEL. Here, each nascent radio initiative competes by fulfilling a series of requirements stipulated by current legal regulations, such as communicational and managerial plans, among others. After the logistics had been settled, La Voz obtained a score of 86/100 for its broadcast, and was then awarded the 99.1 FM frequency in March of 2021, with broadcast coverage over the central Ecuadorian Amazon, including the province of Pastaza, and parts of Napo, Tungurahua, and Morona Santiago. This victory was for the benefit of the 11 Amazonian nationalities, 23 member organizations, and more than 1,500 communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

On September 24, 2021, the physical radio station was officially inaugurated, and on October 12 of the same year, the radio went on air from its studio in my community of Unión Base, of the Pastaza province, located next to CONFENIAE headquarters. The legal and bureaucratic success that resulted in the allocation of the radio frequency was important to the community members, the nationalities, and the confederation as a significant advance in the process of democratizing communication in Ecuador. Therefore, the official launch event of La Voz de la CONFENIAE at Unión Base was highly important. The multiplicity of local actors, nationality representatives, cooperative agencies, international allies, and government authorities present illustrates the transcendent role of radio in our social life and organizational processes. Additionally, the event revealed the growing need to continue expanding the fabric of community communication in the Amazon and throughout the country. This is particularly important for Indigenous organizations, where the intrinsic link between communication and social struggle is evident and thus establishes communications as an important space for the expression of the communal visions of the Indigenous peoples.

The station now has a team of 12 communicators and direct communicators, equally divided between men and women, who mostly belong to the

Kichwa nationality, with Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, and Waorani nationalities also represented. At least ten programs are produced in these ancestral languages in addition to Spanish. Programs include newscasts, entertainment, opinion, cultural, educational, and sports programs among many others produced in alliance with popular media outlets such as the Coordinator of Popular and Educational Community Media of Ecuador (CORAPE) or the radios of the Casa de la Cultura (National House of Culture). At the moment, 30% of La Voz airtime is dedicated to these programs, with 70% being filled by music, although this ratio is growing to favor programming. Additionally, podcasts have been produced in the remaining ancestral languages of the northern Amazon region: Aingae of the Kofan People, Baikoka of the Siona nationality and Paikoka of the Siekopai nation.

The main objective of La Voz is to make visible and inform about the realities of the Amazonian territories and raise the voices of Indigenous peoples for the defense and equality of rights, thus becoming an instrument of struggle and resistance. The Communications Department of the CONFENIAE Governing Council, of which I am director, is responsible for the operation of the radio, although oversight is drawn from the Governing Council and by the CONFENIAE assembly itself, especially when it comes to larger social events, such as the social mobilizations of June 2022 (discussed further below). In general, it can be said that the radio works toward the aims of CONFENIAE and the Indigenous nationalities, but with administrative and communicational autonomy. In the period in which I have worked as director of the radio, that is between 2019 and 2023, I have felt at all times the collective power and contributions of the organization to building the narrative of the radio. At the same time, I have also felt my own authority and independence, able to carry out my role as radio adviser without having experienced any pressure or imposition, which has guaranteed the communicative space as a plural and democratic environment. In this way, the radio has been consistent with the demands and struggles of the Indigenous peoples, and representative of the popular aspirations of our audiences.

Perspectives on Indigenous Radio

[**All**] Narratives presented below were gathered as part of an impact study of CONFENIAE's community radio station, La Voz de la CONFENIAE, performed in July and August of 2022. Designed in commitment to decolonized methodologies (Sillitoe, 2015), our collaboration was led by Tapia, whose reputation as Director of Communications for La Voz de la CONFENIAE granted us easy access to the communities involved in our work. We focused our work on two Indigenous communities, differing both in demographics and in geographical orientation. Fifteen members from each community were interviewed just weeks after the *paro nacional* (national strike) and amidst the funerals and memorials for the fallen. Graffiti artifacts from the protests denouncing Guillermo Lasso's presidency, and counter-protest messages

defaming Indigenous organizations and their leaders, such as Leonidas Iza, were still visible throughout the country; the conflict was still fresh in the memory of many.

Unión Base, the first community involved in this study, is situated on the periphery of a small urban center called Puyo, just far enough to practice rural subsistence yet near enough to have access to the city via a regular bus route. It is home to approximately 250 inhabitants from 40 to 50 families, however, they often host visitors from afar who come to the community for CONFENIAE assemblies and other organizational events. Most members of the community describe strong familial or extended familial kinship with the other members of the community. Men are not often present in the home throughout the day, typically occupied with fishing, cultivating the *chakras* (agroforestry subsistence), or working in urban Puyo, while many (but certainly not all) of the women often occupy domestic roles, often cultivating *chakras* as well. This distribution of work strikes the Western senses as patriarchal, however many community members describe Unión Base as a matriarchal community, one in which women occupy powerful leadership roles – something that is reflected in CONFENIAE's organizational structure. Whether it be through the occupation of a leadership position in nearby CONFENIAE, instilling local morals and values into the youth, or walking along the front lines of a protest, women here are central to the preservation of communalism.

Yukutais, the second community in which we collected narratives, is a Shuar community located outside of Gualaquiza in the southern part of the Morona Santiago province, a two-day walk from the Ecuador–Peruvian border. Separated by an hour's drive from the small, urban center of Gualaquiza, access to the city from Yukutais is far from convenient, though it's a trip that community members make often for work, selling produce, and purchasing supplies. As the entrance to the community is a river-spanning bridge only crossable by foot (or motorcycle), no community members own a car, and thus the commute often depends on a taxi, a recent (yet still infrequent) luxury that came with the precarious construction of a paved road a year prior to our visit. Even still, the near-constant rains and frequent landslides, products of the mountainous terrain, had already rendered many portions of the road nearly unusable. Nestled in between mountains, Yukutais lies outside of La Voz de la CONFENIAE's FM broadcast range and is cut off from most FM frequencies in general. Despite this, a very small number of community members had previously accessed CONFENIAE programs via the radio's streaming service on its Facebook page.

In both communities, we used two processes of consent to ensure everyone's understanding of the project and to allow for both communal and individual consideration of its value and impacts. The first level was a community invitation written by the local confederation president; the second was individual consent from each narrator. This dual strategy in consent is a practice aligned with the collective agency championed by many Indigenous communities (Smith-Morris, 2007; Frisancho Hidalgo et al., 2015; Rodríguez, 2017). In the

case of Yukutais, where CONFENIAE radio programming was being introduced, a town hall meeting was held, in which attendees voiced their questions and concerns about the study, and expressed how radio could assist their local development goals until a consensus was reached. This open process of community consultation and the passionate display of the attendees' commitment to community growth called our attention back to what Clemencia Rodríguez and Jeanine El Gazi (2007) call "the poetics of Indigenous radio." Specifically, these poetics refer to the complex ways Indigenous communities consider and understand the adoption of radio communications. Community-wide discussions about these poetics often revolve around emic goals and needs pertaining to community construction, the ways in which radio presence would impact (for better or worse) local priorities such as cultural continuity, and finally, the ways in which radio would impact interactions with other communities, cultures, and socio-political agents.

The majority of the voiced opinions in Yukutais gravitated toward one of two themes: first, the preservation of heritage, history, and tradition; second, capacity building and giving opportunities to the youth. Within this first theme, many attendees expressed a need to use communicative media to preserve Shuar history and heritage, to be broadcast both internally to the community and to external audiences. With regards to internal broadcast, some expressed frustration at the discontinuity of local historical memory and of intergenerational knowledge. As mentioned previously, the area surrounding Yukutais is extraordinarily mountainous, and the seasonally torrential rains often result in landslides. Speaking on radio's potential to help preserve community knowledge, a man referenced these landslides, expressing frustration at the delays and dangers they often pose to community life. Frustratedly, he looked at us and rhetorically asked, "Why do we experience landslides every year in Yukutais?" To this point, radio promised an opportunity for community knowledge production and community-directed education on issues of local pertinence.[1] Regarding broadcast to external audiences, several attendees described an urgent need to broadcast Shuar cosmovision to other communities and nationalities, not out of any sentiment of cultural superiority, but of a selfless desire to help others learn from Shuar values.

Bearing witness to this community dialogue in Yukutais provided a clear look at the ways in which power is distributed horizontally among communally oriented peoples. Particularly, what was striking in Yukutais was the active role that residents assumed in defining the future trajectory of their community and their young generations, and simultaneously, the space and agency that the elected community leader, the *síndico*, reserved for dialogic participation for his community. In fact, while these deliberations were ongoing, the *síndico* stood quietly in the corner, occasionally reaffirming his support of our study, but ultimately making an intentional effort to not interfere with the opportunity for his community to speak. In contrast with many typical Western leader archetypes, which often conflate the ability to monopolize conversation and belittle dissent with a symbolic show of strength, Yukutais

leadership was far more egalitarian. We make no mistake to misinterpret this power structure as the product of a lesser form of leadership. Rather, because "each individual is part of the fabric of both authority and power," traditional community life remains viable in today's deeply colonized world (Brady, 2007: 142).

Level 1: The Family and Ayllu *as Nursery for Communal Values*

[**All**] The fundamental unit of Indigenous communalism in much of the Ecuadorian Amazon is the family, or *ayllu* in the Amazonian Kichwa language. The *ayllu* is not strictly nuclear, often incorporating extended family members via marriage or other close community bonds formed by mutual commitment over time. Thus, the *ayllu* can be synonymous with the nuclear family, but this is not always the case. However, it is necessary to draw a distinction and emphasize that the nuclear home environment is the most crucial site of cultural transmission, acting as a nursery for the development of communal values. The growing presence of Western modernism – capitalist, hegemonic, more individualist society, and the technologies and lifestyles associated with it – presents a heightened challenge to Indigenous families wishing to instill these values in their children. Communal enculturation is an active, loving resistance to cultural loss (Smith-Morris, 2019: 53). Starting at the most fundamental level of communalism, the family allows us to understand more deeply the creation of larger communities, organizations, and movements. Communal ideals shape each of these entities and rely on the *ayllu* as a foundation.

Mariana,[2] a young woman from Unión Base, has just emerged into her 20s. She is in the process of earning a bachelor's degree from a university several hours away from her family, which is an uncommon event for members of this community. Her entrance into university studies has situated her in the heart of Western life, which is both physically and ideologically distanced from the communal ways of life at home. We met Mariana while she was back at home in Unión Base on vacation. She is proud to be pursuing a university education but laments that it pulls her away from her community when classes are in session. Mariana recounted how local ideals were taught to her from a young age by her mother, and how the products of this matriarchal commitment continue to be a touchstone of identity as she navigates her newfound urban milieu.

> I think that the community is based on this, on the *compañerismo* (camaraderie) and the help that is given to the brother … Perhaps I think it is because of the values and the ideas with which you create yourself and with which you grow … my parents educated me, so that if [I have the opportunity] I can help another person. It depends on how I was taught, and I do it with great pleasure.

While care for the family is certainly not unique to communalism or to this community in particular, the ways in which a deeply rooted commitment to

others is developed within the Unión Base family are worth mentioning. More so than a *teaching* process, youth in Unión Base are brought into a *constant practice* of communalism that is first transmitted through the family. From a young age, children accompany their parents to the *mingas*, an intensely collaborative process meant to address the needs of others, or of the community as a whole. The *minga* is described more fully in our discussion of community functions. These experiences of accompaniment demonstrate a process of ongoing and active learning, stemming from the *ayllu* environment, that introduces children to a profound commitment to every aspect of community life.

Elements of her communal upbringing, such as this commitment to *compañerismo*, are lasting products of a communalist commitment within the household. Mariana worries that the other products of this commitment, such as fluency in the Kichwa language, are more gravely threatened by her absence from community life. At her university, there are few opportunities to speak her family's language, and being a largely oral language, even fewer opportunities to read it. Mariana admitted that she was not confident in her Kichwa speaking skills before her studies, and now had lost much of her ability. Even still, commitment within her family structure persists into her adulthood to help her preserve her heritage.

> I hardly speak much [Kichwa] and my mom is teaching me little by little. So, I did start to worry [about losing it]. How does one get to an age where you worry about your nationality, my identity, or how I am going to leave it behind?

Cultural preservation is a fight that cannot be fought alone. For Mariana, heritage is maintained through the family. As a group of intimate belonging that extends beyond the self, the *ayllu* (specifically, the nuclear family) is the basis of communalism and the site of cultural generation and transmission, including the preservation of Kichwa, the mother tongue of her family. Language is a tool for transmitting ancestral knowledge, traditions, and practices vital to the continuity of the community as a whole. Thus, the *ayllu* acts as the point of origin for the ideals upon which larger communalist constructs (e.g., communities as a whole) are built. Mariana's story demonstrates the critical role of familial socialization in reproducing communalist ideals. Further, her efforts and the efforts of her family to preserve her heritage despite having moved to a distant city show how family remains integral to community life long after children emerge into adulthood.

Unión Base community members also emphasized the utility of radio communications in familial matters. Referring to both high-frequency (HF) radio available at the La Voz station, which allows for interpersonal communication, much like a phone call, and the La Voz FM broadcast, radio clearly contributes both pragmatically and affectively to family life. Some families in Unión Base and the surrounding communities are geographically separated.

Whether family members are forced to leave the community for urban economic or educational opportunities like Mariana, or have relocated to other Indigenous communities, often too far for regular contact, radio provides an opportunity to exercise familial communalism at a greater distance.

More than a pragmatic tool of communication, the emotional fulfillment provided by radio-mediated communication, and the security provided by the availability of a constant link to kin, demonstrate the "affective-symbolical" dimension of Indigenous community radio (Rodríguez, 2005). From an elderly Unión Base woman:

> It would be good to be able to communicate with family members who are far away. We have some relatives who are far away, [so] to be able to be more in contact with them, to know what is happening, how they are, and [to] spend more [time] peacefully communicating with them [would be good.]

Similarly, from a young adult woman in Yukutais:

> My community, the Shuar Yukutais Center, is located in a very distant place. I would very much like to be able to communicate with my family, with my families who are in other places … to share my daily events.

Radio offers these communities an opportunity to expand their worlds, as well as an opportunity to mitigate the isolating effects of this expansion by keeping close contact with loved ones. Deep commitments to family often require quotidian relational touchstones and affirmations. Here, radio is not creating new types of communalism within the family, but rather acting as a tool to strengthen the family unit even when at a distance. The challenges and transformations of the present have caused many families to separate over great geographic distances. Radio facilitates a continuation of intimate family contact in spite of these challenges. Further, as an Indigenous-owned radio, recognition must be given to the communal processes that worked to obtain the radio, and then operate it free of charge for families to use. In Unión Base, the two-way HF radio is housed in the same facility as the La Voz broadcast station. When families come to share messages with loved ones, they engage in deeply intimate contact in a public arena, yet they are accommodated with compassion and privacy. In this way, La Voz works to embody the communalism inherent to Indigenous community radio.

The manner in which CONFENIAE's audience listens to their broadcasts, which is often in family settings, is also important to our discussions of communalism. Without delving into the pilot study's statistics on listener behavior (reported elsewhere), the act of listening to radio broadcasts provides an important opportunity to physically convene on the family level. These events transcend the aural aspect of the radio listening experience and create "an embodied, intimate experience of ancestral time and space," one in which

family members learn from each other, and from the culturally relevant material being broadcast (Ennis, 2019; see also Chapter 3 in this volume). Radio fosters bonds of communication, support and affect between family members distant and near, and thus acts as a cohesive force for the most fundamental level of communalism. In the fight for the preservation of traditional lifeways, this convention of the family for the consumption of community-based media is an active resistance to the weakening of familial ties, an adverse symptom of Western modernity. Here, we are once again in agreement with Rodríguez (2005), who argues that radio has become a tool to resist the "extraordinarily hostile social and physical environment" that acts centrifugally on the nuclear family unit.

Level 2: Communalism in the Broader Community

[**All**] The formation and cohesion of Indigenous communities is built on ties between *ayllus*. These commitments between *ayllus* in a given community constitute the important local social institution of the *minga*. The *minga* is the internal driving force of community projects and initiatives, in which *ayllus* collaborate out of mutual moral commitment to address the needs of individuals or families in need, or of the community as a whole. As a collaborative social institution, each community member committed to a *minga* comes together in order to perform crucial tasks, such as the building of family or communal houses, clearing pathways, or carrying canoes to the river. These practices often take the form of a lively social event, with plenty of *chicha* (a traditional drink of fermented yucca, corn, or other regional variant) to go around. Indigenous communities are relational, territorial, and spiritually important places where each aspect of life is situated within the intrinsic relationship between human beings and territory; the *minga* is central to this relationship.

Relational groups of families, which collectively form communities, are constructed in a variety of ways, and their names and descriptive qualities vary regionally. *Ayllus* come together in mutual commitment through matriarchal alliances, intermarrying, or other unions affirmed and reaffirmed through time; these processes are relational at their core. Mary-Elizabeth Reeve describes the kin structure among Kichwa communities of the Curaray River, East of Puyo in the interior of the Ecuadorian Amazon; the *llacta* is defined as a "residence cluster" made of intermarrying *ayllus* – communities therefore consist of multiple *llaktas* (Reeve, 2022: 45). In Unión Base, the *llacta* is known as the *ayllu llakta*.[3] The *ayllu* structures the life of the community and guides its functioning in permanent balance with all the lives of nature (Viteri Gualinga, 2002). The ayllu is an instance of both blood and non-blood relations, based on shared experience in a specific territory in which the community settles, hence the intrinsic link of the ayllu with territory. *Ayllu llaktas* provide the social infrastructure for wider community life, upon which shared heritage can be cooperatively built.

[**AT**] In an example of personal nature, when I built my own house in Unión Base, the extended family supported the first *mingas* for the construction of my home. The community as a whole decided to allocate a specific piece of land for the construction. In this way, I, an individual, experienced the acceptance and support of the entire community through the assembly, and was graciously given the physical space as well as the collaborative labor of the *ayllu llakta*. Examples like these are numerous and apply to individuals like me, newlywed couples, nuclear families, underprivileged community members, and the elderly alike. Through the *minga*, the principle of communalism is applied unconditionally to those vested in the community.

In this context, the *minga*, as an institution for the social development of the community, plays a central role in inter- and intra-family relationships and the strengthening of family networks that make up the *ayllu llaktas*. Within the *minga*, other social instances are produced, such as the assembly – a symbolic cultural event, which creates spaces for exchange and community coexistence, thus reinforcing the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, and conviviality that underlie communalism.

These community assemblies, the various councils and congresses of the confederation, and all the instances of collective debate within the wider Indigenous movement are decision-making spaces that lead the poetics of Indigenous life and organization. They allow community-based reflections that guide the organizational work and the political agenda with which the mandates, resolutions, and demands of the communities of CONFENIAE are born. Community radio such as La Voz arises from the same community-driven processes. It is a product of the mandates that have been drawn in these same assemblies, not only by the leaders or members of the government councils, but by the community members themselves who are integrated into the daily life of the *ayllu, ayllu llaktas*, and beyond. For them, it is urgent to have their own communicative means, to have spaces that make visible their realities and aspirations, their problems, opportunities, threats, and weaknesses. Therefore, the emergence of a community medium allows Indigenous peoples to hoist the banner of struggle together in times of solidarity.

[**All**] While the radio station's physical presence within the heart of the Unión Base community is of great importance to community members, La Voz de la CONFENIAE has taken on an integral symbolic value as well. Valuable not only for its ability to link listeners with news, music, and entertainment, some feel that the radio's programming provides reaffirmation of identity and of local community belonging. Ian Watson (2013) documents this symbolic role performed by an Indigenous community radio program in the Northern Australian Peninsula – specifically, conceptualizing the community radio station as a source of broad "empowerment," promoting pride, feelings of connectedness, and involvement both on the individual and community levels. When speaking with a woman in her mid-30s from Unión Base, she remarked:

> Through this … of these media. Now it is already being generated, that sense of belonging in our roots.

Similarly, another Unión Base woman of similar age echoed this sentiment. By having access to culturally sensitive content, often broadcast in the Kichwa language, media becomes a touchstone of self-identification.

> I think it is very feasible that the work they are doing [at the radio]. I mean, we identify ourselves with this.

[**AT**] To explain this response on behalf of the community more broadly, we can see that the radio programming represents the visions and aspirations of community life. By way of example, consider a program highlighting the community enterprises of artisan women. The popularity of the program facilitates the emergence of larger spaces in which Kichwa women exhibit their products and handicrafts. When they see these ventures represented in a program on the radio, women reinforce their identity through the radio content. As opposed to other mainstream media outlets, where the Indigenous People are often invisible, media like La Voz are by and for Indigenous peoples, and people thus identify with them. This is certainly the case of *Remando*, a radio program at La Voz led by Kichwa and Achuar women, focused on the role of women in social, political, and community life, along with their challenges, realities, dreams, and current demands.

[**All**] In addition to maintaining communicational contact within and between families, as occurs at the first level of communalism, radio bolsters communalism across broader local scales. With the ever-increasing interjection of modernity into generations-old Indigenous traditions and lifeways, many adults in both Unión Base and Yukutais fear for the continuity of cultural transmission. Radio, as identified by both communities, is a tool for countering the youth's cultural loss, thus promoting stronger identification with the community. Indeed, the radio fulfills this articulate role between previous, current, and future generations, thanks to the possibility it creates for transmitting inherited knowledge in accessible and innovative formats for the youth. An example of this is the radio series *Mitos y Leyendas* (Myths and Legends), a work led by a group of young communicators known as the *Lanceros Digitales* (Digital Spearmen). For this program, ancestral knowledge from *apamamas* and *apayayas* (grandmothers and grandfathers) is presented during the peak hours of La Voz's schedule, drawing some of the station's largest audiences. The series achieves not only greater involvement of the youth in tradition, but that of a broader public, reaching the rural, urban, and urban margins. The collection of ancestral knowledge, and subsequent broadcast and online publication fulfills another of the radio's aims of generating a rich collective memory and promoting the ideals of community life.

For instance, just as Mariana fears losing the Kichwa language, adults throughout Unión Base and Yukutais share concerns that their community's youth will lose their language. To this point, La Voz broadcasts come in several Indigenous languages, providing youth an opportunity to reinforce their language abilities, and to take pride in their cultural presence in FM airways.

The shared commitment to preserving heritage and ancestral knowledge is performed by Indigenous communities themselves, however, radio has become a way to support this active process. In Yukutais, where CONFENIAE radio broadcasts do not yet reach, one of the men we interviewed, not alone in his comments, had already dreamed of this utility.

> The youth are already losing a part [of our culture] and it would be important to strengthen it in some way with some [radio] program.

Thus, communalism, which is rooted in the intimate family structure, propagates outwardly via connections between *ayllus* and *ayllu llaktas* to bind entire communities together. Communities are centered around shared territory, cultural heritage, language, and general conviviality. Radio, specifically Indigenous community radio, promotes community cohesion, bringing people together with culturally relevant programming to aid in intergenerational transmission, while acting as a touchstone for one's identity. As has been demonstrated, the mission and vision of the radio responds to the work agenda of the organizations – in this case, CONFENIAE. Therefore, radio programming obeys the postulates outlined in the community assemblies, which are rooted in the community members themselves. Radio transmits the aspirations and needs identified by the communities in their collective debate spaces.

Thus, radio is both a product of communalism and a tool for the practice and extension of communal principles.

Level 3: La Voz and Cross-Community Connections

[**All**] Western portrayals of Indigenous peoples in academic spheres and popular media alike often draw heavily upon essentialized tropes of indigeneity. These tropes pull from dramatized depictions of uncontacted tribes, emphasize backwardness, and often reduce Indigenous plurality to a homogenous singular. Certainly, many communities choose to live in relative isolation, occasionally choosing to maintain a complete lack of contact with outsiders (e.g., Pappalardo et al., 2013). However, the tendency of settler-colonial society to divide, and subsequently reinforce Indigenous identities as reduced typologies is merely an imposition of Western concepts of statehood and identity at the expense of local realities. Thus, the geographically fragmented Indigenous landscape seen in countries such as Ecuador is an artifact of Spanish colonial governance (Novo, 2021). The nation-state itself can be viewed similarly; the borders imposed upon Indigenous peoples are colonial relics – imaginaries of imperial expanse.

With the emergence of mass communications, Indigenous peoples slowly gained heightened access to the ability to forge relationships and alliances with neighboring communities and peoples. Furthermore, the geographical fragmentation of many families often leads to inter-ethnic *compadrazgo* ties between *ayllus* of different communities, sometimes spanning great cultural

and linguistic differences (Reeve, 2022: 45). Thus, communications technology, for many communities, provides the unique opportunity to expand worldviews, social connections, and conceptions of community belonging in a way that transcends community borders (Rodríguez, 2005). *Compadrazgo* ties lead to alliances between communities as a whole. While larger-scale communities like these are often rallied around other factors, such as shared geography, sports, or other traditions, in our study, Indigenous radio has been a facilitator of pluralist community space. Specifically, this space revolves around the sentiment, shared by many Indigenous peoples, that their common inter-ethnic identity as *indígenas* is worth organizing around.

La Voz de la CONFENIAE exemplifies radio's role in promoting cross-community connections. The great value of maintaining regular contact with distant neighbors was often cited in our interviews. While discussing the hardships and adversities of modern Indigenous life, many express a broad empathy with the invisible, distant other, and describe radio as a way to engage and empathize through shared strife. This engagement ranges from simple communication (e.g., inquiring about the weather or other day-to-day occurrences) to much more serious conversations regarding health and safety. In Unión Base, some community members involved with medicinal plants and healing practices, particularly among the interviewed women, feel passionate about using radio to check on the health of surrounding, and sometimes distant communities in order to coordinate healing efforts and cross-community support. In this case, radio acts as an extension of an established communalist practice, allowing individuals to exercise moral commitments to the collective well-being of groups both within and well beyond community borders.

A female Unión Base elder described how radio, particularly HF radio, is used in situations of health emergencies. Her account was supported by various workers at the radio who recounted times that HF radio had been used to coordinate emergency healthcare services.

> Some are sick inside the forest, that is why they communicate … they ask for help so that they can leave and get to the city to go to the hospital.

From another Unión Base adult woman:

> I would like to communicate to be able to help … direct [treatment] or give [them] an idea so that they can support themselves with natural medicines because there are no clinics there. It is very, very far away in the Kichwa territories.

[**NS**] I led these two interviews outside of a territorial preservation and medicinal plant workshop that had been organized by a local organization for Unión Base women. Both of the women behind these quotes were respected figures for their knowledge of ancestral healing methods and were excited to tell me about them unprompted. I was struck by the urgency with which they spoke to me about their

role in the health of their more distant neighbors. This concern seemed in no way part of an organizational or occupational expectation, but rather a deep moral obligation that they felt to their community and to the communities around them. As they spoke of their curative roles and of the plight of their sick neighbors, the emotion that came across their faces was an unmistakable reflection of the affect inherent to these communal intertwinements.

[**All**] Beyond these more acute needs met through HF radio, radio also promises the possibility of enacting relationships with other bordering communities and those further afield. In these instances, radio allows communities to reciprocally share their culture, language, and worldviews with other Indigenous peoples. For example, many in Unión Base and Yukutais place a great emphasis on creating and maintaining relationships and connections between Indigenous nationalities. This focus is well-represented in the organizational strategies of CONFENIAE: collective decision-making at community assemblies, plurinational ancestral festivities, ceremonies and parties, and community visits on behalf of elected leaders create physical and symbolic spaces for these intercultural connections to thrive. Radio also has served well to this aim in Unión Base, and those in Yukutais spoke to us of the promise of this utility.

From a man in Yukutais:

> It is what we most want to communicate between nationalities of others, from other places, from other provinces.

The increasing access to radio that many Indigenous communities are enjoying is a great facilitator of the pluralist Indigenous movement. Having connections to other communities, even other nationalities, via FM and HF radio expands the possibilities of collaboration and communalist expression across cultural lines. Despite this, above all else, hearing one's own Indigenous language on the radio is a validating experience, described to us as a source of empowerment in the face of discrimination.

> We speak Kichwa, but they discriminate against us for it. Now we are proud to put it on our resume.

This quote captures the power of Indigenous radio to inspire community members to claim and announce their Indigenous identities despite the marginalization experienced by Indigenous peoples. Because of the Kichwa language content that La Voz broadcasts, speaking Kichwa has become a point of pride for this speaker and something that now carries weight as a valued skill in a multicultural society that has historically repressed Indigenous peoples. This visibilization of Indigenous languages thus positions Indigenous radio as an agent of resistance to hegemony and a promoter of the self-identification necessary for the continuity of communalist practices.

The different levels of communalism from the family structure to inter-family *ayllu llakta* networks, and now to inter-community expressions

demonstrates that communalism manifests in various ways. In part facilitated by Indigenous community radio, collaboration and solidarity over large geographical distances has allowed many to connect and organize across cultural lines.

Level 4: Communalism in Indigenous Political Organization

[**All**] As we have thus far seen, *ayllus*, rooted in the nuclear family, are the basis of communalism. Next, *ayllu llaktas* form communities, and sometimes engage with more distant communities collaborating around *mingas*, language, organizational events, or various needs. In each of these levels, radio fortifies existing communalist practices and allows new ways to express communalism, and can even support or assist the modes of communication that generate and sustain relational bonds. Communalism exists independently of the radio, however the radio is useful in adapting to the novel situations of the present. Now, in the fourth level of communalist engagement, we see Indigenous ethnopolitical associations. These local associations, wider in scope, form the larger collectives – ethnic federations – needed to interact with federal offices and processes. These federations represent particular Indigenous nationalities as a whole; the product of collaboration between federations is even larger, forming the pluralist confederation (e.g., CONFENIAE). The creation of ethnic confederations requires different processes of communal engagement, ones that reach beyond ethnic divisions so that Indigenous peoples can be powerful actors in national and international legal landscapes.

As opposed to many Indigenous authorities, elected federal leadership is usually far more hierarchical and removed from the lived experience of constituents. As a result, power is localized in the electorate and the consequences of this power emanate downward. On the contrary, Indigenous leadership and authority are often more horizontal, formed by the collective commitments of each individual (Brady, 2007); this shared commitment prioritizes authority that is "closely tied to the subjective, experiential, and local qualities of life" (Smith-Morris, 2019: 70; see also Erazo, 2013). The creation of large political (e.g., regional, national, and international governing) with vertical power distribution, does not necessarily detract from Indigenous expressions of communalism (2005; see also Corntassel & Primeau, 1995). Instead, these federations and confederations interface with local and state governments and other international actors to act as stewards of the emic priorities of Indigenous communities (Wilson, 2015).

Indigenous federations and confederations, inevitably bureaucratic to an extent and focused more broadly than daily community life, are representational in a way not always embraced by Indigenous peoples. At their core, however, these organizations are built around the principles of community involvement, representation, and autonomy. Their centrality in recent Ecuadorian politics substantiates a need to discuss Indigenous communalism, as it guides many aspects of Ecuadorian Indigenous polity.

The emergence of Indigenous political organizations such as these in Latin America to advocate for communal priorities has drastically altered the socio-political climate (e.g., Canessa, 2006). Alfred and Corntassel (2005) describe the birth of these organizations as products of "forced federalism," in which Indigenous peoples replicate hegemonic bureaucratic structures to gain legitimacy in the political sphere; Specifically, colonial bureaucracy assumes that settler power is "the fundamental reference and assumption," which attempts to force Indigenous peoples into "a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power" (p. 601).

In times of community crisis or duress, broad Indigenous political groups and alliances are mobilized to meet the needs of the locality. For instance, communities facing acute danger from oil spills are met with rapid responses emanating from larger centralized Indigenous organizations, often across ethnic lines, as seen in the confederations' efforts to aid the recent resistances of the Waorani and Shuar Arutam nationalities.

Indigenous political organization is rooted in local expressions of communalism and communitarianism. Each of the prior levels of communalism that have been described in this chapter (*ayllu*, community, inter-ethnic *compadrazgo*, political) are active and involved in the larger communalist communities provided by confederations such as CONFENIAE. We believe this is shown in the following case study of radio and its role in the *paro nacional* of 2022.

El Paro Nacional: Radio and Communalism in Broad Socio-Political Context

[**All**] The protests that occurred in Ecuador in 2022, known as the *paro nacional*, demonstrate more recently and urgently how political organization and mobilization is rooted in communalism. The nation-state of Ecuador, not to be conflated with the Indigenous peoples living within imposed Ecuadorian borders, has been no exception to the neoliberalization experienced by much of Latin America in recent decades. This socio-political transformation, marked by an increasing reliance on the export of natural resources, such as oil, minerals, and gas, increasing government decentralization, and a laissez-faire approach to international commerce, has disproportionately impacted the lifeways of Indigenous peoples (e.g., Lu & Silva, 2015). A symptom of this neoliberal paradigm of development is the increasingly large role that multilateral financial institutions and multinational corporations have taken in defining Ecuador's development trajectory, particularly on the local scale (Sawyer & Gomez, 2012). Externally imposed development agendas such as these often cast a burden on already marginalized populations (Escobar, 1995). In fact, during the social uprising of October 2019, Leonidas Iza, president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), addressed IMF austerity measures, and expressed the following in a speech to more than 50,000 spectators:

> We, the entire pueblo, are here now, rising up until the economic measures of the International Monetary Fund fall.
>
> (Iza et al., 2023).

These social and economic issues boiled over in Ecuador in June of 2022, as protests organized via social media and radio broadcasts brought the country to a halt. We witnessed as Ecuadorian Indigenous confederations directly combated the systemic invisibilization of Indigenous peoples, leveraging community and social media to demand the attention of the wider public (Rodríguez, 2005). We make no attempt at chronicling the events of the protests, nor do we suggest that they were exclusively carried out by Indigenous peoples. However, the protests featured tenacious displays of multicultural Indigenous collaboration, with "*somos un pueblo*" (we are one people) echoing throughout the protests and on social media. Thus, the *paro* can be taken as an example of how locally grounded expressions of communalism can coalesce into large displays of multicultural communal commitment.

The 18 days of protest brought Ecuador to a standstill: roadblocks closed most major highways leading in and out of Quito, protestors were met with escalating force from police, paramilitary and military personnel, and several protestors were killed, including a young Indigenous man, who was killed by police in Puyo near the La Voz radio station. Despite the state's attempt at co-opting Indigenous platforms and delegitimizing Indigenous leadership through criminalizing rhetoric, Ecuador's Indigenous peoples maintained a unified front to demand socioeconomic justice. Without regard to Indigenous nationality, community of origin, or language spoken, an intense, highly inclusive plurinational alliance was enacted. Beth Conklin and Laura Graham (1995) discuss this "transnational" collaboration as a necessity to resist the ambiguity with which Indigenous rights are often constitutionally enforced.

Without erasing the particular identity of Ecuador's diverse Indigenous peoples or the nationalities they belong to, or diving into identity politics, many of our interviews emphasized a feeling of empowerment and intercultural brotherhood stemming from a united "Indigenous identity." This broad intercultural indigeneity, in addition to shared economic strife, served as a rallying point for many during the *paro*.

During an interview, when asked about the significance of multicultural Indigenous alliance, a 21-year-old woman from Unión Base said the following:

> [*Un pueblo*] refers to everyone fighting for a good, because at that moment when they have to fight for a brother, we are not a nationality, we are not a community, but we are a pueblo. Because I think that the community is based on this, on the camaraderie and the help that is given to the brother.

In Yukutais, far more distant from the epicenter of the 2022 protests, a 58-year-old man spoke similarly of the collaboration between diverse peoples of the Indigenous movement:

> We are all united, of the Indigenous nationality … everything is [because of] how we are united, and we should all die [united] like this. And as the common national and Indigenous [people] that we are, [we are] together, and nothing [can cause us] to separate. [We are] all the same.

Collaboration on this scale emerged rapidly in response to collective strife and calls from Indigenous leadership through community media, such as community-controlled radio. The exclusive coverage of La Voz de la CONFENIAE during the events of the mobilization of June 2022 posed a challenge for CONFENIAE and for the Indigenous movement as a whole. The previous experience of national protests in 2019 led to the establishment of a media siege by the nation's communication networks at the onset of the protests, preventing many from following the events. Given this barrier to popular media, the strategy outlined by CONAIE and CONFENIAE was the mobilization of a network of community-based media throughout the country to communicate the experiences and realities of the protests. La Voz played a key role in this obligation. Deployment of community reporters throughout the country was the starting point. Both the central team of the radio and a series of allied communicators from other popular media collaborated to transmit the messages. In this way, the confederation reached a vast number of its members, achieving the objective of wide engagement and dispersed knowledge sharing and co-production through local involvement.

As protestors traveled in droves to Quito or coordinated protests in their own villages and towns, many willingly launched themselves into positions of vulnerability, far from housing, and in need of food and water, only to meet the support of others. From a 69-year-old Unión Base woman recalling the arrival of protestors at nearby Puyo:

> They came here [for the paro] and we helped cook [for them] the first time. And well, as we are a collective, then we had to help them, those here … our people, for example, of the nationalities … [for] everyone, yes … For example, we [made] cassava, chicha, plantains, we have donated all that and anything and everything.

To support the movement, a radically committed and highly diverse Indigenous support network engaged in communal acts of solidarity. While many protested in the streets, many others banded their resources together, providing food, medicine, and shelter to protestors. The 2022 protests provide an understanding of how communalism can contextually emerge from localities onto an intercultural stage, extending beyond ties of kinship or ethnicity. Normally bound by geographical and logistical constraints, these multicultural endeavors are produced by necessity, yet would not be possible without a baseline, lasting commitment to common, inclusive prosperity. Ultimately, these passionate displays of collaboration are made possible in modernity when Indigenous political organizations witness and empower communal priorities.

Conclusion

By seeking to understand Indigenous radio as a tool to express and shape communalism within and across multiple levels of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples, we acknowledge core elements of these Indigenous lifeways yet avoid essentialism. Thus, by acknowledging the existence of an overarching Indigenous movement, we also distance ourselves from any suggestion of pan-Indigenous homogeneity and recognize that the results of this pilot study do not encapsulate the multitude of Indigenous identities, relations, and cosmologies found in and beyond the Ecuadorian Amazon. In this chapter, we have tried to illustrate the pragmatic, affective, and reciprocal commitment that Indigenous families, communities, inter-ethnic associations, and political organizations share in promoting communalist goals.

We have shared voices and opinions from two Indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon as they reflected on the impacts of a community radio program, La Voz de la CONFENIAE. Community members resoundingly praised the utility of such radio, both as a conduit of communalism and a promoter of community belonging. Additionally, we pull from community histories, organizational processes, and recent social and political mobilizations to demonstrate communalism as it is enacted and valued in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

We emphasize that radio is emerging as a platform for Indigenous communities to enact their communal ideals through dissemination to, and interconnection with, a wider public. The public broadcast of community knowledge, so inextricable, historically bound, and "inalienable to the collective," inherently constitutes a communal action, for it is the selfless offering of ancestral, crowdsourced expertise for the sake of mutual aid, with no expectation of individual-level compensation or recognition (Smith-Morris, 2019: 73).

On the most fundamental level, communalism is rooted in the intimate nuclear family structure, which is encapsulated by the *ayllu*; here, communal ideals and customs are reproduced and transmitted intergenerationally. Radio communications bolster these familial communalist expressions by providing families with an opportunity to physically convene to listen to local programming – additionally, two-way HF radio allows families to stay in close contact across greater distances. In effect, the audience of a community radio is a collective, not limited to an individual listener, but rather many nuclear and extended families that form part of the medium. This reinforces the social character of the medium and aligns it with the principle of popular communication for which it was created. The participative nature of the medium also makes it an expression of communalism and forms part of the daily life of the *ayllu*, the community, and the wider associations and confederation.

The second level of communalism reported here occurs between *ayllus* and *ayllu llaktas*. Shared commitments between several families form the collective

meshwork that holds entire communities together. Again, considering geographical distance and the impacts of colonial society (e.g., having to relocate for work opportunities), radio communications bolster existing community ties for those with access to the medium.

Even more broadly, on the third level, communities form commitments with each other over even greater distances. The resulting ethnic associations enact communalism in different ways than the more intimate levels in order to respond to the unique social and political challenges facing Indigenous peoples at larger scales. Ethnic associations from the same nationality come together to broaden their scope even further, forming federations.

Looking beyond lines of nationality, these federations unite to build much larger multicultural confederations, such as CONFENIAE. This large-scale political organization, and the "intercultural communalism" that it fosters, constitutes the fourth and largest level of communalism identified here (Chapter 4 in this volume). These confederations rely on radio communications not only for pragmatic purposes, but for symbolic purposes as well, providing members of their various communities with culturally relevant programming and opportunities for organizational involvement. Through this, individuals can enact both their ethnic citizenship and their commitment to a larger Indigenous movement. The intimate representation strategies of Indigenous confederations, such as frequent *asambleas* (assemblies), celebrations, and community visits, and their associated media outlets (community radio, social media, etc.), work to foster a broader Indigenous community built on mutual solidarity while respecting and celebrating cultural difference.

Documenting the ways in which Indigenous peoples enact communalism on multiple levels to counter modernity and its harms is of paramount importance. Through the communalist expressions identified in this chapter and those by Black et al. (Chapter 5), Akubadaura et al. (Chapter 6), and so many others, we can see that many Indigenous peoples are actively preserving their lifeways while resisting colonial abuses, including rampant co-optation and demonization from state governments, popular media, and their corporate allies. More broadly, these accounts of cultural preservation and resilience echo this volume's larger intent to illustrate the dire threats posed by the workings of modern capitalist and political agendas. These threats were captured during the *paro*, where media portrayals of Indigenous organizations, and of the Indigenous peoples represented by them, were disheartening. For instance, Ecuador's president at the time, Guillermo Lasso, took to social media to actively discredit and demonize the Indigenous movement, often equating them to criminals or threats to state prosperity. However, it should not go unnoticed that although Lasso is a right-leaning neoliberal, Ecuador's presidential leadership has historically found itself at odds with Indigenous peoples regardless of where it falls on the political spectrum (Novo, 2021).

Despite these pressures, acute political mobilization demonstrates how expressions of Indigenous communalism change contextually. The *paro* was made possible by commitments to radical inclusivity, in which thousands of

Indigenous protestors supported each other across nationalities – certainly, communalism is present in these times of mobilization as we have demonstrated. These acts of communalism are context-dependent; however, we argue that they happen in spite of colonial suppression, not as a result.

In the face of anti-Indigenous rhetoric, academic resources must be leveraged to promote Indigenous projects and visibility to counter the onslaught of repression. Recognizing the utility of radio in promoting communalism urges a reconsideration of the role of the researcher. Researchers, rather than viewing Indigenous communities as subjects under the "proverbial diorama glass," must work to become allies in promoting Indigenous agendas, rather than extracting Indigenous knowledge for one-sided gain. We assert a critical reconsideration of the academic paradigm of knowledge ownership; Indigenous knowledge systems (for there is no singular "Indigenous" knowledge) are owned by those that possess, practice, and transmit them intergenerationally. The interpretive and analytical views of the anthropologist must not be confused with ultimate epistemological authority.

Increasingly, settler-colonial society, of which non-Indigenous peoples are inherently complicit, demands much of Indigenous peoples while offering little compromise. Faced with symbolic and literal annihilation, Indigenous peoples are demanded to adapt to the conditions of modernity, our moment's extension of the imperial project, in order to survive. Born out of necessity, many Indigenous peoples around the globe have built political structures after the style of settler bureaucracy, learned settler languages, and performed identities based on settler understandings of indigeneity. In sum, settler governments and societies force Indigenous peoples into ontological plurality, while rarely, if ever, displaying the same plasticity in order to accommodate Indigenous ways of being, including the expressions of communalism identified here.

Notes

1 Nowadays, La Voz have incorporated the podcast program called "Raíces Resistentes" (Resistant Roots) regarding risk management (gestión de riesgos) in the northern part of the Amazonian region with participation by the ancestral peoples of this corner of the rainforest (Siona, Siekopai, Ai Kofan, and Kichwa).
2 All names used for research participants are pseudonyms.
3 The different spellings of *llacta* and *llakta* do not carry different meanings. In Unión Base, *llacta* is thought to be an older spelling.

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11 Politics of Representations

Making Indigenous Paintings for Sale in Central Australia

Françoise Dussart

Introduction

Indigenous Central Australia in the early 1980s became a bustling place with the production of Aboriginal art transposed on new media – stretched canvases and acrylic paints. As I and others (see, e.g., Dussart, 2007; Morphy, 1991; Myers, 2002) have shown the contemporary production of Indigenous artworks for sale – often held as a mark of "Indigenous modernity" – cannot be understood without careful analysis of its complex entanglements with neocolonial Australia and its local negotiations processes. As I highlight in this chapter, such understanding can help us explore the changing nature of what it means and how it means to be "Indigenous," as well as the shifting values and expectations associated with the production of artworks grounded in ontological knowledge, *savoir-faire*, and pragmatism dialogue with broader transformations in the life of Indigenous people who live in so-called remote Central Australia. In other words, dialogues among Warlpiri artists, and among artists, non-Indigenous art coordinators, and buyers about producing Warlpiri artworks for sale emphasize selected cultural, generational, and gendered attributes while affirming different paths to *Warlpiri-inesses* – representation, accountability, and recognition – locally constituted and globally framed by colonial and neocolonial politics over time.

The group of Warlpiri people I started to work with in 1983 were forced to sedentarize just after World War II and many were sent to a ration depot in the Northern Territory run by the government in 1946 and called Yuendumu. Today about 800 people live in Yuendumu and are for the large majority Warlpiri and speak Warlpiri as their first language. They have seen most of their lands returned to them through successful land claims procedures under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act (1976) and under the Native Title (1993) legislation.

When I first arrived in Yuendumu in 1983 as a 23-year-old graduate student, I spent the first few months concentrating on learning Warlpiri and explaining to people what I was hoping to study – ritual body designs and ceremonial performances. As I have detailed elsewhere, several members of different kin groups living then in Yuendumu understood how they could reorient my research and manage my presence. A perfect alignment of sorts was in the making for grounding life-long friendship and collaborative work: an upcoming land claim for which I initially

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-15

collected all the necessary genealogies, a desire to return to their homelands and their need of a reliable driver who was not originally tethered or indebted to any specific kin group, a growing interest in commercializing their artforms as a nearby settlement was doing and their need for a White emissary who could buy supplies and sell their artworks.

In turn over 40 senior women and a dozen of senior men took it upon themselves to educate me, to teach me Warlpiri, to spend time showing me how to read the land, sharing their ritual knowledge and how to become an ally. They have allowed me to drive them to their distant lands, to archive their knowledge, and to become a friend, aka fictional kin. Through many decades, our relationships have recalibrated as we have engaged with different political contingencies and possibilities. As we aged together, I continued to ask questions and my friends formulated new questions as well, figuring out how we could construct more effective ways to represent their interests. We have had to reset more than once what it meant to work with one another and for what purposes, some projects became undone. But Warlpiri elders never wavered, and despite harsher governmental policies and failed initiatives, their dominant organizing value for representation has remained kin-relatedness (Myers, 1986; Dussart, 1989). As Fred Myers has initially explained, the "inner logic" of Indigenous people in Central Australia expressed itself in complex patterns of relatedness and autonomy mediated by "the cultural representation of hierarchy as nurturance" (1986: 22). Individuals may represent themselves without offending or implicating other kin who are not present at an event or with whom they have not discussed what knowledge, or what design or what ritual can or cannot be performed. Religious affiliations, economic welfare, and political allegiances continue to be governed by the principles of kin-relatedness (see Dussart, 2000; Schwarz & Dussart, 2010). They did not represent "their Warlpiri community" or "Yuendumu," an entity which is lived as a space created and controlled by colonial and neocolonial powers. Understanding how such tensions between relatedness and autonomy – ways of being in the world – have and I would argue continue to counter colonial epistemology of the self/group dualism, has been for me the most important life lesson (see also Smith-Morris and Abadia's Introduction in this volume). The elders "who grew me up" have now alas all passed away. Since the beginning of our friendship, they held me accountable to make accessible some of their knowledge to younger generations by returning digitized songs, photographs of their ceremonial performances, and the personal stories of their grand- and great-grand parents. Such returns are not always easy, and even at times, contested and fraught as both stakes and players may have changed as well as why and how they want to redeploy (or not) "returned" Indigenous knowledges (see also Barwick et al., 2020).

Artistic Deployment, Representation and Social Change

As in most Aboriginal art from Central Australia, the main graphic symbols used by painters include circles, semi-circles, lines, meanders, dots, animal, and

human footprints. These symbols are combined to tell ritual and non-ritual stories. Traditionally, the ritual designs are applied to wooden objects, the human body, and to the ground. Accompanied by sacred songs and dances, ritual designs connect people to their kin, their land, and the Ancestral Beings. Ritual designs from these surfaces have now been recombined on painted canvases and are bought by tourists, art galleries, and museums. Most paintings are grounded in geo-specific cosmological stories celebrating Ancestral Beings in *Jukurrpa* – the Ancestral Present – also known in English as the Dreaming.

In Yuendumu, painting with acrylics on canvases for sale began in earnest in 1983, when some 30 older women (over 35 years old) decided to raise money for a Toyota. Previously, these women tightly connected through kinship and friendship bonds had access to a vehicle that they used for hunting, visiting sacred sites, and other visits to neighbor communities for ritual activities which was then beyond repairs. By the end of 1984, they were able to buy the Toyota with revenues gained from painting sales. This experience underlined the pragmatic value of painting as a source of revenue in a place plagued by lack of jobs and a place where Indigenous people rely mostly on welfare payments. Men soon joined in. Interest in the acrylic paintings was immediate and intense partly because of their "recognition" as "authentically Indigenous." As I have shown elsewhere such an explosion of interests occurred at a moment that valued multifaceted efforts to nurture Indigenous self-reliance in Australia in the 1980s. After more than three decades of "sedentarized" oppression, Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents at Yuendumu made countless efforts to encourage a sense of Indigenous cultural pride and self-reliance, as well as help the world beyond the settlement to appreciate and recognize Warlpiri knowledges and claims. It is never surprising to them that the world is interested in their art and worldviews, as they are imbued with power of the Dreaming.

Men and women involved in the early stages of the so-called acrylic movement were all over 40 and held expertise and knowledge and were very active in the ritual domain. Acrylic painting mirrored from the start the gerontocratic rules around production, performance and transmission of ritual knowledge. With declining ritual activities painting for sale has become since a site where knowledge can be transmitted to younger individuals interested in learning. An art cooperative was incorporated in 1985 and has since become one of the most successful Aboriginally owned businesses run in collaboration since its inception with non-Indigenous art coordinators at Yuendumu. The art cooperative counts today over 300 individual painters painting on and off. This art cooperative is called Warlukurlangu and is what Mario Blaser called a "life-project" (Blaser, 2004: 26) (see also the intercultural initiative discussed by Uitoto, Korevaju, and Muinane Peoples et al. in Chapter 4 in this volume). In other words, the artworks are about Indigenous knowledges and skills, they are the deeds to their lands, they provide an idiom for action and ways for the painters – as individuals and members of kin/family groups associated with territories and Dreaming-stories – to project themselves into a future. I want to

make clear here that the early efforts to make the art cooperative viable were tethered to specific families' efforts. These families did not see themselves as a "community" (i.e., Yuendumu) or as a "collective," but rather as small social units formed through residency, the bonds of kinship, and neocolonial social realignment (Dussart, 2000). Today, combined with non-Indigenous obsession to find and celebrate "individual artists" rather than a people, rights to paint acrylics for sale have become even more circumscribed to individuals within family groups.

Acrylics as a Neocolonial Political Tool

From the point of view of their makers, paintings for sale should be straightforwardly translated into efficient, economic, and political action: i.e., making sure that white people first of all understand the power/value of the Dreaming and buy the paintings, and second that they cannot thus dispossess families/kin groups again of their lands. Acrylic paintings for sale tell stories of struggle, resistance, connectedness, appropriation, entanglement, and change. Acrylics play a role in managing claims to places (rituals and other political and economic issues surrounding the area) and social positions. They also represent moments of individual pride when they are sold and appreciated by national and international buyers. In short, they play a role in the enactment of identities – often contested outside as well as within – in a neocolonial world (see Dussart, 2007, 2012; Carty, 2010). Through their engagements with the art cooperative, individuals and families have interpreted and reinterpreted modernity, as well as their places within the Australian settler state. More recently, during the pandemic and long periods of lockdowns, the sale of their acrylic paintings has also become the most substantial and visible links to the outside world.

As social and cultural shifts have intensified in the last couple of decades, the painting of acrylics has also become a discursive field in the expression of ontological and cosmological knowledges, of kin ownership of territories and associated myths, of Warlpiri law, and of identity. Painters' accountabilities to their kincentric ontology remain strongly tied to delineating identity (see also Morphy, Chapter 13 in this volume). Today, the bottom line, from a Warlpiri perspective, if you are not from a specific place, if your relatives do not teach you, you cannot paint the geo-specific ritual designs narrating the marvelous acts performed by the Ancestral Beings in the *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming), and in the process maintain and nurture both land and its people physically and spiritually. As performances of *Warlpirinesses*, acrylic paintings, from the perspective of their makers, are authoritative messages about rights and responsibilities to the land and the individuals and families who live on and with it. These experiences are also at times quite stressful in recent years. A young painter explained to a buyer in 2019 that he paints only his Dreaming story tied to specific territories for fear of reprisals: "We are scared of being sung[1] if we paint other people's places, people can get really mean and dangerous. I am a young man, I do not want to be sung [i.e., die]."

Negotiations around designs and what to paint for sale have recently further delineated, limited and circumscribed the rights of specific individuals within family groups. In other words, certain portions of Dreaming-stories which in the past could be told and painted by many different individuals connected through bonds of kinship and experiences are now the exclusive property of certain individuals and families. In some cases, such realignments have motivated some painters to disengage and stop painting to avoid conflicts and stress. Others for other motives – religious, disenchanted with mainstream politics toward Indigenous people, resisting gerontocratic relationships so they can learn about their Dreaming-stories, or refusing to be perceived as an "authentic" Warlpiri person by the world beyond the settlement only if they painted acrylics, to name just a few – rarely engage with acrylic painting for sale. In other words, engaging or disengaging from painting has become a way to constitute oneself as a Warlpiri person and kin. Painting acrylics remains the only other source of cash, aside from welfare monies, on the settlement. Payments for paintings are processed relatively fast providing opportunities for individuals to access a certain amount of cash which will be almost immediately redistributed among kin or used for food or gas. The local pressure to get involved in the painting business can at times be palpable. On the one hand, the art cooperative provides a space for artistic expressions entangled with kin-related pressures of performing paintings which are "correct" and sanctioned by senior knowledgeable relatives. As such paintings for sale can be perceived as an engagement with the land, the Dreaming, the ancestors, and one's kin. On the other hand, individuals may want to resist the entanglements of local kin pressures of engagement, of witnessing and of showing their cultural patrimony to a global market whose thirst for "authenticity" is unquenchable. Not a novel point, but the irony here is that the individual and kin assertions of their land sovereignty through their paintings grounded in their Dreaming-stories – immutable and never changing – have become the global markers of "authenticity" sustaining the neocolonial project. It seems that for now Aboriginal people will continue to produce art for sale, struggle with internal and external pressures surrounding entangled modalities of representations in a neocolonial world challenging (or not) what "the lines laid down by the official institutional structures of representation" (Spivak, 1990: 306).

Conclusion

As I have discussed elsewhere the diversity of motives and methods behind producing, disengaging, reengaging, or not producing artworks for sale in Yuendumu manifests and contributes to the intensely heterogenous nature of neocolonial Aboriginal settlement life today (see for examples Ginsburg, 2016 and Deger, 2013 on the production of Indigenous visual media).

For young and old, men and women, participating in the production of acrylic paintings (or not) shows how their understanding of belonging has pivoted upon the complexities for Warlpiri individuals and families who live at

Yuendumu to place themselves within their own shifting historical context and within a settler-nation relentlessly modifying its policies about sovereignty and rights. Their understandings of Warlpiri difference engage with the complex political exigencies of forms of relatedness of the past, the present and the future, and their endeavor may well lead to a new deployment of more exclusive forms of knowledge combined with inclusive Indigenous forms of representation, recognition, and accountabilities and non-Indigenous forms of recognitions, and their entanglements. The production of acrylics for sale as performances and displays of identity has come to serve as a catalyst for thinking about what it means to be Warlpiri through the prisms of local and global forms of relatedness and social change, making us question what we mean as anthropologists by "communal and community processes" (see Escobar, 1995; Spivak, 1988).

Note

1 The fear of sorcery is ever present at Yuendumu. Spells are cast on individuals through the act of "singing" them and can result in their death.

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Countering Modernity; edited by Carolyn Smith-Morris and
César Abadía-Barrero
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12 Rights, Repatriation, and Return
The Sámi

Jocelyn Bell

At the heart of the repatriation of Sámi artifacts, is the changing landscape of Northern Norway. Sámi populations stretch from modern-day Trondheim to the arctic climate of Tromsø and Hammerfest. Six different groups of Sámi, occupy these areas with unique cultural practices and traditional methods of subsistence (Larsen et al., 2017). However, many of those continuing traditional practices are in areas along the coast or fjords, areas first to experience the effects of the changing climate. Climate change is reshaping the Arctic and threatening to erase traditional landscapes through both rising sea levels and the shrinking of grazing lands for reindeer.

The exhibit known as the *Bååstede* acts as a bridge to overcome the changing climate. It addresses both the physical changing of the climate, permanently altering the lives of reindeer herders, and the changing political climate of the adjudication of Sámi rights. The museum system has painted repatriating artifacts as an act to preserve and reclaim Sámi culture (Gaup et al., 2021; Tennberg et al., 2022). This act is intended to strengthen the bonds of the Sámi community by igniting the revival of traditional practices of weaving that have been lost to time. The *Bååstede* also ensures the communal ties to ancestral lands are not eradicated as the landscape shifts and disappears with environmental degradation (Pearson et al., 2021; Gaup et al., 2021). The *Bååstede* is not only an exhibit at the Norsk Folkemuseet, but a movement reflecting the Norwegian state's desire to strengthen its ties and support for the Sámi people. Norway has been a pivotal country in adopting the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP) and incorporating communal rights into Sámi representation. The *Bååstede* adopts this policy by allowing the Sámi to represent themselves in a communal manner throughout the negation process (Gaup et al., 2021). Through reflection on the process of the *Bååstede* and subsequent activism to display Sámi culture, one can understand how communal ties bind together people, territories, and the role of artifacts in this process.

In the negotiations of repatriating artifacts, the Sámi are recognized as an Indigenous group with communal rights, in congruence with DRIP. However, this is not the first instance of Norway practicing good policy with the Sámi community. Through the Sámi Act of 1987, a representative body was formed

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-16

to uphold Sámi culture and values. To this day, the Sámi Parliament acts collectively to represent the six culturally distinct Sámi groups in Norway. (Lehtola, 2006; Broderstad, 2011; Lightfoot, 2016; Kuhn, 2020). The expression of the right to culture through the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Labor Organization No. 169 (ILO 169) have worked to dismantle the perspective that there is only one ethnic identity in Norway. Obligations of the Sámi Act of 1987, created a Norwegian obligation to ensure Sámi culture was protected and upheld, offering a reprieve from the previous idea that all people in Norway were Norwegian (Broderstad, 2011). Dismantling that modern ideal of a singular national identity, allowed for political representation in the Sámi Parliament and ultimately Sámi acknowledgment throughout the education and political system (Lehtola, 2006; Broderstad, 2011; Kuhn, 2020). The *Bååstede*, a repatriation of Sámi artifacts, has come to represent this shift in representation. As Bird-David argues in Chapter 8, we can see the *Bååstede* as a form of communitizing filled with tensions and inconsistencies. It is a project of being many that counters the Norwegian majority and challenges their prior oppression of the Sámi. We are decades from the beginning of the Indigenous Rights Movement of the 1980s and the beginning of Norway's acknowledgment of the Sámi people, but the problems of representation and a sense of equality remain in Norway (Larsen et al., 2018; Gaup et al., 2021).

The Norsk Folkemuseet

Outside the city center of Oslo is the Norsk Folkemuseet. An open-air museum spans multiple acres takes you on a journey through time. As you walk through the entrance, you are met with modern buildings. The modern colorful buildings, mirror those seen across Norway today. They house the most precious artifacts from King Oscar II's collections. Within these modern walls is the latest technology and elegant displays of Norwegian culture. Outside of the circle of modern buildings, there lies buildings from the Middle Ages to the 1800s, most of which have been relocated from across Norway to the Folkemuseet to display and uphold Norwegian culture. The buildings range from ornate wooden structures to log houses used for farm life and burial. It is the integration of homes into the countryside that stands out to me, as grass grows on the roof of log cabins. What draws most to it is the reconstruction of the 13th-century Norwegian church, Gol Stove (Figure 1, see below). The church stands at the top of a hill, looking down in granger upon all the other bits of Norwegian folk culture below.

The church and the people employed at the museum stand as a piece of Norwegian pride. It is this pride and display of Norwegian culture that can be traced back to the emancipation of the country from Denmark. On May 17, 1814, Norway signed its constitution, making it an independent country. Every year, this day is celebrated across the country, shutting down schools and work for people to gather in the streets in folk clothing or *bunad*. This desire

to embrace what it means to be Norwegian and became a powerful symbol for Norwegian political freedom (Strand, 2018). The clothing known as the *bunad* is worn by all, including those at the Folkemuseet. There are different *bunads* for each region of Norway, but there is not one for the Sámi. One can see this display of nationalism on display in malls and shopping centers across the country as stores selling *bunads* seem to be everywhere. Both the National Day and the celebration of the *bunad* provide an unshakable sense of what it means to be Norwegian. However, this nationalistic pride often overshadows the Sámi and their way of life. There was for many years, a systematic denial of the Sámi in schools and textbooks, often forcing Sámi children to assimilate into Norwegians. The most notable example of this can be found with the evidence of Sámi occupation in Trondheim for over 10,000 years, but the Norwegian majority denies this exists and refuses to alter the history books (Aalto & Lehtola, 2017). It was this form of suppression of culture that was supposed to get better after the Indigenous Rights Movement of the 1960s, but when speaking with older Norwegians today, you can still hear the disdain in their voice about the Sámi. Older Norwegians deny the existence of Sámi people continuing on traditions from their ancestors. With their pride and celebration of their culture, comes a prejudice against the Sámi and their continuation of traditions. The contempt and overshadowing of the Sámi is no more present than within the walls of the Folkemuseet.

Contrasting the large church and within the confines of the museum grounds, a traditional Sámi camping site remains nestled between two other Norwegian structures from the Middle Ages. Two tent structures aim to portray the communal and nomadic nature of the Sámi culture. You would miss it if you were not looking for it, as it is surrounded by rich, natural foliage. Yet, it is important to note, that the foliage of Oslo does not match that of Northern Norway, providing a dissonance between the tents and their natural habitat. An antsy, nervous woman stood outside the tent to teach individuals how ropes were tied to build the structure. She was not dressed in the traditional *bunad* as all other members of staff were, marking the experience as different from that of Norwegian folk culture. It provided a strong contrast to the proud women and men dressed in folk clothing, overjoyed to display Norwegian culture.

Just aside from the structure was a small, hidden enclave leading to the Sámi permanent exhibit. It pales in comparison to the multistoried building with high security that houses Norway's folk treasures. The pristine and updated glass cases with interactive displays seen in other parts of the museum were not present in the Sámi collection. The panels of the museum detail the history of forced assimilation through the "Show your Sápmi," movement of the 1980s (Lehtola, 2006; Kuhn, 2020). It is this movement most commonly associated with the Sámi as it is associated with the ten-year occupation of the Alta Dam and the political revolution that led to the Sámi procuring the communal rights they have today (Lehtola, 2006; Kuhn, 2020). The exhibit relies on political cartoons, pictures, and cut-outs to depict life in Norway's Northern regions.

Figure 12.1 A comparison of photos between the Sámi Site (taken by the Norsk Folkemuseet) and the Gol Stave Church (taken by me). The church is one of the largest tourist attractions at the museum.

The focus remains split between the political plight and the unique weaving associated with Sámi women. The original exhibit whispers of the rights around reindeer herding and cultural practices in order to continue traditional ways of life. Little of the exhibit mentions the communal nature of the Sámi culture. It does not represent the continuation of communalism despite being once forced to assimilate into the general population, nor how they continued caring for non-Sámi neighbors in rural areas (Larsen et al., 2018). The exhibit does little to acknowledge the activism and protest that led to the solidification of Sámi rights both communally and as individuals within Norway. Just as this area of Sámi history has been forgotten, the exhibit has been forgotten as well. Dust creeps into every corner and the cut-outs are faded from the sunlight pouring in from the entrance. It is a far cry from the care and delicacy promised by the cultural heritage expedition, *Bååstede*, or the care that has been put into place to handle the remnants of Norwegian culture.

Most notably, a colorful cartoon stood out in the case of political propaganda. The cartoon print pictured was created by Arvidsveen to describe the plight of forced assimilation and land destruction in Norway. Arvidsveen's piece is a prized print of pro-Sámi propaganda during the Indigenous Rights Movement in Norway. As previously stated, this movement entitled "Show your Sápmi" encouraged Sámi to show their pride for their homeland, Sápmi,

Figure 12.2 Pictured is propaganda from the Show Your Sápmi Movement at the permanent Sámi exhibit at the Norsk Folkemuseet.

and reject the destruction of their land for the Alta Dam (Lehtola, 2006). It begins with a panel of a male figure being forced to wear a cap with a Norwegian flag printed on it. This hat is being forced onto his head by a pair of hands, representing the Norwegian Government's assimilation practices in the early 20th century and lasting through the 1960s. Throughout the piece, the man begins forcing the hat from his head and the Sámi flag appears in the background. The horned Sámi hat appears in his hands, and he places it on his head. The last picture depicts the man running toward something. He is fully dressed in traditional clothing and proudly shows off the full Sámi flag in the background. We can assume this man is running toward the Alta Dam Protest or running to show off his pride for his homeland and his people. By keeping this print on permanent display at the Norsk Folkemuseet, the Norwegian curators are confirming the forced assimilation inflicted upon the Sámi people. It is a beautiful rendition of the difficulty in rejecting the majority culture and proudly displaying your people and homeland. Yet, the display does not acknowledge the further plight forged by those activists to communitize and construct their identity outside of forced assimilation. Additionally, it displays the Sámi as singular and is not aligned with their communal values. While the cartoon is powerful, it seems to only paint a partial picture of the Sámi experience.

The *Bååstede* is plastered on posters around the museum, highlighting the exhibit. In Southern Sámi, *Bååstede* translates to "return" (Gaup et al., 2021). It marks a return of material history and culture into the hands of its rightful owners, the Sámi. Since the 19th century, the University of Oslo and the Norsk Folkemuseet have housed Sámi heirlooms and artifacts. The artifacts remained in the hands of Norwegians and claimed as their own, despite the international obligations adopted by Norway to repatriate them. It was not until the 21st century brought about a reevaluation of Indigenous rights and the repatriation of cultural heritage (Lightfoot, 2016; Gaup et al., 2021). More specifically, the Nuuk conference and Inari conference forced Norwegian curators to address their holding of Sámi artifacts. Here marks an instance of the Norwegian state recognizing Sámi communal rights. In 2008, a working group was created in conjunction between museum staff and the Sámi Parliament to decide who would receive repatriated artifacts (Gaup et al., 2021) Through many community discussions, Sámi were allotted the opportunity to decide as separate groups and communities what items they were going to reclaim and which they would allow to remain within the Folkemuseet. Within these discussions, the working group went slowly through the Folkemuseet catalog to decide each object's fate. There was no simple vote; instead, groups representing the six *sidas* or six distinct Sámi groups openly discussed where the pieces would be moved to with non-Indigenous curators (Gaup et al., 2021). This marked an important moment in history as the Sámi were recognized as an Indigenous group in Norway, as previously and to today there only exists one population in Norway, Norwegians. Moreover, their rights were being implemented in a way that reflected the communal nature of the Sámi throughout this

negotiation process, respecting their right to culture (Lightfoot, 2016; Gaup et al., 2021; Tennberg et al., 2022). Each *sida* decided upon their representatives as a community. There was not one single leader or elected official, but a community of stakeholders to reach a consensus on repatriation (Gaup et al., 2021). The *Bååstede* reinforces the Sámi as Norway's Indigenous people legally and socially, through their expression of self-determination through communal representation (see below), and the power material culture holds (Lightfoot, 2016).

Many of the Norsk Folkemuseet's Sámi objects were returned to different communities across Lapland, another name for the traditional lands the Sámi inhabit. The representatives reflected the communities' views and the embodiment of the spirit of International Indigenous laws, like International Labor Organization No. 169. The Symposium was curated within the Sámi Parliament, bringing together different generations of representatives and curators. (Gaup et al., 2021; Tennberg et al., 2022). The curators and activists saw the repatriation as a means of reinspiring traditions and both enhancing and strengthening communal ties. From rediscovering the unique patterns of weaving in Ajtte to the spoons once engraved with one's family ties, the object's purpose in remaining was to "… allow us to convey the cultural heritage to our children and youth for whom this may appear to be lost traditions" (The *Bååstede* Exhibit). The narrative put forth by the museum and government focuses on material culture, not the spiritual ties to the land or objects. It does not acknowledge the importance of oral traditions in the passing of knowledge within Sámi culture (Gaski, 1997). The message conveys the pain of lost tradition, but it does not explain how those ties between Sámi were affected by assimilation and the loss of cultural practices to the Norwegian majority. Repatriation of materials is essential to reparations, but there is a clear misunderstanding of who the Sámi are or how they see their communal rights from the Norwegian majority. It is as if the Sámi must fit into the Norwegian narrative of what being Sámi is. The current tension between the effective enactment of Sámi's communal rights and the actual practice of repatriation, which challenges the *Bååstede* as a project of recognition, respect, and rights fulfillment. In my own communications with the Department of Indigenous and National Minority Affairs in Norway, I found a complete denial of the Sámi continuing traditions and countering modernity. There is a disconnect between the communities, government, and curators may be a result of left over tension between the Norwegian majority and Sámi minority from the last century.

Unlike the permanent exhibit, the *Bååstede* exhibition lies in a bright blue, modern building near the entrance to the museum. When I arrived, I was the only one in the exhibit, despite it being a crowded Saturday on the property. The objects repatriated to the Sámi still exist in part in the museum, but many pieces have taken on new forms (Gaup et al., 2021). Objects from traditional knits to delicate drums are pictured in high definition, bringing the visitor into contact with the Sámi artifacts. These images can be assessed online, stretching

the reach of the museum to all parts of the globe. Behind glass enclosures, remains a few precious artifacts not repatriated. The most notable is the unique horned hat or *ládgjogahpir*. It is impossible to miss as it is made of bright, red fabric. The unique structure points the crescent or horned shape toward the face of the wearer. It seems instinctual that the hat would be sent to its rightful owners, but a decision was made to keep it at the Folkemuseet. The decision was made after negotiations of all stakeholders, the museum staff, Sámi Parliament, and Sámi Museum Association (Gaup et al., 2021). The process allowed for all Sámi groups to be represented communally through Sámi Museum Association and in the negotiations, properly reflecting the ties of the communities. Sámi recognized that their museums in the far North do not engage with all of Norway's inhabitants or tourists, and that the Folkemuseet reach is far beyond that of the museums of Norway's Northern peoples. Recognizing the need to educate people on Sámi culture, practices, and political movements, Sámi collectively decided to continue allowing the Folkemuseet to house some artifacts, like the *ládgjogahpir* (Gaup et al., 2021).

Behind the photographs hanging in the loft space is a discussion and debate about what has not been returned and if it will be returned. However, the mass accumulation of Sámi artifacts in the 19th century was not organized, labeled, or documented in a way to make repatriation an easy task. A working group was established with the museum, Sámi Parliament, and the Sámi Museum Association to create an Agreement on Repatriation, which was signed in 2012. In the Agreement, the conditions necessary for transfer and how the selection processes is organized are outlined (Gaup et al., 2021). Part of the Agreement ensures that Sámi stakeholders and Norwegian representatives are included and given equal representation (and culturally appropriate representation) in the decision-making process for each artifact. Over a century ago, thousands of artifacts were initially cataloged upon their unearthing and deemed to be Norwegian artifacts, only to be reclaimed as Sámi artifacts during the Indigenous Rights Movement. Decades later, this process of classification continues. An object conservator was hired to go through the collection and deem what objects are Sámi and which are Norwegian in origin. This process remains extremely difficult as the initial classification of objects as Norwegian provides a hurdle for reclassification as Sámi objects (Gaup et al., 2021). If an object was created in Oslo by a Sámi artist, the Folkemuseet puts up a fight to keep it within its walls. About half of the artifacts have been repatriated to the six different *sidas* or Sámi museums throughout Norway. Museum curators claim Sámi facilities across the state do not have the proper equipment for the most precious objects (Gaup et al., 2021). The Sámi representatives cite a need for funding to improve the storage and housing of artifacts to continue the repatriation process (Sámi Parliament, 20/1695–1691). However, the faded, sun-drenched space housing many Sámi objects in their permanent exhibition does not portray the Norsk Folkemuseet as having proper mechanisms for display either. The power imbalance attempted to be fixed through repatriation and the *Bååstede* remains unremedied, and it fails to

present the current Sámi. Instead, it glosses over the Indigenous Rights Movement as a thing of the past. The *Bååstede* fails to engage with the continued colonial rule and imposition impacting their land use and altering their ancestral lands (Falkenås, 2017). While communal representations reflect the Sámi culturally, they fail to remedy the settler-colonial dynamic that allows for the state to continue claiming artifacts as their own.

The fight over objects of the past forces us to look to Sámi challenging modernity today through artistic expression. *Bååstede* claims to give back stolen pieces of culture to ensure traditional knowledge is not lost, ignoring that, as in any other culture (see for example Dussart, Chapter 11 in this volume), artistic expressions are dynamic and negotiate constantly with modern demands and expectations, as well as cultural shifts of new generations and emerging problems that need to be addressed both politically and artistically. Both museum staff and government officials tout the importance of repatriating to continue traditional cloth and weaving practices (Gaup et al., 2021). Sámi artists stress the acknowledgment of the past and traditions, but the focus of recent years is the continuation of activism and art from the Indigenous Rights Movement of the twentieth century (Olsen, 2017; Kuhn, 2020). It is important to acknowledge the idea of *duodji*. *Duodji* embraces the understanding of nature, the process of gathering materials, and the deep rooting of art within identity and culture (Hansen, 2016). However, focusing on tradition solely is enclosing, a space stuck in the past but not acknowledging the present (Ronström, 2008). Tradition is bound in continuity, acknowledging both the past and present simultaneously. It is here we can look at the idea of *gierdu* from the Sámi. This translates to "circle" or "connection," acknowledging the connection between the past and present (Hansen, 2016). Material culture acts as a means of remembrance and can encourage the resurrection of forgotten traditions. However, the same modern notion of repatriation as a way of repair seems to fall short at acknowledging the dynamicity between historical continuities and shifts since it has very little to say about the current way of life. It is here we look toward museums of modern art to *duodji*, or to show pieces at the crossroads of tradition and modernity.

The National Museum

Across Oslo, the National Museum of Art houses a resurgence of Sámi cultural expressions. The two-story museum includes the "Show your Sápmi" era in its depiction of Norway from the 1960s to the present. Situated against the black stone walls of the entrance is a curtain of reindeer skulls. Four hundred reindeer skulls bear a bullet hole in the center. The skulls are bleached and dyed to mimic that of the Sámi flag. Forced slaughter and disrupted reindeer herding patterns resulted in the accumulation of skulls. Sámi artist Máret Ánne Sara assembled the skulls from her brother's slaughtered herd. Sara began stacking the slaughtered heads on the courthouse steps near her hometown. The still

bloodied skulls were fleshly slaughtered. The red of blood standing out against the pure, white snow. The skulls were topped with a Norwegian flag, symbolizing the forceful hands of the Norwegian Government, and entitled this a "Pile O'Sápmi" (Sara, 2020). Eventually, she would clean the skulls, removing the flesh to display the bone beneath. The skulls would soon be assembled and bleached to represent the Sámi flag.

The title "Pile O'Sápmi," reflects the relationship of the Sámi with the reindeer they heard, as two beings tied intimately to Northern Norway. Sápmi refers to the land which the Sámi have been inhabiting for centuries. The reindeer are just as much a part of the landscape as the grass that grows along the fjords. By titling the piece "Pile O'Sápmi," Máret Ánne Sara reflects the interconnected nature of the Sámi existence with nature. Additionally, she directly refers to an image entitled "Pile O'Bones" from South Carolina, in which a head of buffalo skulls has been piled up and a man stands atop it (Olsen, 2017). One can draw similarities to the slaughtering of buffalo in America and its decimation of Indigenous livelihoods and that of the forced slaughtering of reindeer in Norway. The Norwegian Government's actions act as a threat to Sámi existence within Norway's borders. By having the piece of artwork at the entrance of the museum, against a stark, black wall, the museum is acknowledging the darkness that lies behind the government regulation of the Sámi presence on Norwegian land.

It is not just an art piece as a means of protest or solely for her family who was suffering, but for her people who were forced into precarity and retraumatized. It forces one to question the effects of the Reindeer Husbandry Act of 2007, in which Sara's brother and other herders were forced to slaughter their herd to keep a ratio between reindeer and areas of land. Following the implementation of the act, Sara's first iteration of "Pile O'Sápmi" on the courthouse steps represents what this neoliberal form of governance means for Sámi herders (Johnsen & Benjaminsen, 2017). Her piece is thought-provoking for everyone who encounters it, as from the beginning it forces one to question the use of these regulations. The law is part of a multi-generational effort to force the Sámi to integrate into modernity while ignoring the importance of continuing these traditions to the herders (Johnsen & Benjaminsen, 2017). It forces one to confront the difficulty of being Sámi and continuing a way of life that cannot be rationalized by the Norwegian majority, and even when they try to acknowledge its existence, it ultimately falls short, as seen with the *Bååstede*.

Yet, two floors above Sara's piece hang memories of pieces of art connected with the Alta Dam Protest and Indigenous Rights Movement of the 1980s. This area of the museum is dedicated to modern acts, acknowledging that Sámi protests continue to this day. Variations on the Sámi flag are on display, showing the development of the current rallying cry. The colors represented are red, blue, green, and yellow, often seen in woven materials from the past to the present. Once one views the flag, the coloring of Sara's piece becomes more obvious. One can follow the thread of activism that has come to be part of the Sámi way of life. However, it is not activism to make one's life better. The

Figure 12.3 Pictured are the skulls of hundreds of slaughtered reindeer assembled for Máret Ánne Sara's piece "Pile O'Sápmi."

expressions of protest are a way of expressing collective political ideas of what being Sámi is.

The Norwegian Government is actively promoting Sámi culture on a national and international stage. Norway's support of the Sámi has extended past museums on their own soil. The Nordic Pavilion in Venice, Italy, has always housed prominent Norwegian artists, but the 2022 Pavilion was renamed the Sámi Pavilion to house three Sámi artists. Máret Ánne Sara was a featured artist along with Pauliina Feodoroff and Anders Sunna, and each was guided by elders. The Pavilion was set up in conjunction with the Sámi University College, curators, and young Sámi scholars. It is evident the Norwegian Government ensured the Sámi were represented in a way that accurately reflected their community and the differing struggles among the Indigenous group. The intention of the project was to reflect the sovereignty, art, and culture from the Sámi perspective. It is a drastic step forward from the previous denial of Sámi existence up until the 1960s (Aalto & Lehtola, 2017). In many ways, it is a continuation of the Indigenous Rights Movement. The Norwegian Government is making concessions and giving space for the Sámi

What is one to do when one must slaughter as their means of survival? The skulls staring back are a reminder of how fragile the balance between life and death remains even in a world with numerous rules and regulations. Máret

Ánne Sara's piece embodies the pain and trauma of the Sámi in their plight to continue their traditions. It reflects the nature of communalism within the culture as it is not only her family that has been harmed but many beings across Sápmi. The feature of the piece by the National Museum highlights an understanding of the Sámi people that is not seen universally in Norway.

Importance of Norwegian Cultural Heritage

The Norsk Folkemuseet and the National Museum of Art display the Sámi culture in dramatically different ways. A once bustling collection of Sámi culture at the Folkemuseet served as a marker of colonization and oppression. The Sámi first appear in the Norwegian legal record in the year 1100. In ancient provincial laws, Norwegians were forbidden from traveling into *finnmØrk* to receive predictions. This ancient legal description paints the Sámi as an exotic, group that do not represent Christian values. Sources like the Latin *Historia Norwegiæ* described the areas as the "Sámi wilderness woods," ensuring the Sámi are characterized as wild men and women (Aalto & Lehtola, 2017). Crude and offensive descriptions of the Sámi allowed the group to be cemented in the historical record. Centuries later, Sámi activists would use these records of their presence to justify their rights to land and culture against the Norwegian majority. The "Show your Sápmi" Movement, in which Sámi activists proudly identified themselves and fought against the destruction of the land, would introduce these items of history to the majority population (Lehtola, 2006; Kuhn, 2020). The *Bååstede* marks a dramatic shift in the relationship between the Norwegian majority and the Sámi. Many once-treasured pieces have now been returned to their rightful owners. This allows the Sámi a sense of closure and power, as they have pieces of history back in their rightful hands and were seen as equals with the Norwegian majority. In their place hangs pictures as a reminder of what once was (Gaup et al., 2021). One cannot understate the empowering sense the community felt with the return of their items, but it must be acknowledged that many items still remain in the hands of colonizers. Additionally, the inclusion of communal representation serves as an example of how repatriation and negotiations should work between the majority nation and the Indigenous peoples.

Within Oslo, we see two different approaches to portraying Sámi culture. At the National Museum of Art, there is a display of Sámi activism, protest, and the continuation of traditional practices. By placing activism on full display, the National Museum acknowledges the power of Sámi activism over the last 50 years. Sara's piece does not just represent the struggle her brother has felt. It is a representation of every Sámi herder in Norway trying to maintain their traditions. The Sápmi (land), Sámi people, and the reindeer are connected in intimate ways that can only be understood through a holistic and communal lens. The representation of the pain the community is feeling under threat by the decimation of land and Western policy allows outsiders to connect to the plight of the community.

It is essential artifacts of culture are repatriated to the Sámi people, but the work of those like Máret Ánne Sara is important to show the continuation of culture. Art and cultural material act as a mechanism to link people together. The *Bååstede* has worked to complete its mission, allowing the Sámi the ability to negotiate in a way that is representative of the culture. However, the National Museum places emphasis on the expression of Sámi culture through activism and art, representing the communal nature of the culture through a different mechanism. All efforts of the Norwegian Government acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past and provide a platform for the Sámi to be seen on a world stage, through the Venice Pavilion. Even with the efforts, there remains a way to go. The Norwegian majority must reflect on the mistakes of the past, acknowledge their suppression of the Sámi people, and continue to work toward representing the Sámi as they wish to be seen.

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13 "Nation" v. "*Rom*"

Yolŋu Articulations of Communal Identity in Northeast Arnhem Land, Australia

Frances Morphy

Introduction

The rise of the term "First Nations" as an alternative to "Indigenous Australians" (which in turn replaced the more cumbersome "Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders"), has coincided with growing calls for a treaty or series of treaties with the settler Australian state, in recognition of never-ceded sovereignty. Communal identities such as the "Wiradjuri Nation" are now constantly invoked, and indeed confederations of "nations" such as the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MILDRIN) are becoming increasingly salient players at the interface between communal Indigenous interests and the institutions of the settler state, at least in the more "heavily settled"[1] parts of the continent such as New South Wales and Victoria.

As an anthropologist who has worked in more "remote"[2] areas of the continent, these developments do not sit easily with me. In this chapter I will attempt to unfankle[3] this sense of discomfort, contemplating my interactions over nearly 50 years with people now known as "the Yolŋu,"[4] in dialogue with commentary from Yolŋu themselves on the origin and nature of Yolŋu communal identities. I will argue that the crucial marker of communal identity for Yolŋu – what makes them Yolŋu rather than some other kind of persons, be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous – is not primarily founded in a concept of nationhood or anything similar. Rather it consists of *nhina yukurra rommirri* "living with *rom*" or *nhina yukurra romŋura* "living in *rom*." Often translated as "Law" (as is the case with similar concepts all over Australia), *rom* at its most abstract is a complex, all-encompassing and powerful ontological and epistemological schema – a particular way of knowing the world and being in it.

In the Introduction, Carolyn Smith-Morris and César Abadía-Barrero point to living with *rom* and *Buen Vivir* as "two examples of Indigenous relational and cooperative models" (p. X), stressing that Indigenous forms of sociality are distinctive and also share certain commonalities captured by Nurit Bird-David (Chapter 7 in this volume) in the trope "being many." This chapter, like many others in the volume, explores the potential consequences for such forms of sociality of encapsulation within "modern" nation-states. In particular, it points to the dangers inherent in adopting a term such as "nation" to describe

DOI: 10.4324/9781003473565-17

Indigenous polities in the Australian context in general and the Yolŋu context in particular. While it may be true, as Smith-Morris and Abadía-Barrero aver, that in general "communal values and priorities have not been *destroyed* by hyper-individualized liberalism, they have been made *invisible*" (p. X), it is precisely the adoption of such terms as "nation," I argue, that helps to confer invisibility.

What is a "First Nation"?

In order to draw out the implications for the Yolŋu way of being in the contemporary world, it is first necessary to characterize what "nation"[5] has come to mean at the points of intersection between Indigenous Australians and the state. The idea that Indigenous polities might be characterized as nations has come and gone in the anthropological literature since the late 19th century (Blackburn, 2002), but it has only come to prominence in public discourse and in Indigenous self-representation in the last three decades or so (Merlan, 2022). Blackburn notes that in the earliest (quasi-) anthropological work on Australian Aboriginal social organization the term nation was often invoked. He argues that for the most part early observers such as A.W. Howitt and R.H. Matthews were using nation in an earlier sense. He writes that:

> From the late 18th century to the end of the 19th century, the word "nation" underwent a change in meaning from a term describing cultural entities … to the modern definition of a nation as a sovereign people.
>
> (Blackburn, 2002: 1) c

He goes on to argue that several of these early observers explicitly stated that Aboriginal nations were not political units in the sense of being the locus of either land ownership or of the political power and influence of community leaders. They tended to agree that these features of polity were obtained with smaller aggregations of people, variously described as "tribes" or "clans."

It seems then that in tracing the history of the use of the term nation in Australia we need to bear in mind two rather different meanings of the entities represented by labels such as "the Wiradjuri Nation." Back in the 18th century and early 19th century it was being described in terms of the cultural and linguistic commonalities of its member "tribes," whereas today it is seen by those who advocate for the name as the locus of regional sovereignty.

Nadasday's characterization of nation speaks to the "modern" definition, in Blackburn's terms.[6] Far from being a universal category, Nadasdy sees it rather as one of a set of "culturally contingent categories derived from the state – concepts such as *sovereignty, self-government, citizenship, nation, history*, and *territorial jurisdiction*" (Nadasday, 2017: 9; emphasis in the original). It is no accident that today the trope of nation in Australia is thoroughly entangled with some of these other terms – the link to "sovereignty" has already been noted.

For example, until the advent of native title, Indigenous Australian polities had not found it necessary to draw boundaries around their member "citizens"; but this is precisely what the *Native Title Act* (1993) demands of them. In order to set up a Prescribed Bodies Corporation (PBC)[7] to administer a native title determination, The Act requires the PBC to draw up a defined and finite list of members and by extension to exclude other, non-members. This membership delineation has become a significant source of tension and intra-community disputation, particularly in the highly settled areas of Australia where the events and effects of colonization (massacre, dispossession, and disease, and in some areas, as a result, the demographic collapse of local populations) have forced radical adaptations of "classical" forms of social organization to fit the surviving descendants' new circumstances.[8] In some cases the term nation seems to inhere in unambiguously postcolonial institutions such as PBCs. More than one of these organizations describes its activities as "nation-building."

There is also the matter of territorial jurisdiction. Here the question of how and at what scale to define a nation's boundaries becomes complicated. Different solutions to this conundrum are being advanced in different parts of Australia. In New South Wales, entities such as the Wiradjuri Nation are defined with respect to aspects of shared culture and language but are also viewed in the "modern" sense of nation as the locus of sovereignty; in Victoria, in the current discourse over the need for treaties, the push seems to be toward using nation as an alternative to "clan" for much smaller, original land-holding social units. This is, in effect, an application of the "modern" meaning of nation to the level of social grouping that was recognized by observers as sovereign in earlier times, but which was explicitly *not* labelled as "nation." And in Victoria terms for larger-scale groupings such as "the Kulin Nation" (similar in its constitution to the Wiradjuri Nation) are also in everyday use. This points to an ambiguity and a problem of definition, even in areas where the modern use of the term "nation" obtains, as to the scale at which the term applies.

A Yolŋu Conundrum: Is There a Nation in the Making?

The Yolŋu-Matha-speaking peoples remained effectively beyond the colonial frontier until the 1920s. Yolŋu have a long and distinguished tradition of fighting for their rights and those of other Indigenous peoples, beginning with the Gove Land Rights case of 1971 (*Milirrpum vs Nabalco and the Commonwealth of Australia*) in which the clans of the Gove Peninsula and their allies attempted, unsuccessfully, to halt the incursion of mining onto Yolŋu Country. That case was one of the contributing factors to the passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* (ALRA) in 1976. Some decades later the Yolŋu of the Blue Mud Bay region to the south of Yirrkala were involved in a landmark case run simultaneously under the ALRA and the *Native Title Act 1993* (NTA) in which the final resolution, in 2007 in the High Court of

Australia, confirmed that Indigenous Australians had the right to control access to the intertidal waters over 80% plus of the Northern Territory coastline (see F. Morphy, 2009). In all these fights for rights, the question of nationhood was not raised. Nor was it raised in early attempts to set up regional organizations; for example there was an unsuccessful bid in the 1990s to form a North East Arnhem Ringgitj Council as a breakaway from the Darwin-based Northern Land Council (Martin, 1995).

Indeed, Yolŋu have not used the term "nation" until very recently in reference to their own polities, although they have a long tradition of making analogies between certain of their institutions and those of the incomers. Examples are the use of "Parliament" to refer to the *Ŋärra* – a regional ceremony in which, among other things, senior men (*ḏilak*) from a set of clans (*bäpurru*) linked through ceremony and intermarriage gather on a restricted ceremony ground and discuss regional affairs – and the use of "embassy" to translate *riŋgitj* – a small discrete area near a major ceremony ground which belongs permanently to a *bäpurru* connected to the area through ceremony, the members of which will regularly attend regional ceremonies there, but who are not themselves *wäŋa wataŋu* (landholders). This hints once again at an area of ambiguity with respect to scale: both parliaments and embassies, in the world of democratic nation-states, are institutions that mark and maintain the boundary of the state. But in their use in the Yolŋu world, one of these terms (*Ŋärra*/Parliament) operates with reference to a (yet unspecified) regional polity, whereas the other (*riŋgitj*/embassy) delineates the land-holding clan as "sovereign."[9]

Within the last decade the nation trope has begun to figure in local discourse. In some parts of northeast Arnhem Land the term "clan nation" is gaining some currency as a translation of *bäpurru*. In 2008, in conjunction with Noel Pearson's "Empowered Communities" initiative, a "Dilak [Elders] Authority" purporting to represent the "13 clan nations" of the eastern (Miwatj) subregion was established.[10] A list of the Dilak is not published, and the designated leader of the Arnhem Land group (presumably the Executive Officer) is a non-local, non-Yolŋu Indigenous person. The information about the constituency of the organization on the Empowered Communities website is vague and inconsistent. Figures of the number of people represented vary between 800 (the size of the largest local Yolŋu community), to the 13 aforementioned clan nations (population unspecified, but perhaps somewhere around 1,500 people), to 12,000 (the total population of the Yolŋu-Matha-speaking region, and then some more). In a section of the website that appears to have been authored by Galarrwuy Yunupiŋu, through whom Noel Pearson was first introduced to eastern Arnhem Land, the following appears:

> The Dilak Authority (comprising our 13 Yolngu clan nations) has long operated as our system of governance, but is not recognized outside our traditional world. In order to achieve effective Indigenous policy reform, government must hear that Yolngu people are requesting responsibility to determine our own future.[11]

It appears then that the Dilak Authority is an attempt by Empowered Communities and their Yolŋu collaborators to create an interface between the settler state and the "Yolŋu system of governance," conceived in terms of clan nations.

In 2011, a charity, in the form of an Aboriginal Corporation with the title "Yolŋu Nations Assembly" (YNA) was registered.[12] The website initially offered no definition of nation. It can probably be assumed that the patrilineal clan nation is what was in mind, but this is by no means clear-cut. In a letter to the organization's supporters the Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM is described as the "Djirrikay [ceremonial leader] for Dhurili Clan Nation." However, Dhurili is not the name for a patrilineal clan but rather for a set of clans who share the same ceremony, a grouping termed a "phratry" by Warner (1958).

Whether the YNA is in any way "representative" of the 60 or so clans of the Yolŋu region is also unspecified; there is no detail given on the organization's website as to how the nine Yolŋu listed as "responsible people" were chosen, or what their roles are. The stated aim of the YNA is: "to represent eight traditional states that cover East, Central and West Arnhem Land. These states are called: Miwatj, Laynha, Raminy, Marthakal, Garriny, Gumurr-Rawarraŋ, Gaṯtjirrik, and Miḏiyirrk. By the next year, it is these 'states' that are now referred to as nations."[13] The rationale for this move is not stated, and way in which these nations are constituted is not specified.

The formation of both the Dilak Authority and the YNA reflect self-conscious strategizing (on the part of at least some Yolŋu people and their supporters) to create communal regional political identities that are legible to particular (external) interlocutors, while attempting to retain and represent certain principles of local governance. These latter are articulated in a petition that was sent in 1998 to then Prime Minister John Howard, as summarized by Yiŋiya Mark Guyula[14] in an address to the President's National Ministers' Conference [of the] Uniting Church:

> We request that [the Australian government]:
>
> 1 [recognize] the Dhulmu-mulka Bathi [the] Title Deeds which establish the legal tenure for each of our traditional clan estates. Your Westminster system calls this "Native Title."
> 2 [recognize] the jurisdiction of our Ŋärra/Traditional Parliament in the same way as we recognize your Parliament and Westminster system of Government.
> 3 and both formally and legally recognize our Maḏayin[15] system of law (Guyula, 2017: 1).

He then goes on to argue for a treaty between the Yolŋu People and the state, stating that:

We the Yolŋu people have not been conquered:

- we won our war against the pastoralists,
- we still occupy our land
- we still have our own languages,
- we still have our institutions and systems of education, health and justice,
- we still maintain and assent to our own complete system of law – the Maḏayin system of law,
- and we have not made any agreement to give our land away or to be subject to any other law

That means we still have nationhood and we view ourselves as independent (Guyula, 2017: 4).

Here Yiŋiya seems to be locating the nation at the level of "the Yolŋu people [sic]" as a whole, defined in terms of both the old and "modern" senses of the term. But it is safe to say that this petition fell on deaf ears in 1998, and while the Dilak Authority and the YNA might be seen as attempted expressions of a Yolŋu political identity in the context of articulation with the institutions of the encapsulating settler state, such organizations are not – or not yet – articulations of a pan-Yolŋu sense of communal identity. The definition of would-be nations is fluid, and the scale at which it applies remains unresolved.

Rom: The Yolŋu System

It is time now to look at the Yolŋu world from the inside out rather than the outside in. It is a world that was given shape by the actions of Country-transforming beings of the time/dimension known as *Waŋarr*, who also gave shape through *rom* to the social world of the first human inhabitants and charged them with the responsibility for living according to *rom* and being the "voice (*rirrakay*) of Country." *Maḏayin* (that which is sacred; the enactment of *rom*) and *gurruṯu* (kinship) are significant and related concepts. These are what fashions *rom* into a "system" as people have explained to me.

Rom, as foundational to the creation of the Yolŋu physical and social world, is impervious to the political power imbalances introduced by colonization. It is an eternal truth in the sense that it will always exist in the Country, whether or not the people who are its *rirrakay* are there to give it voice. I have written elsewhere about how Yolŋu inserted performances of *rom* into the native title process in the Blue Mud Bay case (F. Morphy, 2009). One of the Yolŋu witnesses, Djambawa Marawili, went so far as to insist on the incommensurability of *rom* and what he and most Yolŋu (including Yiŋiya, see quote above) think of as "*Ŋäpaki* law" – that is the law introduced as part of the "Australian Westminster form of government." Here is Djambawa in

dialogue with counsel representing the Yolŋu applicants (CA is counsel, X is Djambawa) (cited from F. Morphy, 2009: 115–116):

CA: … you mentioned your law, or "our law" I think you said. Well, what do you mean by that? What do you mean by your "law"?
X: My law.
CA: Yes.
X: Well, what's that "law" mean?
CA: That's right.
X: What in your …
CA: That's the question I'm asking you …
X: Well, exactly what I'm talking now. When I'm using balanda English, well, you should know better than me, you know, because I'm – I'm talking in the Yolngu way too you know? … my real language is the Yolngu language … And I cannot – you know, when you talk to me, you know – what is the Yolngu story, what this "law" means, you know, well, I just pick up the English, "law." My *ngarraku rom*, my *ngarraku rom* is different. I call it *rom*.
CA: And what does that word mean?
X: Well, I'm telling you – the law has been there forever. It was given from our ancestors to our grandfathers to our father to me. This is what I call *rom* and law. I'm just putting that English into my – in my way of using of – using or thinking, you know, law. You call it law; I call it *rom*.

The conclusion to the chapter summarizes the centrality of *rom* to the Yolŋu sense of identity:

> Through resisting commensurability in the court, they have been able … to hold firmly to their "two worlds" model, in which the state's particular objectification of "their" native title is … essentially irrelevant to *rom* and the social field that is founded in it … their sense of sovereignty as people would only collapse, in their view, if they were to abandon *rom* for a more generic state of colonized Aboriginality (F. Morphy, 2009: 118).

That is to say, as long as Yolŋu continue to *nhina yukurra rommirri* their identity is secure, and they may be politically encapsulated but they are not colonized.

We can think of both *rom* and nation in terms of Anderson's (1983) "imagined communities" in order to compare and contrast them. Nations as they have evolved in the context of the nation-state (of which Australia is an example) are physical-social spaces imagined and then constituted in terms of exclusionary binaries ("citizens" versus "non-citizens"), bounded territories, and unitary systems of law. Boundaries – even including those of territorial waters – can be represented by lines on maps. *Rom* imagines the nexus

between the physical and the social very differently. In the Blue Mud Bay case another witness, the late Dr. Gumana put it this way (Morphy, 2009: 115): "Your [*ŋäpaki*] world is changing every day, or every month, or every year. My law and my story, it can't change" (cited from F. Morphy, 2009: 115).

Rom is imagined as permanent and unchanging, but also as flexible and resilient – individuals may stray from the patterns established by *rom*, but those patterns will always reassert themselves, and "the center holds." Yolŋu over three generations now have said to me in various ways (the last in the course of a Zoom meeting): "we always go back to the past to fix tomorrow."

Rom is also imagined as inherently inclusive – as a balancing of difference – rather than exclusionary. This balancing of difference is reified in the existence of the moiety system – really the only rigid, but nevertheless internal, boundary in the Yolŋu universe. Everything in the entire universe – people, other living beings, and natural phenomena (such as what we call "weather") and Country – belongs either to Dhuwa or to Yirritja. But neither can exist without the other: in the realm of humans, a person can only marry someone from the opposite moiety: a person's *gurruṯu* (kin), belong to both. *Rom* when translated as "law" is not the law of a bounded nation-state but rather of people who share a sense of spiritual identity, who are always looking to come together through what they have in common. It is, perhaps the law of a nation in the earlier sense of the term.

Neither the social groups constituted through *rom*, nor the physical spaces to which they are attached, are rigidly bounded.[16] It is true that being a *wäŋa wataŋu* is an inheritance that comes through the patriline, but responsibility for ensuring that *wäŋa wataŋu* fulfill their responsibilities to their Country is vested in the *djuŋgayi*, members of the opposite moiety – the children of the women of the clan. And people of other clans, of both moieties, will have "standing permission" to move over and use the resources of that clan's estate because of extended kin relationships. And there are various ways in which someone who is not a clan member can nevertheless have rights and responsibilities to the Country that are analogous to those of *wäŋa wataŋu*. A person's conception spirit usually comes from their own clan Country, but occasionally it comes from that of another clan. A person in this position is *weka-X* ("gifted by clan X") and is viewed as a member of both clans. Adoption is another way in which a person can come to have more than one identity – or in the case of non-Yolŋu who become significantly part of the social field it is constitutive of their identity. In cases of succession where a clan becomes depleted in numbers of senior people, the senior members of one or more closely related clans of the same moiety (related either through the marriage bestowal system and/or connected by the travels of the Waŋarr) will take responsibility for that clan's *rom* until it can be passed on to the next generation. Should the clan become extinct, there is a process of succession – sometimes prolonged – by which one of those clans or a section of one will "become" the former clan and assume responsibility for its estates.

In a wonderful essay in the bilingual catalog for a major exhibition of Yolŋu paintings that is touring the US at the time of writing (2022–2024), Dela

Munuŋgurr (Yunupiŋu) and Dhukumul Wanambi explain the reach and connectivity of *gurruṯu*. Dela says:

> *Gurruṯu* is known to us as *raki* (string) – *raki* is how *gurruṯu* is connected. This *raki* connects all Yolŋu people across northeast Arnhem Land – we have a *gurruṯu* connection even to the Yolŋu we have never met. This *raki* extends to the land, the sea and the creatures and plants that live there … Yolŋu are connected to everything in our world through *gurruṯu*. [17]
>
> (Munuŋgurr & Wanambi, 2022: 54–55)

What Dela is saying, in effect is that for Yolŋu it is *gurruṯu*, informed by *rom*, that is the imagined community, not nation.

Conclusion

In conclusion I will briefly consider an existential threat to the integrity and power of *rom* combined with *gurruṯu* as an articulation of Yolŋu communal identity. It is posed, indirectly, by the political rhetoric at the national level surrounding First Nations and their relationship to the settler state. In continuing to assert their sense of the sovereignty of *rom* in the face of encapsulation within a settler nation, Yolŋu are faced with an unenviable paradox. Because it would seem from the current rhetoric that nations can only make treaties with other nations. The nation in its "modern" sense as a bounded political entity is not, and never has been, a Yolŋu way of being in the world, and we have seen that the creation of some form of nation-like regional polity is not (as yet) fully imaginable. Is it possible to simultaneously sustain two very different signifiers of communal identity, one of which might be effective for looking outwards politically, but which entails an enforced commensurability with the encapsulating other? Would living with *rom* be compromised in the process? Or can the two co-exist, as outward- versus inward-facing articulations of identity? In short, can Yolŋu retain their sense of themselves as encapsulated but not colonized?

The answer to these questions lies in sidestepping the apparent conundrum of commensurability. We have seen that in institutions like the Dilak Authority and the YNA the intention is to provide a "carapace," by which "traditional" institutions of Yolŋu governance (possibly reimagined as nations to make them appear legible) are given an administrative interface through which to interact with the settler state (see Mantziaris & Martin, 2000). There is another solution, which is to give space and encouragement to Yolŋu re-imaginings and re-purposings of their own regional systems of governance. In this, the clans of Blue Mud Bay, who came together in solidarity to run the Blue Mud Bay case are taking the lead today. The clans of this region are linked together in a named regional system – a connubium – through patterns of intermarriage over many generations (Morphy & Morphy, 2019).[18] They are the Djalkiripuyŋu ("the footprint people," referring to the footprints of the generations

in the mud of the Bay). This is a regional social universe based in *rom, maḏayin* and *gurruṯu*, whose members were formerly engaged, in the days of the hunting and gathering economy, in joint economic activities over the whole range of the combined clan estates. Nevertheless, the connubium is not firmly bounded – both *gurruṯu* and *maḏayin* connect it in all directions to other surrounding connubia. So in many respects it is very un-nationlike, and the term nation has never yet been attached to it. Nor, I would argue, should it be. The connubium is a particularly Yolŋu form of regional organization that could be recognized, on its own terms, as a potential treaty partner by the state. There is no need to call it a nation, nor to demand that it become more nation-like, if (echoing Yiŋiya Guyula) the state were willing to accept the connubium's own way of governing itself as both legitimate and coherent.

I return here to Nadasdy, who eschews the term "modernity" because of its covertly evolutionary implications, a sentiment echoed in the title of this book (*Countering Modernity*). This stance can be taken as compatible with the refusal of the enforced commensurability that is entailed in adopting terms like nation to describe Indigenous polities. But perhaps the more radical course would be to challenge universalist assumptions about (the inevitability of) nation as the only coherent form of human polity, by insisting that there are *alternative possible forms of modernity*. And if modernity simply drags too much cultural baggage along with it, then at least the term "modern" could be claimed for all contemporary forms of polity, including those where principles of complementarity and connectedness trump the emphasis on boundaries and binary oppositions that is the hallmark of the nation in its modern guise.

Notes

1 I find it hard to use the word "settled" without scare quotes in the context of discussing settler states like Australia. The term creates a double erasure: of that which was there before the "settlers" arrived and of the experiences of those who were so fundamentally unsettled by the effects of colonization. I will use the term henceforth without the scare quotes, but do not mean to detract from its ironic associations by so doing.
2 Again, the scare quotes indicate that this term belongs to the sphere and the viewpoint of settler Australia.
3 "Fankle" is a good Scots verb that is akin to "entangle," but with a metaphorical meaning of "muddle," or "complicate." As a Scot myself I would like to see "unfankle" become an anthropological term of art.
4 Yolŋu is the word for (Aboriginal) person in the set of closely related languages now known collectively as Yolŋu Matha (*matha* is "tongue, language") that are spoken in northeast Arnhem Land in Australia's Northern Territory. Numbering between 6,500 and 7,000, the majority of Yolŋu today live in the ex-mission settlements of Yirrkala, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi and Ramingining, and in numerous small satellite communities known as "outstations" or "homelands." There is an extensive anthropological literature on the Yolŋu, including several monographs (Berndt, 1952, 1962; Keen, 1994; Macgowan, 2007; H. Morphy, 1984, 1991, 2007; Peterson, 1986; Reid, 1983; Shapiro, 1981; Thomson, 1949, 2006; Warner, 1958; Williams, 1986, 1987). Yolŋu (Murngin) kinship was the subject of

the "Murngin controversy" that occupied much space in anthropological journals in the 1960s (see Barnes, 1967; Maddock, 1970; H. Morphy, 1978). My own engagement with Yolŋu people goes back to 1974 when I arrived at Yirrkala as a Masters linguistics student, accompanying my spouse Howard Morphy who was intending to do his PhD research on Yolŋu art. Both these endeavors resulted in publications (H. Morphy, 1991). We were adopted into the *gurruṯu* (kinship) system, as is the norm, and were positioned for all time as the siblings of the distinguished artist Narritjin Maymuru (Maŋgalili clan) and his wife Baŋara Munuŋgurr (Djapu clan). Since then we have returned many times and worked on a wide variety of research projects, including as the expert-witness anthropologist and linguist for the Blue Mud Bay native title case (see F. Morphy, 2009). This experience, together with research that I undertook on the Australian National Census (F. Morphy, 2002, 2007a, 2013), brought home to me the power of what I term the "enforced commensurability" through which the state silences Indigenous Australian ways of being in the world. We are currently in the midst of a major research project on place names and personal names in collaboration with two local Yolŋu organizations – Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Art and Knowledge Centre and the Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation. Through this project we are in effect returning to the Yolŋu all the data that we have collected over the years. We are collaborating closely with them to design maps and databases that are maximally accessible and useful for their own purposes. Although I have had many discussions with Yolŋu interlocutors over the years about "governance" concepts (see, for example, F. Morphy, 2007b), my thinking about the problem of "nation" is preliminary, and I have not yet had the opportunity to discuss the topic directly with them. I have therefore listed myself as sole author, although to those who know them and me the influence on my framing of the problem owes a great deal to conversations with, among others, the late Dr. Gawirrin Gumana, Yinimala Gumana, the late Dr. Raymattja Marika, Djambawa Marawili, Minitja Marawili, Yananymul Munuŋgurr, and Yumitjin Wunuŋmurra.

5 At this point I will cease to put quotation marks around nation.

6 Both the Introduction to this volume and Bird-David's contribution (Chapter 7) have more to say on the meaning of both "modern" and "modernity," and I return to these terms in the conclusion to the chapter. Here I am simply drawing attention to the way in which "nation," once a descriptor of *cultural* distinctiveness, has migrated via entanglement with terms such as "sovereignty" into the political arena. In both its old and new senses "nation," like "modernity" itself, is a culturally contingent category.

7 "These corporations are called 'prescribed bodies' because they have certain prescribed obligations under the NTA, including a requirement to incorporate under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act) 2006* (CATSI Act)." (https://nativetitle.org.au/learn/role-and-function-pbc/about-pbcs, accessed March 6, 2023).

8 For a number of case studies of the social effects of native title see Smith and Morphy (2007).

9 Problems of scale are also given attention in this volume in the chapters by Simpson et al. (Chapter 9) and Akubadaura (Chapter 6).

10 See https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/our-regions/north-east-arnhem-land/.

11 Ibid.

12 See www.whywarriors.com.au/2011/11/first-yolngu-nations-assembly-held-in-galiwinku/. The website is auspiced by Why Warriors Pty Ltd.

13 See www.whywarriors.com.au/2012/10/yolngu-nations-assembly-statement-from-the-second-assembly/. These "states" at least have the virtue of including clans from both of the moieties into which the Yolŋu universe is divided.

14 Yiŋiya was one of the instigators of the YNA initiative. He is currently the local member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly for the electorate of Mulka (formerly Nhulunbuy), a position he has held since 2016. He initially campaigned "on the platform of Yolŋgu Rom Ngurrungu (Yolŋgu law first) and Treaty" (Guyula, 2017: 1).
15 *Maḏayin* is the term which encompasses everything to do with the sacred aspects of *rom*, including material objects such as paintings, the performative aspects of ceremony such as song and dance sequences, and knowledge connected to the *Waŋarr*.
16 There is no space here to detail they ways in which this is true as far as the physical universe is concerned.
17 Dela and Dhukumul both work at the Mulka Centre which is a part of Buku Larrŋgay Mulka Art and Knowledge Centre at Yirrkala. This truly bilingual catalogue is a major publication involving a team of Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu authors, recorders, transcribers and translators. The original essay on *gurruṯu* is in Yolŋu Matha; here I have used the English translation also provided by the authors.
18 Compare the Kichwa *ayllu llakta* as described by Simpson et al. (Chapter 9 in this volume).

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