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THE SHAPE-SHIFTING TERRITORY

Colonialism, Shamanism and A'i Kofan Place-Making in the Amazonian

Piedmont, Colombia

By

Joaquin E. Carrizosa

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Anthropology)

At the

UNIVERSITY OF KENT-CANTERBURY

2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My PhD study in the UK was made possible thanks to the Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies. In particular, I would like to gratefully thank Sally Pepperall and Tim Butler for their always supportive and kind attention along all this process. My fieldwork would have been impossible without the International Society of Ethnobiology - Darrell Posey Fellowship for Ethnoecology and Traditional Resource Rights award; special thanks to the ISE board for trusting me, specially Sarah Laird, Mary Stockdale and Natasha Duarte for their always-effective and friendly help.

It is very difficult to express how thankful I am with Dr. Miguel Alexiades for his extremely useful guidance, his thoughtful understanding, his patience from the beginning, and most importantly, his friendship during all this times of walking, thinking, traveling, discussing, and wildly laughing together. His passionate, wide open and accurate knowledge from the most basic fact in diverse disciplines to the most complicated conundrums about the self encouraged me to not only grow as an anthropologist but also as an independent thinker, and I would say, a humanist. I know that not many students are given the opportunity to found this strange combination of real friendship and guidance, together with the allowance to develop their own forms of creative individuality and self-reflection. With all my heart and my sincere long lasting friendship, I thank you for all these.

I would also like to thank Dr. Daniela Peluso for trusting me, for your unconditional help, always-warm attention, and remarkable effectiveness to solve every obstacle along this trip. From the first day Daniela guaranteed that the road was going to be safe and pleasant, and hence, with unlimited enthusiasm and impressive knowledge Daniela guided me through all this process while opening the door of his home as a new member. An attitude that always reminded me of my experience in Amazonia with indigenous groups for whom commensality and the sharing of food not only characterize the relation between relatives but produce relatives. Eating like someone and with someone is a primary vector of identity, and thus, food sharing and the culinary-shared space fabricate people of the same species. This was my experience with the Alexiades-Peluso family and their cheerful dining room.

A very special thank to Dr. Juan Alvaro Echeverri for his enlightening advice and permanent help before and during my teaching experience in Leticia. I owe great part of the arguments presented here to his generous explanations and groundbreaking analysis on indigenous territorial issues.

Thanks a lot to professor Glenn Bowman for accepting to be part of my upgrade. His friendly and orientating comments and advices were definitively useful during my fieldwork time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank German Palacio, Dani Mahecha, Carlos Franky, Juan Jose Vieco and German Ochoa at the IMANI -National University in Leticia, Amazonas where I had the rewarding experience of working for a short time, but with whom I forged very special bonds. Many thanks for the encouragement and helpful advice.

To my two great friends Eda Elif Tibet and Jaime Cabrera my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for patiently listening all my endless meanderings about the territory, for their inspiring discussions and for providing me with the much needed humor to deal with a PhD specially during winter time. In Leticia, all my loving thanks to Monica Perez, my good friend all along these Amazonian years.

I would also like to thank Sandra Valenzuela. Without her vote of confidence long ago, my Putumayo experience and actually my current life would have been very different. I am more than thankful for her respect to my arguments, her patience with my sometimes-rebellious ways of doing things and her unconditional friendship. I hope I could be able to return at least a little bit of all those marvelous things you have given me.

Thanks to all of the members of the School of Anthropology and Conservation at the University of Kent. In particular Jennie Hogg and Nicola Kerry-Yoxall for their endless patience to deal with each one of my administrative issues always with the most caring attitude.

I cannot offer here the proper thanks to the people in Putumayo. I owe all of them too much. After all these years of walking together, their families became so much more than just friends or acquaintances. Accordingly, my thanks would be the future actions that will define me not as an anthropologist but as an ethical and concerned human being.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my mother and sisters for their unconditional and loving support to all my decisions even when they seemed to be deliberately unsafe, strange and often irrational. I love all of you for that.

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A Note on Names

All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals and their personal and family security. Many of the people with whom I collaborated here are still living in areas of military activity and specially intelligence operations directed to eliminate drug production and other illicit activities mentioned in this dissertation. Accordingly it is certainly not my intention to provide any potentially useful information for this purpose.

PART 1

Chapter 1 Introduction

On July 11, 2012, an unusual event took place in southwest Colombia. Waves of Nasa indigenous people of the Cauca Department (province) began confronting armed groups directly while peacefully asking them to leave their traditional territories. Indigenous men and women from diverse communities removed police trenches, disassembled FARC guerrilla's bombs found on their lands and walked from Toribio to the surrounding mountains with the firm intention of pressing the FARC rebels to leave the area. Later, more than five hundred Nasa occupied the sacred indigenous site of El Berlin, where the National Army was protecting private cell phone company towers, and urged the soldiers to leave the place¹. A couple of days later, when the military had yet to retreat from indigenous lands by the proposed deadline, the Nasa forcibly removed troops from El Berlin's mountaintop base. Amidst dust, tears and blood, striking images of terrified soldiers surrounded by indigenous peoples, furiously lifted, and then dragged away from their posts, rapidly spread across the national press. *"These communities have learned how to live in the midst of conflict"* read one of many Nasa communications during this time,

*"but our territories still belong to us, and the government should respect that we want to live in a different way from the way they attempt to impose on us from Bogota (the capital city of Colombia) or any other large city"*².

A message of territorial autonomy and cultural differentiation sent by the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia – ONIC ("National Indigenous Organization of Colombia") in support of the Nasa people declared that:

*"Indigenous territories must be respected by the state, armed actors, multinationals, and any other actor with military, economic and geostrategic interests that may threat our different culture and autonomy"*³.

In the same vein, the two main political organizations representing indigenous peoples in Amazonia (OPIAC⁴) and nationally (AICO⁵), publicly declared:

¹ Indigenous Nasa Resist Militarization in Cauca. Fellowship of reconciliation.

² Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia-ONIC. <http://cms.onic.org.co/> Accessed on January 05-2014

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana

⁵ Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia

“We are here to tell the national opinion that we want the government to respect our legitimate demands already recognized in the 1991 Constitution. We have the legal right to govern our territories in the same way as our forebears taught us to. We want to live without war and conflict and in harmony with the nature”⁶.

Several Amazonian Indigenous leaders that I interviewed while the conflict was at its peak, referred to this situation as an opportunity to restate their position regarding the territorial problem in Colombia. In most of the declarations I documented, their arguments coincided in defining the territory as:

“(…) the ancestral source of life for humanity. And we, as indigenous peoples, are guardians of such life filled with its own different meanings. Thus we must live in close harmony with the land, in our own terms, and under the guidance of our own Law of Origin”⁷.

Given the difficulties faced by indigenous communities lying in the path of large-scale development projects, the events in Cauca and the subsequent responses by indigenous political leaders formed a dramatic call, I believe, to readdress the indigenous territorial issue. As such, this unexpected, strong and unified reaction of the national indigenous movement to this territorial transgression was important, for it suggested that the territory in Colombia, as an object of struggle, is still vital within the political arenas of the entire ethno-political movement. In this sense, it was further a reminder that notwithstanding the occurrence of ‘deterritorialization’ and ‘reterritorialization’ processes at the same time and in the same spaces (Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987) caused by increased voluntary and forced mobility in Amazonia (McSweeney and Jokisch, 2007; Alexiades, 2009), and transnational flows of people, media, and commodities (Hannerz, 1989; Appadurai 1991, 1996), the idea of indigenous fixed territories still provide the basis for geographical differentiation, and hence, for place-based identities in marginal regions of Latin America. The Cauca uprising stands thus as another example of how place and territory retain their crucial role for indigenous peoples in spite the “placelessness that has become the essential and often painful feature of the modern condition” (Escobar, 2001:140),

⁶ Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonia Colombiana-OPIAC- <http://www.opiac.org.co/> Accessed on January 05-2014

⁷ This comment was made by José Fernando O. an experienced indigenous leader with more than two decades participating in land claims’ processes in Amazonia and currently working in OPIAC.

For indigenous peoples, nonetheless, talking about territory is not the same as talking about land. Over the past decades, the importance of territory for indigenous political movements has evolved from one around which indigenous land claims were articulated, to its current role as an all-embracing political tool that serves to unify diverse legitimate demands, not only relating to land rights, but much broader issues. Health, education, political participation, developmental assistance, human rights' protection, and differentiated legal treatment, are all often currently subsumed under the 'territory claims' of indigenous Amazonians (Surrallés and García Hierro, 2005; Stavenhagen, 2006). The emergent indigenous discourse in question is characterized thus by a certain way of thinking about the territory as containing a differentiated realm of particular identities and specific forms of balanced socio- environmental relationships (Chirif, et. al. 1991; Ramos, 1994a; Surrallés, 2009).

Such conceptual constructions of indigenous territories as differentiated spaces containing cultures have gained political recognition within global policy-making arenas. This can be seen for instance in diverse legislative instruments developed by intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations General Assembly which have produced the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), or the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO) No. 169, that deals specifically with the rights of indigenous peoples. These two important instruments are meaningful for they recognize "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their *distinctive*⁸ spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard" (Article 25, UNDRIP, 2008)⁹. Hence "the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their own political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources" (*Ibid*: Annex. 2). Most of the articles included in UN, and in general pan-indigenous narratives (see COICA, 1990; OEA, 1997; CEPAL, 2000) reveal a narrative style and a set of concepts and assumptions that dovetail quite well with *Territorio Indígena* (Indigenous territory in Spanish) as a unified and consistent social, geographical and political category, defined as the distinct place of ethnic and traditional socio-spatial dynamics (see Pandey, 2003; Castree, 2004, and Watts, 2004);¹⁰ and therefore, as the Cauca's episode suggests, as a central issue of

⁸ My italics

⁹United Nations-Declaration of the rights on indigenous peoples http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. Accessed on January 05-2014

¹⁰ The arguments of these authors clearly explore the construction of differential spaces as intrinsic part of the modernity's project.

many indigenous struggles which are currently seeking to reappropriate what have been historically taken away from them.

The problem of indigenous differential territories' discourses

As indispensable and legitimate as these definitions of territory may be, I find them to be also problematic, for as I shall explore throughout this thesis, they draw on a simple contrast of opposites. In other words, these discursive constructions strategically rely on images of localism, notions of cultural purity, well-marked geographical difference, and ultimately, immobile identities. Certainly, this is necessary, for as Castree points out "Given the sometimes appalling histories they have suffered at the hands of majoritarian populations, it is understandable (and pragmatically useful) that they might, in certain cases, wish to underpin claims to territory, artefacts and knowledges with plenary statements about 'their' identity and difference. Such statements can provide a platform for indigenes to interact with named 'outsiders' on their own terms" (2004:156). An important question however, one which I seek to grapple in this thesis, is the extent to which these territorial representations obscure a more complex and unsteady construction of the territory in the quotidian realities of indigenous peoples in Colombia,

Focused on the Kofán people of the Putumayo province in Southern Colombia, in this thesis I am therefore interested in exploring several questions concerned with those indigenous territorial understandings and practices, born out of the contact with Others, that normally are excluded from the indigenous public political debate on Amerindian territorialization. For instance, how are the missionary's violent territorial impositions in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Colombian Amazon piedmont currently produced and mobilized as essential part of Kofán shamanic geographies? Why do several indigenous Kofán, who might otherwise be seen as free and autonomous, continue to seek the imposed oil company's presence within their lands; and therefore, what kind of cosmological and territorial conceptions engender such interest? I would like to examine also what kind of territorial, political, economic and cultural changes and adaptations led many indigenous families to participate in the Putumayo's land commodification process, so harmful for their very territorial autonomy. Furthermore, what kind of agreements and confrontations between Kofán families and the arriving waves of colonists are vital in how the indigenous people conceive the territory today. From observing the Kofán encounters with Others, I shall explore also how natives' forced but also voluntary participation in the war dynamics, or their active involvement in the cocaine regional economy have shaped their current territorial conceptions. And finally, how such involvement in these activities have influenced their traditional

forms of shamanism in order to be attuned to the transformations and dilemmas of our contemporary world, even if this implies in some cases, the development of sorcery practices directly linked to the drug and violence- ridden context.

Thus, rather than take as a given the notion of territory that is embedded and promoted in the public sphere of indigenous political debate and international arenas, but certainly without underestimating the need and effectiveness of it, I have tried to engage diverse territorial questions concerned with the rather multiple, paradoxical and contradictory territorial perceptions that transpire in daily social life within indigenous communities of the Colombian Andean-Amazon region.

In this introductory chapter I would like to start exploring thus, the seemingly opposed versions of the territory for indigenous peoples. These are, the idea of differential indigenous geographies deployed in the public sphere of indigenous political debate in contrast to a rather more relational and intercultural understanding, which is the one I have been in contact with during the past years of work with the Kofán people. As part of this discussion, I will provide first an overview of the anthropological debate on indigenous territories in Amazonia while connecting such debates with the Colombian political history regarding ethnicity and territoriality. From here I propose the core argument of this thesis, this is, that indigenous territorial conceptions in the Colombian Amazon piedmont emerge from what might be seen as encounters or contact zones where actors' perceptions and ideologies about their territory are not always clearly bounded and well defined. Within such historical contact zones, complex and very often violent dialectics between indigenous peoples with diverse colonial and postcolonial forces create, in spite the asymmetrical relations of power, mutually influenced territorial constructions.

agenda. Equally important topics such as land claims, indigenous reserves' titling, the national oil company's infrastructure within their territories, the intrusions of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the abhorrent crimes committed by the paramilitary United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), and the human rights abuses of the National Army were analysed.

Within this political field, not only Kofán people, but also Inga, Siona, Emberá, Awá, Pastos, Kichwa, among other Amazon piedmont indigenous inhabitants, worked on and debated year after year all these territorial issues intrinsic to the Colombian state formation in the region. In 2011, moreover, I had the opportunity to attend the Indigenous' Congress in La Hormiga, Putumayo. Listening discussions around all these territorial threats, I was able to understand the efforts of indigenous leaders to create discursive constructions of "differential geographies" (Castree, 2004), that is, to construct the concept of territory as a differentiated indigenous cultural and spatial realm under permanent threat; and furthermore, how, consequently, these communities are imagined as the opposed spaces of oil, warfare, mining, and cocaine activities. As Fernando X, an important indigenous leader argued during his speech:

"(...) the "territorio indígena" is what we should be focused on right now. Why? Because we are Indians and we have to know that even today, after so many achievements of our indigenous movement, white peoples still have intentions of stripping us from what make us Indians, that is the territory. Thus, we need to continue struggling and defending indigenous territories from all those threats such as miners, oil seekers, colonists, pharmaceuticals, etc. which are outside there waiting for us to lower our guard".

In Colombia, this indigenous conception of territory as a differentiated space from the one that exists "outside", as Fernando argued, has been consistently restated in indigenous legal and political instruments such as the Planes Integrales de Vida (Comprehensive Life Plans). These documents, developed by the ONIC at the end of the 1990s, are built through long and complex processes of community participation relating to their cultural projects and reflections upon their experiences with particular developmental initiatives. These plans contain information about the community, its resources, its needs, the changes the community wants to implement and the necessary steps or projects in needs to carry out in to achieve such changes.¹³ The Planes Integrales de Vida were legally recognized in the 1991 Colombian Constitution as the main instrument for indigenous populations to insert

¹³Planes de vida y planes de etnodesarrollo (2009)
http://observatorioetnicocecoin.org.co/files/4_Guia_planes_de_vida_y_de_desarrollo.pdf Accessed August, 2013

their different demands (health coverage, education, land titling, employment) in regional and national development agendas, and therefore its contents are considered by the state institutions as the collective, unified, political position of the people they are about.

The point, henceforth, is that indigenous' political arguments, the Planes Integrales de Vida, and ultimately, the National Constitution, pursue indigenous autonomy discursively relying on the differential geographies argument. Accordingly, these discourses put forward dichotomous images of indigenous territories as external, and even opposed to, some of the most pervasive violent and economic dynamics of Colombia and state forms of territorialization. These arguments about cultural and territorial difference are consistent with the premise that ethnic difference must be situated within the framework of the overarching administrative and legal apparatus of the Colombian state (Rappaport and Dover, 1996:24). And therefore, it is precisely by using legal tools conceived within this apparatus such as the Constitution or Planes de Vida, and the historical adoption of colonial institutions such as Resguardos and Indian Reserves that indigenous populations develop and legalize this differential political construction of the *territorio indígena*. Thus, as Lazarus-Black and Hirsch (1994) indicate, indigenous movements' actions have contested the law through the means of the law by negotiating and relocating itself within the national Constitution and legal frameworks.

The construction of differential ethnic geographies through political devices and discourses are therefore intrinsically linked to the strategic production of essentialised identities (Ramos 1994a, 1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Slater 1996; Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Graham, 2005; Hennessy 2008; Bolaños 2010); and with the contemporary capacities of indigenous groups to invoke specific identities within shifting political and economic landscapes (Warren 1998; Yashar, 1999, 2005; Brysk 2000; Warren and Jackson 2002). Accordingly, indigenous strategic representations of essentialized identities put forward images of tribal, clan, ethnic, or other subcategories of indigenous forms of social organization with strong emphasis on its intrinsic connection with a spatially bounded territory. This model of distinct people embedded in distinct places is fundamental to resistance efforts and in negotiations with national and international actors (Brysk 2000; Castree 2004; Niezen 2006; Escobar 2008; Westra 2008). In this way, they seize their collective identity as a performance strategy in order to establish relations with the state (Gros 1998).

From my point of view, this differential territorial construction is legitimate and absolutely necessary for cultural and historical recovery projects and inherent

rights demands. However, as Jackson and Warren contend, discourses based on cultural difference do not lead to success everywhere (2005:565), and this is so especially in Putumayo, where as I shall attempt to show, such discursive struggle for differential indigenous geographies structured upon binary models obscures the rather complex and ambiguous encounter of indigenous populations with the national society, and the state.

As noted by Blom Hansen and Stepputat (2001: 23), this separation is predicated upon the idea of an implicit model that posits two abstractions, state and community, as two discrete and antinomial cultural and territorial extremes (see Nugent, 2001; Roseberry, 1994; Van Beek, 2001). Thus, operating from within the political arena of indigenous land struggles, the idea of territory and its closely related concepts of tradition, communalism and custom – akin to Watts (2004:197) remarks on the idea of community- stands in sharp contrast to the more abstract, instrumental, individuated, authoritative, and formal properties of the state, the nation, and the Colombian society. The problem, nevertheless, which I shall attempt to explore in this thesis, is that such dichotomic model of indigenous ‘closed’ place-projects may entail the conceptual reduction of territories to images of discrete spaces where the moral and social values of what is regarded as the indigenous community-traditional lifestyle, unfold in opposition to the nation’s social space (Herzfeld, 1997; Mitchell, 1999; Hunt, 2006; Linke, 2006). As a consequence, I think these ‘purified’ representations of place enclose peoples, culture, resources or knowledges within an imagined bounded local domain, which is typically associated with an idea of ‘resistant identities’ (Castells, 1997) to those ‘external threats’, so crucial as in Fernando’s speech argument.

A different perspective from that afforded by such rigid state-society or power-powerless oppositional model emerged in my day-to-day experience living inside indigenous communities in this region. Outside political arenas of struggle, a parallel constellation of meaning-shifting perspectives upon their social and ecological spaces emerged permanently, articulating fluently Indian and non-Indian visions of the world, and often contradicting many of the official arguments in ethnopolitical discourses. I sensed that the indigenous territory at this level was thus not only the realm of “resistance identities” to the forces colonialism and acculturation as Castells (*Ibid.*) suggests. It seemed to be more of a complex dialogical space of negotiation, confrontation, mutual interpenetration of cultural features, political discourses, economic interests and symbolical codes, between powerful and downtrodden subjects.

Illustrating this multifaceted nature of the territory I found fascinating examples in Putumayo that would become later the ethnographic units of analysis in this research. For instance, the ferocious indigenous opposition against oil drilling within sacred territories through special sorcery assaults, while many of these attackers sought simultaneously employment in the national oil company; the emergence of new forms of shamanic cooperation with the military intelligence operating in the region in spite their firm reluctance to be part of the conflict. The nonlinear ways of reading their painful territorial history from the present, creating in turn territories filled with reinterpreted colonial elements now perceived as intrinsic to their indigenous traditions. Their disapproval of the drug business because they perceive it as bringing invaders and 'spiritual pollution' to their ancestral lands, while cultivating coca inside their own lands. All these paradoxical situations explored in this research, exemplified what at first sight may seem to be incompatible discourses and practices, but in my perspective, they suggest a different and more complex conception of the space and the social relations encompassed in the current context of modern capitalism and neoliberalism in Amazonia.

Hence, while indigenous representations of their territories in Colombia seem to be clearly defined within the official political grounds in which they are expressed- as the Cauca crises reactions or the statements made by the indigenous leaders of Putumayo illustrate- I suggest that such strong conceptual boundaries enclosing the idea of territory, are invariably misleading. I believe such boundaries obliterate historical practices of intercultural dialogue between different indigenous and non-indigenous peoples that largely constitute what is conceptualized by people such as the Kofán as their "indigenous territory". Consequently, these discrete territorial notions obscure the contradictory and mutable quotidian relations of peoples with oil, cocaine and war related activities that suggest other parallel forms of indigenous territorial engagements in current Colombia. I contend thus, that while precise, fixed, and conceptually bounded versions of territory might have been necessary to sustain the cultural difference upon which Indian mobilization constructs its legitimacy, ultimately, these versions fail to capture, in Moore-Gilbert's words, "the mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide" (1997:116).

Nature, culture, politics and territory in Amazonian anthropology

The idea of 'indigenous territory' has been implicit in Amazonian anthropology since the 1940s-1950s, beginning with the typological ethnographical tradition of Steward's *Handbook of South America Indians* that separated, classified and described ethnic groups' inhabited areas, therewith creating bounded spaces, fixed

in maps and texts.¹⁴ At the time Steward's synthesis was produced, Amazonian ethnology was dominated by a blend of diffusionism and geographical and ecological determinisms (Viveiros de Castro, 1996). Accordingly, these early works on indigenous forms of territorialisation evinced the influence of natural sciences permeating the definition of territory as the species' protected and thus discrete space necessary for its reproduction. The "typical Tropical Forest tribe", recounts Viveiros de Castro, "was organized in autonomous and egalitarian villages, which were limited in their size and permanence by both a simple technology and an unproductive environment, and where thus unable to produce the requisite economic surplus to allow the rise of the craft specialization, social stratification, and political centralization that had developed in other areas of South America" (1996: 181).

In the early 1960s, Lévi-Strauss published his pioneering works *La Pensée Sauvage* (1962) and *Mythologiques* (1964), and French structuralism became deeply influential in the nascent field of Amazonian ethnology. Lévi-Strauss different analytical style emphasized the cognitive and symbolic value of the material dimensions of social life studied by cultural ecologists from adaptive viewpoint-relations with animals, origins of cultivated plants, diet, and technology. Thus, the conceptual opposition between "nature" and "culture", which had underlain the deterministic theories of Steward's heirs, Lévi-Strauss made internal to indigenous cosmologies (Viveiros de Castro, 1996:181). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, influenced by French structuralism, anthropologists such as Rivière (1973) and Maybury-Lewis (1979) contributed to define the field of Amazonian anthropology by providing extensive analyses of indigenous socio-cosmological systems in South America (see also Overing 1975; Cardoso de Oliveira, 1978; Carneiro da Cunha, 1978). At the same time, in the United States, ethnohistory and symbolic anthropology, both transformations of Frantz Boas' culturalism had adopted ideas both from Steward's materialism and some aspects of Structuralism (Viveiros de Castro) producing in turn several diverse lines of enquiry in specific sub regions of the Amazon (Rivière, et. al 2001). Exemplifying these new anthropological tendencies are studies focused on the rise of complex societies in Amazonia within the influential theoretical paradigm of cultural ecology (Meggers and Evans, 1957; Carneiro 1970; Lathrap 1970; Meggers 1971, 1972, 1988; Roosevelt 1980). On the other hand, anthropological studies based on structuralists/culturalist paradigms

¹⁴ The monumental "*Handbook of South America Indians*" edited by Julian Steward from 1946 to 1950 is perhaps the most representative work of this early anthropological momentum of Amazonian Anthropology. However the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss "*Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949) or Betty Jane Meggers "*Amazonia: man and culture in a counterfeit paradise* (1971) were profoundly influential as well in the construction of a classificatory anthropology of Amazonian indigenous peoples. For a complete review of sources in this regard see Viveiros de Castro, "Images Of Nature And Society In Amazonian Ethnology", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25, 1, 1996.

investigated particular Amerindian groups and their symbolic ordering of nature (Hugh-Jones C, 1979; Descola, 1985; Santos-Granero 1986).

The point is that in spite the great theoretical differences within Amazonian anthropology, during the 1970s-1980s, the territory as merely a geographical framing convention evolved into more complex and detailed set of understandings of people's relations with the space. As such, the intrinsic relation between native's forms of territorialization, local cosmologies and social organization became a central topic of debate (Overing-Kaplan 1976, Hugh-Jones 1979, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1986; Maybury-lewis 1987). This body of literature fostered from the 1990s until today, another productive moment for Amazonian anthropology and the understanding of indigenous territorial relations. And today, it is therefore widely accepted by diverse scholars that indigenous cosmological conceptions of territories are not only about physical inhabited lands, but rather, as complex spaces which certainly include its productive functions, but also kinship relations, networks of interactions with physical and intangible beings, sacred sites, modification of the environment and resources like water, forests, and belowground minerals with diverse meanings and symbolisms (Van Der Hammen, 1991; Fabian 1992, Gow, 1995; Descola, 1996, 2005; Echeverri, 2005). Thanks to these anthropological and ethnographic efforts, the concept of *territorio indígena* has evolved from the initial idea of a required area for the effective economic and demographic reproduction, into a concept that refers to the "fundamental and multidimensional space for the creation and recreation of the social, economic, and symbolic values and practices of the communities" (Alvarez et al. 1998: 20); and therefore as the vital essence of indigenous identities and cultures (Jackson, 1995; Botero and Echeverri, 2002; Chirif and García, 2007).

The further increased political involvement of several anthropologists working in Amazonian regions within the last two decades in different fronts of territorial struggle (oil, land claiming, human rights, health) has not only provided wider and deeper territorial studies of indigenous articulated engagements of space, culture, history and nature in particular sites, but also the political scenario in which contemporary indigenous versions of territories emerge have also become a key issue for research (Van Cott, 2000; Assies et al. 2000; Brysk 2000; Sieder 2002; Maybury-Lewis 2002; Warren and Jackson 2002; Langer & Muñoz 2003; Laurent, 2005; Surrallés and García Hierro, 2005). Furthermore, the increased deeper and systematic national and international institutional analysis on indigenous land rights (Vieco et. al, 2000; Colchester et al. 2001, Letuama, 2000; Daes, 2001; Plant and Hvalkof 2001, Roldan, 2004; Echeverri, 2005) testify to the great interest these

changes have aroused in the academic and development communities (Stocks, 2005).

This awareness on the complexity of indigenous territorial conceptions became more visible during the 1990s, a period of great achievements for indigenous land titling demands and cultural rights recognition in Amazonia (Albert, 2005; Schwartzman and Zimmerman, 2005). During this time, territory became the centrepiece of discourses developed both by indigenous and non indigenous peoples, developing the idea of the *territorio indígena* as a complex and rich tissue of intermingled society - nature relations, closing the gap between these two poles, and providing in turn a thoughtful definition that satisfied both political and academic demands for a different approach to the concept. By observing lowland indigenous cosmologies, territorial spaces and their enclosed environments were defined as systems for structuring and interpreting reality as a complex relational fabric (Echeverri, 2005; Calavia, 2005) where material and immaterial elements interact through channels, networks, dimensions and paths, and “The result is a vivid space rather than a conceptualized one, where what is important is not to draw a map of a static area but rather to perceive of a dynamic environment, and to be able to interact with the elements that comprise it, which in turn are endowed with subjectivity” (Surrallés and García Hierro, 2005:16).

These anthropological insights on Amazonian forms of territorialization have helped indigenous political activism by providing an structured idea of territory as the locus of self-determination, autonomy, and cultural distinctiveness, and contributing therefore to create the necessary spaces of debate that ultimately prompted political reforms that involved autonomy, land rights, access to natural resources, control over economic development, self-governance and reforms of military and police powers over indigenous peoples (Francois, 1989; Van Cott, 1995: 12; Perreault, 2003; Rubenstein, 2004; De la Peña, 2005; Cepek, 2012). Furthermore, for Indian movements, reifying ethnic identities has become a crucial element of this territorial debate. Hence, we may find that in spite the general differences, there is a pattern in academic literature, indigenous political congregations, and technical documents of the late 1980s through early 2000s, which demonstrates how the territory concept was elaborated with particular emphasis on cosmographical aspects that included ritual relations with intangible entities and the environment, sacred landscapes, shamanic knowledge and ancestrality, history and resistance, all new pivotal elements of the ethnic-political discourse (e.g. Descola 1990; Turner, 1991, 1993; Roosevelt, 1994; Gallois, 1994; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996a, 1996b; Viveiros de Castro, 1996).

Indigenous territories imagined as the last realm of pristine natures and societies

It is important to mention, that such conceptual developments in anthropology emerged in association with the indigenous activist/environmentalist alliance decided to integrate 'traditional' and 'scientific' ecological knowledge, and translate this new epistemological model into the field of politics (e.g. Posey and Balée, 1989; Foresta, 1991; Onis, 1992; Balée, 1994; Hall, 1997). Between the 1980's and 1990's this relationship between environmental and indigenous peoples' movements allowed the consolidation of ecological identities in the Amazon through savvy political tactics that spread globally the idea of Indians as rainforest guardians (Conklin and Graham, 1995). The strategy succeeded by strengthening the view among the international community of indigenous peoples as ecological natives who protect the environment and give hope in the face of the crisis of development. Consequently, representations of indigenous peoples changed from "the savage colonial subject" to "the political-ecological agent." (Ulloa, 2003:1; see also Little, 2001; Albert, 2005).

In the Colombian Amazon, this alliance between environmental advocacy and native-rights movements, as Ulloa contends, fostered a new era of eco-governmentality in which global regulations that relate to new discussions of biodiversity and sustainable development were presented as necessary in order to defend the planet and its natural resources (2003). "Within this new eco-governmentality", Ulloa argues, "Colombia and indigenous peoples, in general, have taken a prominent position because their territories and "natural resources" are some of the hot spots of biodiversity that are focal points of this discourse" (*Ibid*: 3). Accordingly, this entanglement between national and international conservationists and indigenous activism created a certain way of thinking about 'the environment' in Colombia, and as part of this "discursive formation" in Foucault's (1991) words, indigenous territories were ultimately perceived as the last pristine cultural and ecological archipelagos, imagined as unpolluted and disconnected places from the national and international dynamics of capital and power (See Conklin and Graham, 1995).

This ideological alliance between environmentalism and indigenous territorial claims in Colombia would have never been possible before the 1991 Constitution, for the Colombian government interpreted the rise of indigenous land struggles as a security threat until the early 1980s (Ramirez, 1997; Laurent, 2005). Not only in Colombia but throughout Latin America, public discourse and state policies discouraged politicized indigenous identification and the indigenist policies of the era were in fact directed at assimilation (Jackson and Warren, 2005). With the 1991 Constitution, this situation changed and Colombian indigenous peoples were

granted with an enormous level of autonomy. If not effective regarding many territorial decisions, for instance, the extraction of subsoil resources located within their lands, this new level of autonomy was fundamental for it officially established the right to difference, at both the individual and community level, allowing therefore indigenous demands for territorial autonomy and self-determination.

Before the new Constitution of 1991, the situation was completely different. In 1979, for instance, President Julio Cesar Turbay proposed a reorganization of government policies and the creation of the Estatuto Indígena ("Indigenous Statute") that sought the disintegration of indigenous community organizations, the conversion of cabildos (natives' councils) into Communal Action Boards, and the end of collective resguardo ownership that was originally recognized in 1890 (Ramirez, 1997:2). The Indigenous Statute impelled an unprecedented unified reaction of the indigenous movement in Colombia, leading to the First National Indigenous Encounter in Lomas de Ilarco, Tolima, in 1980. In this meeting, several indigenous organizations participated, as did indigenous representatives from Ecuador and Venezuela. After the Lomas de Ilarco encounter, the First National Indigenous Congress was organized in 1982, with participation of more than 2,000 indigenous assistants, and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia –ONIC– was formed. This foundational moment, I argue, was definitive in the political construction of the political concept of indigenous territory, for the native's major goals, namely, "to defend indigenous autonomy and territories; to recover stolen lands; to establish collective ownership of resguardo aimed to control natural resources; to promote community economic organizations; to defend indigenous history culture, and traditions; to establish control over bicultural education; to recover and promote indigenous medicines and health services that are sensitive to the social and cultural characteristics of the communities; and to apply Law 89 that was established to protect and maintain indigenous communities" (*Ibid*:2). All these demands were ultimately unified under the 'territory claim' discourse and struggle (Gros, 1991; Padilla, 1996; Rappaport and Dover, 1996).

The definition of territory institutionalized by the indigenous movement during this process, restated furthermore, their different perspective on land from the Colombian left-wing groups with Marxists revolutionary ideologies, struggling for an agrarian reform in rural Colombia. Underscoring such difference contributed thus, to delineate even more the *territorio indígena* as a discrete space for cultural identity and traditional material practices, far away from the rebels' conception of land use and control structured around the ideology of class struggle. As Echeverri (2005) points out:

“(…) these latter movements [guerrillas] brandished a ‘land struggle’ slogan in which the ‘land’ was understood as the peasantry’s fundamental means of production, whose control had to be recuperated. In this left-wing ideology, the indigenous communities were generally considered as belonging to both the peasantry and the proletariat. The disagreement that led to the split between the indigenous’ claims and the class struggle claims came about precisely from the emphasis placed on the difference between the peasantry’s ‘land struggle’ claims and the indigenous’ territorial claims. This particular concept of territory was to be widely used in the national indigenous movement, acquiring a remarkable subtleness and complexity that set it apart from its mere political jurisdictional meaning (…) as well as with the sense implied in the land struggle claims” (232).

The irony of the guerrilla’s land and social struggles in southern Colombia during the 1970s-1980s is that it actually contributed to the government’s recognition of Indian rights over their territories, but not because the government was committed to amend centuries of indigenous land dispossession and re-establish some sort of social equality in Colombia, but in order to erode the rebel’s support in parts of the country that did not have significant government presence. Granting Indian communities their own land was part of an attempt to win hearts and minds in the government’s eyes against guerrillas and narcotic traffickers, and to co-opt the country’s Indian movement, in particular the Colombian National Indigenous Organization (ONIC) (Jackson, 1995:8). Hence, in order to reduce the spread of political violence and stop civil support to rebel groups, the Colombian State understood the benefits of responding in this way to Indian rights demands.

Although the new sympathetic attitude of the Colombian government towards indigenous territorial demands in the early 1990s was influenced by the counterinsurgent agenda of the state, it was also the fact that the environment was a hot topic in late 1980s and throughout 1990s. Increased environmental awareness, specifically about rainforest issues, magnified national and international sympathy for the plight of Amazonian indigenous peoples (Conklin and Graham 1995, Varese 1996, Ramos 1998, Brosius 1999, 2000, Bengoa 2000, Brysk 2000, 2003, Conklin 1997, 2002, Pieck, 2006). Accordingly, the change in Colombian government’s attitude regarding indigenous issues was directly associated also with the idea of Indian communities as the best guardians of natural resources, and this is why the idea of collective land property -this is the resguardos entitlements- was widely publicized to gain favour in the international ecology movement, and then, in the national public debate (Barco 1987 in Jackson, 1995:8).

Here thus, I can go back to that already mentioned articulation of cultural and ecological discourses embedded in the political construction of Indian identities and territories in Colombia. I suggest in this sense, that the progressive shift in national policies regarding Indian land demands, materialized in the 1991 Constitution, was largely built on the environmentalist and indigenous claim that conservation of biodiversity is congruent with indigenous peoples' views of culture and nature and, by extension, their struggles for territorial differentiation. Accordingly, the new Constitution recognized the native's territorial difference and autonomy relying largely on their role as keepers of the ancestral knowledge that allows the continuity of the biological diversity contained within their territories. *Los territorios indígenas* (indigenous territories) were finally recognized as the spaces of custom and tradition but also of preserved 'ecological places', and hence an emergent, and I would say, rigid socio-spatial structure that strengthened the state/community dual model was established in the Constitution for the management of differential cultural geographies.

This recognition of territorial autonomy came at a price though. Indigenous peoples, under the new National Constitution, have to be recognized as different in order to become citizens with ethnic rights (Ulloa, 2001, 2003; Laurent, 2005). Thus, they claim cultural differences based on unique tradition, identity, law, language, collective territory and particular relations to their environment. Additionally, indigenous peoples were recognized under ideas of nation and within the state only if they were able to construct themselves as a "collective identity" (Ulloa, 2003:5). In this sense, if indigenous peoples are to succeed with their political agendas they need to perform their indigenous difference to gain the authority to speak and be listened to (Jackson and Warren, 2005: 554). This is the "paradox of Indian identity", which, as Gros (1998)¹⁵ has indicated, indigenous peoples have to be different in order to be modern.

Although differential treatment for historically discriminated and marginalized groups is absolutely necessary for them to attain equal citizenship, I argue that these discursive formations around indigenous differential territories echoed somehow 19th century constructions of the the Amazon as the remaining realm of the marvellous where the noble native mystically attunes to the intricate wonders of a vast and virgin ecosystem (Whitehead, 1997:76). Understandably, indigenous Amazonian peoples, such as the A'I Kofán in the Amazon piedmont of Colombia, strategically seized upon these western versions of culture and environment in an effort to legitimize their social, cultural and territorial existence within a national

¹⁵ Christian Gros "Ser diferente por (para) ser moderno, o la paradoja de la modernidad" (Unpaginated manuscript), 1998

space that has excluded them ever since its formation. In this process, Colombian institutions such as the National System of Protected Areas (SINAP), or international environmentalist non-governmental organizations (NGO's) working in the Colombian Amazon piedmont helped to confer and legitimize such ecological identity on indigenous peoples who, at the same time, were active in this constructed identity by reaffirming their traditional practices and knowledge related to nature. These versions of the Indian elaborated by State agencies and NGO's without a thoughtful consideration of the complex context of violence and poverty of Putumayo, and certainly encouraged by indigenous themselves, made possible, as Ramos (1994b) contends, "the production and maintenance of the simulacrum of the Indian: dependent, suffering, a victim of the system, innocent of bourgeois evils, honourable in his actions and intentions, and preferably exotic. (...) The Indians thus created are like clones made in the image of what the whites themselves would like to be" (10).

As intrinsic part of this simplification of indigenous identities and territories, and the strategic underscoring of ecological knowledge and cultural differentiation both fixed in specific spaces, indigenous territorial discourses in Colombia required to give short shrift to the complex dialectical relation, mutual construction, and mirroring forms of representation between indigenous peoples and colonial forces. In other words, these strategic discourses strategically overshadowed the use of colonial history and the Other as an image from which indigenous peoples fashion themselves and their territories as the agents of their own creation (Gow, 1993; Santos Granero, 2009). These versions of indigenous territories as marginal spaces of close-bounded identities, communalism and tradition against the modern state, the nation and its history, I contend, disguise complex intercultural dialogues that have actually led to the construction of the very concept of 'Indigenous Territory'. In fact, I believe that such concept, as Pandey (2003) sustains for community, was constructed as part of the construction of the modern in Putumayo. Since the arrival of conquerors and missionaries, up to the contemporary context of internal neoliberal colonialism, the Colombian Amazon piedmont has been a space of asymmetrical encounters between diverse territorial politics and cultural epistemologies; therefore the impossibility as I shall attempt to show, of considering indigenous territorialities today as cultural and geographic-separated dimensions, but rather, I contend, as the mutable social construction of collective identities and spaces arising out of long lasting and very unsteady intercultural contacts.

Such images of territorial differentiation and fixity are also intrinsically linked to the notion of indigenous group as a well defined and steady cultural unity, this is, as a bounded set of clear and ancestral cultural features and knowledge. By interlocking

this enclosed idea of the 'indigenous group' with the territory notion, the *territorio indígena* is often reduced to the geographical polygon encapsulating all of these cultural features, and thereby representative of encircled and immutable identities. These notions commonly managed by several international NGO's, environmentalists groups, and indigenous activists in Colombian Amazonia, place indigenous peoples exclusively in positions of resistance, as emblematic 'resource rebels' (Gedicks, 2001) enduring the onslaught of modernity and extractivism. Consequently, these versions do not see natives as active agents in the reformulation of their processes of interethnic and cultural contact from an already culturally hybridized perspective, which certainly does not mean acculturation, but creative ways of alterity incorporation as this research attempts to explore.

Contemporary indigenous forms of territorial engagement and the idyllic Indian stereotype

In Putumayo, the indigenous ways of alterity incorporation I have mentioned above include ambiguous and paradoxical relationships with the very Others that affect their own territorial sovereignty, cultural projects, and environmental health, such as the guerrilla, extractivist enterprises, and the state military. Each one of these actors present enormous threats to indigenous territorial projects, and yet, indigenous peoples have weaved particular forms of interaction with them that go beyond the "either resistance or compliance" dichotomy (Beek 2001). These interactions are responsible for many of the cultural and environmental degradation processes affecting communities in the Amazon piedmont. Hence, for those in governments or international NGOs who still function within the mainstream paradigms of indigenism and conservation in Amazonia, several of these contradictory indigenous relations with the territory generated, and still do, disappointment and distrust towards communities or individuals that do not respond to essentialist and stereotypical imageries of natives as 'noble savages'. In the same way as Ramos (1994b) points out for the Brazilian context, it is this image of the idyllic Indian in Colombian Amazonia:

"(...) that justifies funding and personnel for his defence, for otherwise, how would it be possible to convince financing agencies to contribute to the defence of recalcitrant Indians who manage their own alliances with whomever they choose, including some of the clearest opponents of the Indian cause? As most Brazilian NGOs operate with funding from foreign NGOs or governments, they are thus accountable to agencies for whom the Brazilian Indian is a vision evoking paradise lost, ecological disasters and First World guilt. Foreign agencies would have difficulty accepting that their

money was being spent on Indians who were involved in objectionable compromises” (11).

As part of my own experiences with indigenous peoples and international NGOs in Colombian Amazonia, I learned how ideas of sustainable resource management along this region remain inherently attached to the notion of stateless, bounded and atomistic societies, living in intimately harmony with their territories (see Fisher, 1996; Turner, 1993b; Nadasdy, 2005). I also witnessed, however, the disappointing feelings within institutions and organizations when Indians does not meet external criteria of what is supposed to be that idyllic Indian, and they end up selling their lands, natural resources, and cultural knowledge to colonists, state agents or foreign companies, or evincing corrupt or ambitious interests.

This institutional disappointment when the ‘Indian stereotype’ -with all its imagined virtuous principles, ideological purity, willingness to die heroically for cherished ideals- is destroyed by natives themselves, has been common part of the Kofán relations with institutions in Putumayo. This is so because the Kofán came to be widely viewed in the national, but much more in the international public sphere as ‘natural conservationists’ who use environmental resources in ways that are nondestructive, sustainable, and mindful of effects on future generations. Furthermore, the Kofán are popular among NGO’s and some state agencies for they present all the necessary political, cultural-aesthetic (plumages, facial painting, claws and fangs ornaments, colourful attires), and environmental knowledge expected from outsiders to fulfil the idea of the idyllic Indian. But more than all these elements, I suggest, is the fact that Kofán traditional healers are widely recognized in Colombia as “the proper shamans”, paraphrasing a delegate from the Ministry of Culture during an act to celebrate the importance of the Putumayo’s indigenous traditional medicine for the Colombian cultural richness.

The shamans, or Taitas, which is the Kofán correct term I will use along this thesis, are popular after the rise of urban consumption of Yagé. Called also Ayahuasca in Peru and Ecuador, Yagé is the sacred hallucinogenic brew used throughout the Putumayo region in healing rituals under the supervision of the Taitas. Yagé ceremonies have become quite popular in Colombia amongst a population of urban middle class people –college students, professional, housewives, clerical, white collar people, artists, and people of the cultural establishment (Uribe, 2008). Consequently, the Taitas have been type casted, sanctified and certainly stereotyped as the typical ecological native-shaman in the public opinion given their recognized capacities as Yagé healers. An image largely indebted to the nascent Yagé or Ayahuasca tourism in Colombia but a very common trend throughout the

Amazonian region involving droves of tourists who come to the area to drink the beverage from the hands of the 'rainforest's spiritual shamans' (see for instance Proctor 2000; Dobkin and Grob, 2005; Dobkin and Rumrill, 2008; Tupper 2008). To a great extent, these mystically endowed images of the Taitas, quite visible in the media, magazines and periodicals for the general public, is the work of prominent musicians and TV people, and thus, the 'Indian wisdom' is sought today not only by Indians and poor colonist at the margins of the state, but also by a growing sector of the Colombian middle class and international tourists influenced by western new age and neoshamanism ideas, demanding their primitive, curative knowledge in capital cities around the country.

In the Kofán case, such popular imaginaries, I contend, have been problematically extended to a professional sector expecting invariably their "wise forest management" in conservation, and even within some anthropological circles. A situation indicative of a hardly unusual relation between public culture and professional's representations of Amazonian Indians (Nugent, 2007:24). Hence the institutional disappointment, as it has been common in the Colombian Amazon Piedmont, because of Indian's agreements with oil, mining companies, or armed actors, causing them a long and unpleasant exclusion from diverse institutional initiatives with indigenist expectancies.

Such imaginaries about the idyllic Indian involve additionally, that indigenous peoples including Kofán, have been the targets of a peculiar ethic expected on the part of his white allies, especially in what regards to NGOs project's money management. Consequently, the unethical use of such funds is another rather common source of conflict and rupture of alliances between Indians and institutions. I experienced myself this situation in 2008, when the international non-governmental organization I was working for, completely cut off its funding –and any further relationship- of several Kofán projects, when they realized that the indigenous partner, a well recognized indigenous leader they trusted to manage the money of an important environmental conservationist project was leaking part of such funds to his personal bank account. Although this might be seen as an isolated episode of corruption, I believe that there is more to understand when indigenous peoples contradict our own sanctified representations of themselves. Accordingly, I share Ramos (1992) argument, that apparently contradictory indigenous territorial actions today, involving the destruction of our projections upon them, are in fact "a calculated risk, as they took it without the innocence of the uninformed or ignorant, for all along they were aware of the possible repercussions of their agreements with the very sectors that epitomize "the enemy" (1992:3) or the individual misuse of money supposed to benefit entire communities.

As I shall attempt to show along this work, continued cultivation of stereotyped images of Amazonian Indians, either within public perceptions or development/conservationist circles that create these kind of institutional conflicts and ruptures with them, consistently deny the creative individual and collective consciousness and forms of self-representation of indigenous peoples in the process of their (re) formation (Zent 2009). In addition, such conceptualization imposes an ahistorical view of them, obliterating the fact that their contemporary condition results from complex political struggles, accommodation to shifting environmental and economic forces and the permanent process of identity formation (Whitehead 2003). But perhaps the most dangerous part of such stereotyped constructions of indigenous identities as the martyr Indian or the sold-out Indian, is that they lead to the abstraction of people and their socio-ecological relations from the Colombian regional and national context of rural poverty, violence and exclusion which largely explain behaviours that entail corruption or complicity with the very forces oppressing their communities.

In Colombia, as in many other Amazonian regions, this apparent incongruity between indigenous political discourses about the sacredness of its territory, and the everyday practices and interpretations inside communities that defy the ecological Indian cliché, tend to be explained by policy makers and state authorities as the simple consequence of what some insist on calling 'acculturation'. A term coined to designate the interaction resulting from the contact between two cultures, but that has come to designate the "inevitable and passive cultural assimilation of archaic societies by an overwhelming and so-called universal western culture" (Lienhard 1991:97). The episode of the corrupt leader mentioned above, embodies from this point of view, the 'acculturated Indian', a person without the ethical foundations expected from a proper shaman because of the supposed disregard for its own cultural values. Consequently, he, and all Indians behaving in the same way, is subject to criticism and judgment from the institutions not merely because of its incorrect behaviour regarding the money, but a more complex situation involving the indigenous adoption of socially condemnable attitudes expected from whites but no from indigenous peoples. Acculturation, in this sense, was in fact the unofficial reason explained to me by my former bosses when I had to stop working with Kofán after the 'corruption' incident. A reason nevertheless, shared by some other NGO's in this region that abandoned the Kofán struggle because they were involved in activities such as silently supporting oil explorations¹⁶.

¹⁶ Other oversimplified explanations maintain that the inconsistency between how Indians politically speak about their territory and the actual way they behave is basically a rhetorical strategy of indigenous political leaders to deceit and take advantage of paternalistic policies (See for instance Turner, 1995; Conklin and Graham, 1995; Conklin, 1997, and Ramos, 2003 analyses of the

It is true that anthropology has enhanced our intellectual understanding of indigenous contemporary territorialities and cultural contact in Amazonia, and acculturation today, as Gow contends is no other thing than “a shorthand cover term for our ignorance of what was happening in Western Amazonia until professional ethnographic interest developed in the region in the last few decades” (1993:329). Indeed, thanks to anthropology, ideas of discrete, atomistic, and ahistorical indigenous groups have been widely challenged. Amazonia is seen today as a dynamic space of intercultural encounters (Harris, 1998; Little, 2001; Nugent and Harris, 2004) in which indigenous peoples in an exhausting and demoralizing struggle to be recognized and respected, have created, negotiated and even rejected many of the cultural features expected from them (Conklin and Graham, 1995; Laurent, 2001; Luca, 2001). Instead of simplified differential indigenous geographies and binary white/Indian relations, processes of intercultural contact and change have become a key trope for Amazonian anthropology in a wide range of topics such as indigenous involvement in the monetary economy (Hugh-Jones, 1992; Fisher 2000; Godoy, 2001; Rubenstein, 2004); dialectical constructions and negotiations of identities at the national and international level (Conklin 1992, 1997; Conklin and Graham, 1995; Rubenstein, 2001; Warren and Jackson, 2002; Bruce, 2005); indigenous urbanization and contemporary mobility in Amazonia (Peluso and Alexiades, 2005; Andrello, 2006; McSweeney, and Jokisch, 2007; Alexiades, 2009); and new networks of indigenous global communication (Turner, 1992; Perreault, 2003; Ulloa, 2004;). Hence, analyses of intercultural contact, have dissolved any possible primitivist or ahistorical image of indigenous peoples in Amazonia, who are, borrowing Norman E. Whitten words, “just to be ‘too hot’ to treat them ‘structurally’” (2008:21). Consequently we are more aware now of the complexities “operating at the historic juncture between civilizations, and similarly concerned to describe the mental structures of each, how they appropriate and misappropriate each other, and thereby how structural change occurs over time in small increments” (Marcus, 1986:195).

But yet, what we observe outside these anthropological debates and within the Colombian public realm of indigenous politics, as I have attempted to show, is that territories still tend to be constructed without the cultural and spatial relationality advanced by contemporary anthropology. Thus, reasons such as “acculturation” still permeate institutional vocabularies, concomitant to enduring stereotypical perceptions of Indians as ‘environmental saints’ (Li, 2000; Valdivia 2005). Since I

Kayapó worldwide publicized struggles in the early 1990s to stop mega development projects, and the public disappointment and ruthless condemnation of their leaders when environmentalists discovered that Kayapó were also willing to profit from the commercialization of lumber).

could not accept as plausible ‘acculturation’ as the reason underling the inconsistencies between what is said in formal indigenous political scenarios to claim their rights and air their grievances, and those paradoxical and ambiguous attitudes and relationships that indigenous peoples daily weave precisely with those forces affecting their territorial projects, I realized the urgent necessity of taking the time and distance to understand such inner conflicts and contradictions. I wanted to understand the disruption and conceptual ambiguity intrinsic to the territory meanings but certainly without threatening or obliterating the immense political achievements related to land rights of indigenous movements in Colombia during the last few decades. This was the starting point of this PhD research and journey through the ways in which the A’I Kofán people mainly, but some other culturally and territorially related indigenous groups of the Putumayo as well, understand and engage with their physical and symbolical worlds.

The proposal- territories as intercultural contact zones

The most interesting and potentially insightful exploration of the contradictory and complex character of the Kofán concept of territory may lie in a better understanding of the dynamics between their –non unified- cultural and spatial perspectives, and some of the most important projects of aggressive territorialization including the Colombian state formation in the Andean Amazon piedmont. My intention is to avoid describing these processes as oversimplified one-way impositions of territorial regimes on indigenous lands and the transformation of people’s perception of the space as a reactive- adaptive mechanism. Rather, I propose that territorial dialectics and impositions in Putumayo might be seen as encounters or interfaces where actors’ perceptions and ideologies about their territory are not always clearly bounded and well defined. Within such historical encounters, diverse -and very often contradictory- sets of everyday practices and discourses emerge and shift through time, according to complex changes in the organization and distribution of power (Gow, 1993, 1994; Little, 2001; Rubenstein, 2002, 2004). In these interfaces, the encounter of diverse territorialities and techniques of power deployed by the wide range of actors circulating in the piedmont since colonial times, interact with indigenous cosmological, political and social systems generating in turn complex physical and discursive spaces of contact. In this “middle ground”, to borrow Richard White’s concept (1991), the negotiation of new cultural forms occurs since all parties, despite the colonial situation, possess some mutual need or desire to cooperate. The systems of action and thought emerging out of middle grounds are thus an amalgamation of interests, adjustments and very often, misunderstandings. This is precisely what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) define as “contact zones” when referring to the colonial moment. However, I believe

the conceptual framework developed by the author dovetails also with spaces of violent encounter between indigenous peoples and diverse forms of territorialization in current postcolonial Putumayo and the Andean Amazon region.

The contact zone approach unravels how subjects' ideologies intersect, and become constituted in and by their relations to each other within asymmetrical relations of power and violence (Pratt, 1992). Inside contact zones therefore, "peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with one other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (*Ibid*: 6). Consequently, I sustain that everyday people's territorial engagements and definitions may vary depending on how indigenous' perceptions are articulated with shifting conditions related to the state neoliberal reforms, armed conflict, fear and death, coca and cocaine production, struggles over lands and its resources, and the state permanent deployment of territorial mechanisms of surveillance and control.

The contact zone approach dovetails with my intention of questioning the one-sided imposition paradigm among colonizers and colonized, dissolving binary models of alterity and introducing ideas of co-presence, interaction, enmeshed understandings and practices (*Ibid*: 7). In this regard, Paul Little's scope is particularly suited to understanding how indigenous territories in Amazonia, as this work attempts to show, are produced from the encounter between diverse forms of territorialization:

"The spatial and temporal superimposition of cosmographies is a common outcome of frontier situations and produces situations of direct conflict, as would be expected from the direct overlap of territorialities, but it is not limited to them. Simultaneous situations of mutual influence, unilateral accommodation, and interpenetration are also engendered in this process, resulting in the continual transformation of cosmographies and territories" (2001:7).

Adding to this perspective, Sahlins believes it is necessary to reconfigure the usual binary opposition, "including a complicated intercultural zone where the cultural differences are worked through in political and economic practices, a zone in which structures of conjuncture emerge" (2000:486). These concepts of asymmetrical contact and conviviality are complemented here with Achille Mbembe's (1992) idea of "illicit cohabitation", to understand how relations of dominance and imposition in postcolonial contexts are much more complex than encounters of polarity; they are assemblages of imbricated relations where very often systems of thralldom operate with the complacency and complicity of the dominated (Hiddleston, 2009). In this

context therefore, it is important not to lose sight of “how the postcolonial mode of domination is a regime that involves not just control but also conviviality, even connivance, as shown by the constant compromises, the small tokens of fealty and the inherent cautiousness, made by the subjects of domination” (Mbembe . 24-25).

This situation suggests the need to re-evaluate the category of indigenous territory in postcolonial nations, not only focusing on the political sphere of Indian movements and their increased level of organization and competent use of the western legal system. Rather, I propose, it requires an ethnographic examination of the quotidian dialectics between the power (oil extractivism, colonist, armed actors, drug lords and so on) and its socio-spatial practices of domination, and the localized and maybe deeply ambivalent forms indigenous resistance, adaptation, mimesis and cultural incorporation of these forces (Taussig, 1993; Rubenstein, 2001, 2004). I consider that going into depth in these situations will throw light on how the lives and acts of ordinary people may also be intertwined with the lives of the powerful in the illicit cohabitation that Mbembe writes about.

Moreover, such perspective provides ethnographic evidence to enhance our theoretical understanding of a relational worldview, one which authors as diverse as Barbara Bender (1993), Michael Watts (1991), Doreen Massey (1994, 1999) and David Harvey (1973, 1992) have been advocating for. Applying this perspective, for the Amazon piedmont and particularly, for Kofán indigenous peoples, may lead as to think about territories as dynamic contact zones of cultural dialogue and production, which as Barbara Bender (1993) contends for landscape, are “(...) never inert; people engage with it, rework it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group or nation” (3). Such relational vision dismisses ideas of immobile cultural and territorial boundaries, putting forward territory, as this work set out to show, as a concept of “high tension” (*Ibid*: 3) precisely because of the dynamism and mutability of such relations between diverse actors with confronted territorial projects and agendas. In Putumayo, the central area of research in this thesis, Bender’s tension would be particularly tangible since diverse forces have being historically plundering indigenous homelands causing a long-standing atmosphere of distress and confrontation. However, this relational view contemplates not only the evident conflict around territorial disputes but also the micropolitics of these encounters as imbricated spaces of cultural contact and interpenetration.

In a sense, the argument that processes of material and symbolic place making are inevitably related with processes of cultural interaction may amount to little more than a restatement of the Amazon as a historical scenario of contact, but more than

that is proposed here. Firstly, the Andean Amazon-piedmont in Colombia presents substantial cultural, ecological and political differences from the rest of the Amazon because of the intense influence of the Andean-centric construction of the nation-state. Secondly, unlike the rest of Amazonia, this is the only region enduring conditions of brutal political and drug related-violence for more than forty years. Hence, we can doubtlessly assert that such particularities shape, feed and define a completely different kind of cultural encounters from what has been extensively studied in other Amazonian regions. It is important to mention further, that within Amazonian anthropology there are actually non-unified approaches to this in-between region. For the Colombian Amazon piedmont, the body of ethnographic literature about it is almost inexistent after the 1980s with very few exceptions particularly focused on colonist or war issues (Chaves, 2002, 2010; Ramirez, 1998, 2002; Ahumada, 2004; Rojas, 2006).

Finally, this relational view of the space is fundamental in order to understand territorial conflicts and power relations in indigenous regions of Amazonia, where, as Steve Rubenstein asserts, “struggles occur in indigenous communities hand-in-hand with indigenous complicity in desiring and supporting western mechanisms that undermine the very livelihood of these communities” (2004: 133). Ethnographic exploration of these territorial interactions might indicate thus, how revolts or resistance may well serve ends, reproduce structures of domination, or create forms of power that are more repressive and violent than those preceding them (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 33). It would also explain how state-community relations in postcolonial Amazonia are not clear system of imposition but a very complex space of mutual influence, bilateral accommodation, and ideological interpenetration. And finally, how symbiotic, hybrid, mimetic, and negotiated meanings regarding the territory emerge in the course of colonial and postcolonial encounters. Accordingly, the aim here is to step back from what is assumed to be truly collective and culturally differentiable about Andean-Amazonian Indian territories and examine the historical processes that have formed current indigenous forms of territorialization as dynamic but often violent, interethnic dialogues between Indians and whites (namely criollos, mestizos, or colonist) fostering polysemic versions of the space, or as a call this ontological variability, the shape-shifting territory.

Organization of the thesis

In spite of an apparent compliance with historical chronology in terms of how Kofán territorial history and ethnographic material are organized and presented in this thesis, I shall underscore that such ordered temporality is in fact subverted in

indigenous understandings of time and history. In Amazonia, “old, new and hybrid forms coexist, thus invalidating those approaches which assume that there has been an evolution in which the old is superseded by the new (Rowe and Schelling 1991:18). As I shall explain in more detail in following lines, Kofán territorial perceptions derived from their political and shamanic re-appropriation of history, is by no means a neat and ordered process. In this sense, “the negotiation of historical knowledge does not necessarily conclude in an overtly historical representation of any sort. History, in this sense, is not only the proof or the product (...) but also the stuff of the process of everyday life” (Cohen, 1986: in Rappaport, 1988:718). This Kofán permanent reappropriation of past events entails anarchical or subverted readings of time in which the social past and future exist in a kind of present, simultaneous manner.

This thesis is organized in three parts. Each part comprises an historical moment in which particular inter-cultural contact zones between Kofán and Others were established, and consequently, Kofán territorial understandings changed producing in turn new hybrid ones.

The first part establishes a general framework in which the Amazon Piedmont of Colombia is described as a complex geographical and cultural juncture between the Andean Cordillera and the Amazon lowlands (chapter 2). In this context I examine some of the most salient Kofán demographic changes and territorial disruptions, particularly in the southwest region of the Putumayo Department, that is, the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality, which Colombian Kofán people regard as their traditional territories in Colombia. From chapter 3 to 5, I present a historical analysis of the contact zone between indigenous peoples and the Spanish missionary model of ‘landscape disciplinarization’ during the 17th and 18th centuries in the Amazon piedmont. Drawing from this historical analysis, I shall provide a contemporary ethnographic exploration of how this model has been incorporated in present Kofán Yagé shamanism, influencing their forms of reading the past, and ultimately, constructing their present territory.

Chapter 6 opens the second part and introduces the paradigmatic Amazonian indigenous conception of territory as a relational fabric and explores how this idea dovetails with the Kofán notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. This is, the complex concept used by Kofán people to talk about socialized spaces and nature, and hence, territory. But more importantly, this chapter provides this Kofán territorial relational premise mainly to support and guide following explorations of how the modern system of relationships, or ‘contact zones’ (Pratt, 1992) between the A'I people with neocolonial forces in Putumayo such as the mestizo people, oil, cocaine,

and a wide set of armed actors, are not apart from long-standing cultural and cosmological indigenous structures.

Relying on this relational premise, chapter 7 explores ethnographically the ambivalent relationships created between Kofán people and the oil industry and the first wave of colonists attracted by this new activity within indigenous territories. I pose two questions about this contact zone: what kind of socioeconomic events and territorial dynamics took place in Putumayo that were powerful enough to transform the previous conception of *pa'tssi ingi ande* as a system of social relationships with mythic Others? And secondly, how the Kofán processed these changes in order to reformulate former ideas of *pa'tssi ingi ande* in ways that were intrinsically meaningful to them in a context of extractivism and colonization?

In chapter 8, I address directly the contact zone between Kofán and cucama (mestizo colonists) people since the 1970s. Accordingly, it describes the process of cultural hybridization resulting from the Kofán lands' invasion by colonist from the Andean cordillera after the oil boom. I analyse the paradoxes, contradictions, and the effects of this new system of relationships, in order to challenge ideas of differential indigenous geographies and binary white/Indian relations; showing further, how processes of cultural hybridization within contact zones have shaped and modified indigenous social, cosmological and economic conceptions of the territory.

In chapter 9, I explore how the Kofán responded to oil and colonists territorial regimes threatening their local autonomy by entering into the political realm of land claims. Here I explore the contact zone between Kofán and the Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (INCORA) ('Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform') in which strategic indigenous self-representations aimed to achieve political, territorial and cultural autonomy were elaborated from the dialogue between indigenous peoples and the state via the institute. From this point I explore the contradictory Kofán creation and naturalization of dichotomic images of indigenous territories as outside, and I would say, opposed to the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of the nation and state forms of territorialization by incorporating legal land tenure figures ultimately developed by the state.

Chapter 10 is dedicated to reconstruct ethnographically the diverse social, environmental and cultural changes prompted by the coca and cocaine bonanza in the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality, and its impacts on the Kofán territorial perception. Furthermore, I attempt to analyse the changing Kofán-cucama relationships amidst the coca and cocaine economy; how this new convoluted

context prompted another very ambiguous contact zone between them, filled with contradictory amicable and hostile feelings; and ultimately, how this situation led to a complex process of cultural hybridization much more intense than in previous decades of contact.

The third part is mostly devoted to exploring and understanding the complex and very violent contact zone between Kofán families and a wide set of armed actors in Putumayo from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. As an intrinsic part of these encounters between diverse forms of territorial control, I will also attempt to address tropes of violence and fear, as drivers of cultural disruption, change, and reproduction with crucial influence in how indigenous peoples generate an environment of their own. Accordingly, Chapter 11 is about the formation of a system of relationships between Kofán families and other indigenous peoples of the middle Putumayo region, with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia FARC ('Armed Revolutionary Forces Of Colombia'). Through the exploration of the guerrilla's ideological, military and economic impositions and indigenous' mechanisms of alterity incorporation, I shall provide an alternative understanding on how power relations can be better understood under the constraints of war, that is, as complex interfaces of contact, filled with injustice and contradictions but also possibilities for the circulation of power. Chapter 12 continues the analysis of Kofán relationships with the FARC guerrilla but now I focus in particular on the changes that this contact zone generated in the Kofán political system, the implications of this process for the Kofán Yagé shamanism and its effect on people's territorial perceptions.

Chapter 13 analyses how paramilitaries, amidst their bloody crusade to eliminate the FARC and control the Putumayo's drug production and trafficking prompted socio-spatial changes in Kofán identity-making processes. This chapter addresses in particular how do collective experiences of terror inform the current production of self and space for indigenous people in Putumayo. Both chapters attempt firstly to suggest how we might more successfully address power relations under war circumstances, as complex interfaces of contact, filled with contradictions and possibilities.

Chapter 14 focuses on the Colombian state construction of militarized geographies to counter the guerrilla's presence within indigenous regions in Putumayo, through a set of localized tactics of power inscribed in the space during the last twenty years. My intention thus, is to explore new indigenous territorial perceptions born out of these spatial interactions with a violence-prone state.

In chapter 15, I am interested in observing what I call “The modern entanglements of shamanism”. It is about the formation of contemporary forms of Yagé rituals and shamanic techniques as products of shaman’s contact and involvement with the scourges of extractivist economies, war, and cocaine explored in previous chapters, and the repercussions of such entanglements for indigenous perceptions of the territory today in Putumayo.

Chapter 16 offers some conclusions but mostly raises more questions regarding the shape shifting ontology of the territory for indigenous people inhabiting the Amazon piedmont.

Chapter 2

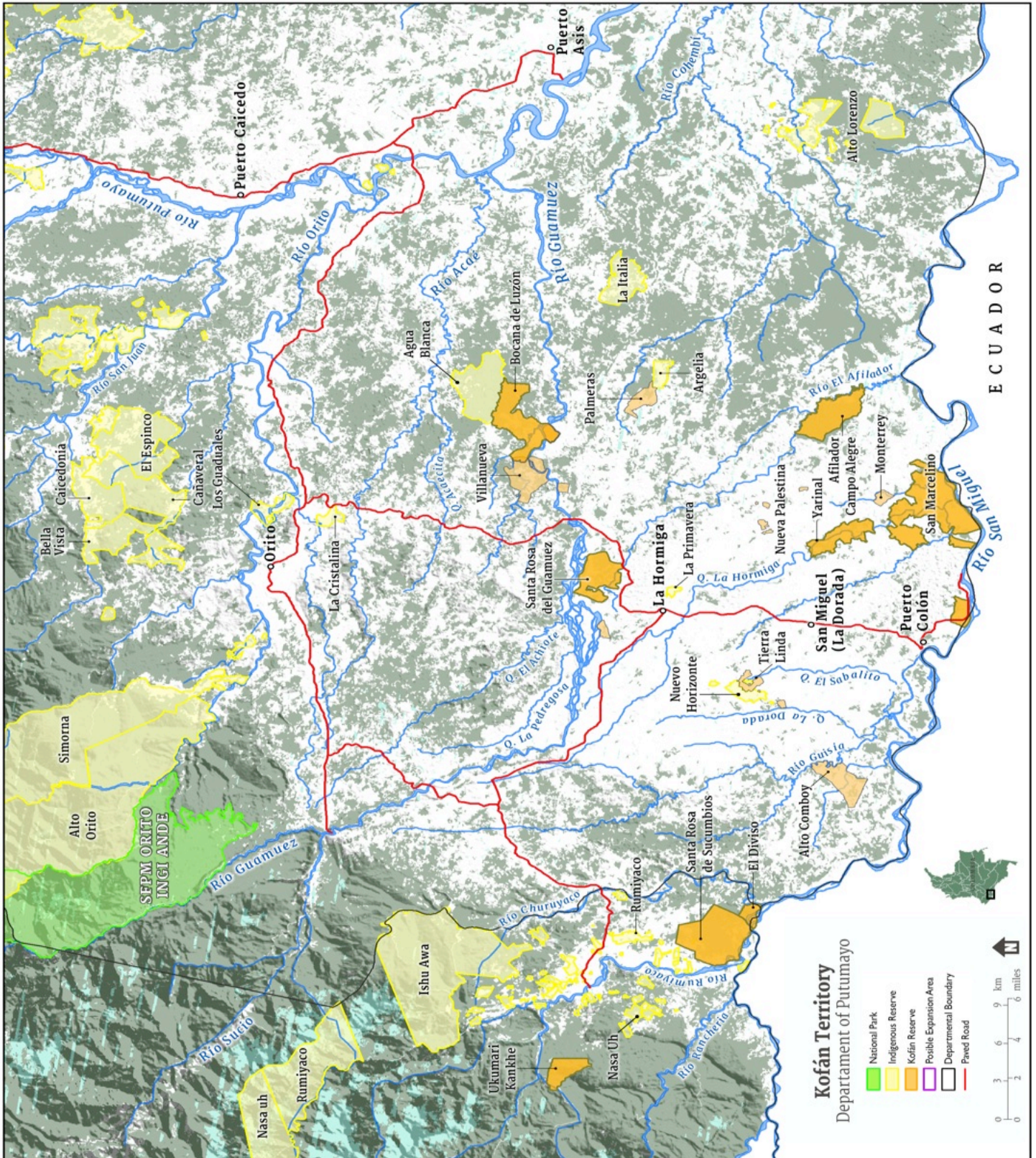
A'I Kofán people of Putumayo

This thesis is intended to explore the A'i Kofán people and their different forms of territorialization. Accordingly, this chapter provides an initial approximation to the colonial history of the interface between the Colombian Andes and the Amazon, an extended and fascinating rugged topographical region where the Andean piedmont grades into the Upper Amazon and thence to the Amazon Basin. Particularly, I focus on the Putumayo department (province) where most of the A'I territory is located in Colombia. My aim is to put in context the ethnographic material I collected and from here, to open up the critical analysis of how diverse situations of interethnic contacts, during colonial and postcolonial times, have shaped current Kofán territorial readings. In this sense, this chapter is mostly concerned with providing some cultural, demographic and territorial facts, with particular emphasis on the current land tenure situation derived from earlier moments of contact. I also provide a brief comparison between the Colombian and Ecuadorian Kofán in order to understand the similarities and differences between the two historical experiences, that today, in spite the permanent interactions between them, reveal strong cultural differences between Ecuador and Colombian Kofán peoples. Finally, I discuss how I approached, ethically and ethnographically, the Kofán people, largely influenced by my personal relationships with some families that began years before my PhD fieldwork, and hence, how I gathered the pertinent data for this thesis through the idea of the ethnography of the subaltern's hidden life.

A' indekhû ('people')

In A'I ayafangae (or A' Ingae) language, the endonyms A' indekhû means people, and A'i means person or people "who has lived and live here". Kofán conversely, is an exonym that originates in the colonial discourse used to identify people who lived on the banks of the river Cofa'nae (nae, "river") (Gonzales 2009). However, Ortiz (1954) suggests that 'Kofán' meant for some of the people he interviewed in 1950s "the ones that navigate". The A'ingae language is grouped sometimes within the macro Chibchean phylum (See Borman, 2009; Plan de Vida de la Nacionalidad A'I Cofán, 2013) but 'without justification' according to Campbell and Grondona (2012). Kaufman (2007:68) places it with Yaruro and Esmeralda (Tacame) in his Takame-Jarúroan stock. Fisher asserts that it remains unclassified (2007).

Map 2. Kofán Reserves in Colombia



The Kofán historically occupied lands comprise a large area rich in natural and mineral resources between the Guamuez River (a tributary of the Putumayo River) and the Aguarico River (a tributary of the Napo River), located in the southern foothills and lower lands of the East Andean-Amazonian region of Colombia and the Napo Province in northeast Ecuador (Borman, 1999; Fundación Zio A'I, 2002; Cepek 2012). Numbering approximately 1317 self-denominated Kofán in Colombia (Ministerio de Cultura, 2010) their population is mainly concentrated in the Putumayo Department (province) and a few families in the neighbouring Nariño Department (see map1).

Within Kofán territories, both Colombian and Ecuadorian governments have prioritized oil explorations as the centrepiece of a long-term regional and national development agenda since the 1960s (Lerner, 1992; Oilwatch International, 2006 Alvarez, 2010, Salinas, 2011). Underlying these landscapes of remarkable biological and ethnic diversity are large reserves of oil many yet untapped, and thus, for nascent developing nations, petroleum revenues represent one of the main mechanisms to access the global economy and industrialized world. This 'developmental' construction of the Amazon as wasted territories if not exploited under extractivist neoliberal paradigms (Raffles, 2002; Santos Granero, 2002; Whitten, 2008) belongs to the long lasting political and economic ideology of 'progress' based on extractivist enterprises, espoused by politicians and elite groups since the 19th century in Latin America (Safford, 1991, Serje, 2005), but reinforced in the 1990s decade with the definite adoption of the neoliberal model in Colombia (Ahumada, 1996; Remmer, 1998; Rocha, 2000). In the last five decades therefore, the Colombian state has sought to exploit strategic oil reserves within indigenous territories of the Putumayo based on a cluster of policies that aim to privatize, liberalize, and deregulate the national economy so as to encourage foreign investment and export production (Finer, 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Salinas, 2011, Torres, 2012; Asociación Minga, 2013).

The Putumayo extends along an area of 24,885 km², bordering Ecuador and Peru and covering a considerable elevation gradient, as it extends from the Amazon Basin at 300 MASL to the Sibundoy Valley at 2200 MASL (WWF, 2008). Such altitudinal gradient is the reason why it's possible to stand in Mocoa, the department's capital at an elevation of 600 MASL, and observe to the west the Andean Cordillera, with its fascinating cloud forests and volcanic topography, shaped in this region by the Puracé and Doña Juana peaks. From the same point it is possible to turn eastward and see the middle Putumayo valleys and lower Putumayo rainforest. This region is thus a captivating mosaic of contrasting landscapes including sparsely, inhabited tropical rainforest, inland tropical plains containing small urban settlements, large

anthropogenic grasslands for cattle, farming communities and indigenous settlements and reserves. Given its geographical position, the Putumayo Department is important for it concentrates the natural wealth of the Andean highlands and the Amazon, but it is also a geostrategic corridor connecting the central governments located in the Andean cordillera with the lowlands and international border regions, and therefore, crucial for the Colombian state to integrate its isolated territories.

The Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality

This research is concentrated on the southwest region of the Putumayo department, that is, the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality, which Colombian Kofán people regard as their traditional territories. In this thesis I will refer to this particular area as the 'middle Putumayo,' even if there is not a local final agreement on the location of the northern and southern borders of this particular in-between region in Colombia. I therefore unify under the term middle Putumayo both the Guamuez and San Miguel municipalities and the area in between the rivers with these same names (see map.1).

The Guamuez Valley comprises an area of 876 km² of which 129 km² belong to Kofán indigenous reserves: Afilador-Campoalegre, Santa Rosa del Guamuez, Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos, and Yarinal-San Marcelino (Fundación Zio A'I, 2002, see map. 2). Although these reserves are officially recognized as Kofán territories, Inga, Pastos, Nasa, Embera-Chami, and other ethnic groups, but mostly mestizo colonists, have been consistently arriving since the 1932 Colombian-Peruvian war, but intensified by the oil boom of the 1970s and the coca boom of the 1980s and 1990s as I shall explain in more detail in the following chapters (Chaves, 2001,2002,2010; Gomez, 2001; Fundación Zio A'I, 2002, 2007, 2008; Salinas, 2011; see chapters 7-10).

The municipality of San Miguel is located on the banks of the San Miguel River, standing on the southwest end of the Putumayo department, bordering with the Republic of Ecuador and covering an area of 570 km². This municipality is the Colombian point of contact with Ecuador through the International Bridge crossing above the San Miguel River, in which strict military posts control people's mobility between the two countries. But before the two nations were separated legally in the Muñoz Vernaza-Suárez Treaty of July 15, 1916, the Kofán perceived the San Miguel River -as some old Kofán people inhabiting this border region tell- as an important channel of contact between the Kofán families from the two riversides, rather than an impediment to circulate throughout what they regarded as an open territory.

The International Bridge is the end of a long road build in the 1930s but finished in the 1950s, to connect the Colombian Andean region with Mocoa, Puerto Asís, the Guamuez Valley and finally San Miguel with Ecuador (see map.1). As a consequence, this road connecting the Andes and the Amazon, opened the region to long standing extractivist economies and the aggressive colonization for cattle breeding and coca planting that eventually turned great part of its primary forest into agricultural land (Viña et. al. 2004). But let me take a few steps back to describe briefly the historical, political and economical events that impelled this geopolitical interest in the region exemplified by this meaningful road and the impacts for the Kofán traditional forms of territorialization.

Kofán people and the Colombian Amazon piedmont's colonial history

Although little is known about the A'I Kofán during pre-colonial times given the absence of written histories prior to the arrival of the Spanish, along with the frustrating lack of well-preserved archaeological sites (Uribe, 1980), the works of Juan Friede (1952); Sergio Ortiz (1954), Scott Robinson (1979), Miguel Cabodevilla (1996), Roberto Franco (2001), Fundación Zio-Ai, (2002), Eduardo Kohn (2002) and Randy Borman (2009) provide a helpful synthesis of diverse materials and colonial documents regarding the precolonial and early times of conquest. From these works we know that Spanish colonists entered into Kofán territories as early as 1536. According to Cepek (2012:7) the military expedition of Captain Gonzalo Díaz de Pineda brought the Kofán into the Spanish rule of the Gobernación de Quijos in this very year. "Upon finding evidence of alluvial gold deposits in the Aguarico and San Miguel regions, Spanish forces set up mining operations and towns". However, a series of campaigns aimed at subduing them straggled back in defeat during the next decades (Moya, 1998). By the end of the 16th century the mining activity was abandoned by the Spanish in this region because of the Kofán constant attacks of colonists' settlements (Friede, 1952). In spite of having fought the Spanish colonial efforts to a standstill, the Kofán were unable to combat the spreading of smallpox, measles, polio, whooping cough, and cholera epidemics and consequently their population was drastically decreased (Moya, 1998; Robinson, 1979).

At the beginning of the 17th century a second missionizing period started and, as I will explain later, the most important Kofán contact with the missionary activity occurred with the arrival of the legendary Jesuit Father Rafael Ferrer (Velasco, 1981). Ferrer's role is important for the Kofán history of contact because he acted as some sort of cultural bridge between indigenous peoples and whites allowing the circulation and indigenous internalization not only of white goods but also of

diverse catholic symbolisms, iconography and knowledge which are visible today in Kofán cosmology. Although murdered later by Kofán enemies, Ferrer was able to establish a number of missions, some with as many as 3,000 inhabitants (Ortiz, 1954). After the death of Ferrer, “the historical record is extremely spotty” (Cepek, 2012:7); what is clear nevertheless, is that within the 17th and 18th centuries, violent colonization, slave raiding and depopulation allowed the foundation of several more evangelizing missions and settlements along the Putumayo region (Casas, 2001:220). As we shall see in more detail later, these attempts by colonial government officials and missionaries’ to dominate, assimilate, convert and exploit native people during this period, led to simultaneous and alternating processes of demographic concentration in Missions and Indian Towns on the one hand, and to disbanding and dispersion of indigenous collectivities, widespread epidemic diseases and demographic collapse on the other (Gomez, 2001). In the same way as Alexiades indicates for Amazonia, in the Andean Amazon piedmont of Colombia, “The initial process of depopulation had a complex domino-type effect on indigenous patterns of spatial distribution. Heightened accusations of sorcery and revenge raids, the displacement into areas occupied by neighbouring groups, together with the emergence of a political economy centred around the procurement of steel tools and slave labour, all increased inter-and intra-tribal war, leading to further social atomization, population loss and heightened mobility” (2009: 11).

According to Hill (1999), in contrast with the northern indigenous lowlands of what is today Guyana and Venezuela, the forested areas along the Putumayo and Caquetá rivers were not directly in the path of military action during the wars of independence in the early 19th century¹⁷. “For the great majority of indigenous peoples inhabiting this vast expanse of rain forests, this was a period of unintentionally benign neglect and recovery from massive losses of population during the colonial period” (*Ibid*: 708). This situation changed at the end of the 19th century when world demand for rubber pushed prices upward, and the Amazon basin was recognized as the world's primary source of the finest grades of wild rubber (Coomes and Barham, 1994:233). The middle reaches of the Putumayo and Caquetá Rivers and their respective tributaries, the Igarapará and Carapará of the Putumayo, and the Cahuinarí of the Caquetá were particularly rich in wild rubber, mostly hevea: *Hevea brasiliensis*, *H. benthamiana*, and during the first two decades of the 20th century, the region came out of its isolation. Industrialists, trade consular officers, government officials, and casual explorers invested in the newly

¹⁷ Colombian Declaration of Independence refers to the historic events of July 20, 1810, in Santa Fe de Bogota, which resulted in the establishment of a junta in that capital. This experience in self-government eventually led to the creation of the Republic of Colombia.

created rubber industry in the upper Amazon (Pineda-Camacho, 1975, 1985; Llanos and Pineda-Camacho, 1982; Weinstein, 1983). American, English, and Dutch companies demanded rubber for the nascent automobile industry and invested therefore in South American rubber-rich countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru (Stanfield, 1988). South American politicians and national elites, and international investors presented the rubber extractivist enterprise not only as an economic activity of national interest but also as a civilizing endeavour inasmuch it would improve and transform Amazonian “savages” into modern citizens (Dominguez, 1990; Stanfield 1998; Burgos, 2008). For the Amazon’s indigenous inhabitants on the other hand, the rubber boom meant one of the worse episodes of their history. During this brutal period, indigenous people were forced, through the use of atrocious coercive methods, to perform the task of harvesting rubber. The rubber companies forced indigenous peoples into a system of debt peonage, treated them as slaves, tortured and massacred them (Hardenburg, 1912; Taussig, 1987; Pineda, 2000). As many of the main investors in the rubber business were of British nationality, an investigation was commissioned by the British government to Consul Roger Casement in the early 1910 (Casement, [1912] 1997). The essence of his research based on seven weeks of travel through the rubber-gathering areas in the Putumayo lowlands and on some six months in the Amazon basin, lay in its detail of the terror and tortures inflicted by rubber tappers on local Indian populations. After Casement’s report the Putumayo became internationally salient in political and economic discussions because of the details on Indians beaten, mutilated, tortured, murdered, or punished just for the amusement of sadistic *caucheros*. In his report, he came to the conclusion that between 1900 and 1912 the rubber industry had cost the lives of more than 30,000 indigenous people (Stanfield, 1998).

The late 19th and early 20th century was a watershed and horrifying moment for the Putumayo history. However, although research has been carried out on the Ecuadorian Kofán peoples inhabiting the border with Colombia (Califano, 1995; Borman, 1999; Fitton, 1999; Kohn, 2002; Cepek, 2008a, 2008b, 2012) no single study exists which adequately covers ethnographically the Colombian Kofán history, and therefore there is no published information regarding the impact of the rubber boom in Kofán Colombian territories. Consequently, the middle Putumayo tends to be seen as relatively isolated from the rubber dynamics, and therefore, untouched by the violence and slavery of the Lower Putumayo. However, what might be regarded as an indirect effect of the crimes against indigenous populations during the rubber boom in the Colombian lower Putumayo is the arrival of the Capuchin Order to the middle Putumayo now visualized because of the rubber scandal. The Capuchins focused particularly in the San Miguel River area, where according to Cepek since 1914, the priests:

“(…) rounded up Cofán people from dispersed communities and formed the new site of Nuevo San Miguel. In the settlement, the Cofán planted cash crops, attended school, listened to masses and were “taught” to give up their long houses” (2012:7).

Beginning in 1912, the Capuchins built three missions there, hoping to “reduce” and civilize dispersed Kofán and Siona groups. At Puerto Asís, they organized boarding schools for native children. But their project ended abruptly in 1923, when a visiting friar brought measles that ravaged the Indians (Robinson 1979). The Kofán population was reduced to no more than a few hundred- an insignificant fraction of previous numbers. Hence, although the rubber boom was not a driver of direct territorial transformation within the Kofán inhabited territories, the combination of epidemics, missionizing processes, and other economic bonanzas such as the quinine, gold, wood and animal skin’s booms, certainly changed both landscapes and people because these activities attracted colonists, entrepreneurs and explorers to indigenous lands since the second half of the 19th century onwards (Chaves, 1946; Casas Aguilar, 2001; Franco, 2001; Gomez, 2001; Rojas, 2006).

After the rubber boom, a number of border disputes occurred between Colombia and Peru (Zárate, 2008; Echeverri, 2013). Consequently, in 1932-33, the increasing expansion of Peruvian territorial interests in Amazonia led to a short war between the two countries. In the aftermath of the war, another process of colonization was driven by the Colombian government to ensure its presence in isolated and geopolitically vulnerable territories of the Amazon (Forero, 1990), affecting again indigenous territories including the Kofán region of San Miguel municipality and the Guamuez Valley,

Now thus, I can go back to that meaningful road connecting the Andean highlands with the Amazon lowlands that meant new entanglements of different histories, territorial perceptions and cultures, in other words, new ‘contact zones’. After the frontier conflict, one of the most important strategies of the Colombian state formation process in Putumayo was the construction of the road Pasto -Mocoa-and Puerto Asís in 1936 for moving military troops, construction materials, and ultimately, people employing indigenous workforce (see figure. 1, 2). The road opened the eastern slopes and lowlands of Putumayo to an undergoing an active colonization process of poor farmers coming essentially from Nariño (Bonilla, 1968) to the Kofán, Inga, Siona and Coreguaje peoples’ territories. Migration flows were initially distributed along the path traced by the new road and settled firstly in the highlands of Putumayo, by way of Mocoa and Puerto Caicedo, then Puerto Asís

(Domínguez, 2005) and finally the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality. At the same time began the displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands. The use of force by the new landowners (supported by the state) and the enticement with material goods transformed intra-community relations and indigenous territorial distribution (Casas, 2001; Gomez, 2001).



Figure 1. Colombian Military Forces, Capuchin Missionaries, and Kofán individuals on the banks of the Putumayo River during the 1930s (CEPAC¹⁸, undated)

The road, nevertheless, was part of a greater territorial project developed not only by the Colombian state but primarily by the Catholic Capuchin's Order (Vilanova, 1947; Bonilla, 1968). The Colombian government put them in charge of the Christianisation of the "savage" Indians, according to a Concordat signed by the Colombian Government with the Holy See in 1887 (Echeverri, 1997b). In the Sibundoy Valley, located in the Upper Putumayo, Capuchin friars from Igualada, outside of Barcelona, Spain, had set up their base since 1901, taking control of an enormous stretch of Amazonia (Tausig, 2011). With the Colombian government's approval and financial support to "civilize" the region and develop their untamed Amazonian territories, Capuchin's main missionary settlement was built in this mountainous region at an elevation of 2200 meters, in a place of extremely high rainfall and the homeland of the Kamentsá and Inga peoples (Gómez, 2005). Rapidly the priests developed an aggressive strategy of landscape and cultural change in the

¹⁸ CPAC (Capuchin Provincial Archive of Catalonia, Putumayo mission photographic archive)

same fashion as their Jesuit and Franciscan predecessors did centuries before them along the Putumayo River basin. Through the painstaking construction of roads and paths to connect the Andes and the Amazon using free indigenous labour; forcing the sedentarization of indigenous families; conducting evangelization activities; enticing and forcing Indians to work for the church, and introducing new economies based on cattle breeding and foreign commercial crops (Bonilla, 1968), the priests transformed the valley at the beginning of the 20th century into a another modern postcolonial regime.



Figure 2. 1909-1930 Puerto Umbría –Puerto Asís Road construction led by the Capuchins (CEPAC)

Additionally, the capuchins were responsible of an extended process of Indian land expropriation and forced privatization of the Kamentsá and Inga territories, processes that today still generate social conflicts in the Sibundoy Valley (Bonilla, 1968, Gómez, 2001, 2005; Pineda, 2005).

In 1946, one decade after the road was finished, many Andean indigenous people from the neighbouring Nariño Department, had to migrate to the Putumayo jungles due to the loss of their territories because of the 1421 Decree enactment of 1940¹⁹, which dissolved indigenous reserves (Zúñiga and Chávez, 1987:13, 114). Displaced natives from the Andean cordillera took advantage of the road by establishing

¹⁹ The Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for the implementation of Decree Law 1421 of 1940, aimed to transform indigenous reserves into productive agricultural parcels. The process was carried on under the excuse that the reserves ceased to exist "because their titles were not in the notary offices." The lands were considered barren and the Indians who occupied them were registered, as peasants with no direct possession of the land only their crops' yields and some of the improvements Indians have developed (Fals Borda, 1959:11-12).

settlements in the outskirts of Mocoa, Villagarzón and Puerto Umbria settlements. This new wave of indigenous populations dispersed throughout the middle and lower Putumayo generating new interethnic relations and conflicts making even more complex the territorial situation of the middle Putumayo original peoples such as the Kofán, Inga, and Siona peoples (Brücher, 1970; Chaves, 2002). In the municipalities of Guamuez Valley and San Miguel, these three ethnic groups were the most affected during this period as they were gradually confined to smaller lands. However, it would be the growing influx of settlers of the 1970s that brought more diseases and social disruption. As we shall see later, Indians were again being driven off their lands, this time to make way for oil wells, mines, and cattle ranches, followed by coca crops in the 1980s onwards.

Given the historical conditions of spatial mobility, migration and colonization, one of the main features of the indigenous population in the *Piedemonte Amazónico* is the variability of its ethnic composition. From this, two different and often conflictive identity categories are commonly employed by indigenous peoples in Putumayo: the ancient pueblos (“peoples”) such as the Kofán, Inga, Kamentsá, Siona, Coreguaje, Murui and Muinane – and the new indigenous groups who have migrated to these areas from Andean regions such as Nasa and Yanacona from the Cauca region, the Awá from Nariño, and the Emberá -Chami from the Cauca Valley (Fundación Zio A’I, 2002). Today there are in the Department of Putumayo approximately 30,000 indigenous people from 14 pueblos (peoples), which represent about 10% of the total population in Putumayo (SINIC, 2013²⁰).

General approximation to the Kofán- A’i -people and their territorial history²¹

This work is based on my working experience for more than one decade with self-recognized A’I Kofán people in Colombia. Additionally, I spent fourteen months (July, 2011-August 2012) conducting research specifically for this thesis, mostly in the Kofán Reserve of Santa Rosa del Guamuez, but frequently visiting other Kofán reserves such as Afilador Campo-Alegre, Yarinal and Ukumari Kankhe. I mention my previous working experience for I had never done anthropology in the straight sense of academic research in this particular region, but rather working as a consultant or participating in independent projects with indigenous peoples throughout the Amazon Piedmont. Accordingly, my relationships with the indigenous people that helped me during fieldwork were hardly mediated by any kind of academic perspective prior to my doctoral studies.

²⁰ Sistema Nacional de Información Cultural-Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia. Población Putumayo. Accessed September 25-2013. <http://goo.gl/bTUfeA>

²¹ Ecuador A’I people write Cofán with C. In Colombia both C and K are used.

This perspectival change after I went to the University of Kent in the UK and returned to Putumayo, was not free of difficulties, especially when attempting to understand or at least connect peoples' behaviours with theoretical stances, for in my case, there were prior personal relationships with the "Other". A situation that consistently, and more than anything, annoyingly, forced me to cast doubt in every attempt to disentangle such relationship from the scholar-ethnographic eye. This was further complicated when I had to consider the necessity of making argumentative generalizations about 'the Kofán' as a unified ethnic category. But such anthropological premise was at some point discarded during the writing period when I realized that this research was largely about a relationship between them and me. And this situation therefore, was another contact zone or intersubjective encounter, from which a particular version of the territory was not objectively advanced by my indigenous interlocutors, but is in fact the encounter between each one of them and I what created such versions.

Though I decided to analyse this contact zone between me and them in further research and continue with my original aim of exploring other particular contact zones which I knew from my experience with Kofán individuals that were definitive for their territorial history, yet, there is an underlying intentionality in this work to call into question the appropriateness of anthropological engagements of different cultural identities as bounded groups. But before insisting on this point, I need to provide a contextualization of the Kofán people, which, although it may look in contradiction to my argument about the importance of individual viewpoints over generalization about groups, it is inevitable for the reader to understand in general terms the circumstances of the people I have worked and lived with. Thus, I will address again my argument about ethnographic work and the conflictive concept of 'ethnic groups' in places such as Putumayo at the end of this chapter. This will not be done as a conclusive idea of how anthropologists must engage fieldwork and therefore anthropological observation of Amazonian peoples, but rather to suggest a different ethnographic perspective.

Contemporary Kofán situation in Colombia

During fieldwork I realized that the arrival of oil companies at the end of the 1960s is perhaps the most important contact zone and thus, transitional historic moment for contemporary Kofán generations. Before oil was discovered in Orito, on the northern boundary of their ancestral territory in 1963, the Colombian Kofán lived in relative peace (Salinas 2011:365). Oil changed community internal relationships, environmental conditions and socioeconomic dynamics. The regional oil economy

attracted colonist from the highlands, and suddenly, Kofán lands were invaded creating another contact zone with mestizo families they call cucama people.



Figure 3. Morning after Yagé ceremony intended to discuss the advances on land claiming processes (Author, 2009)

A decade and a half after, former and new colonist's populations began to cultivate coca plants or produce cocaine within the Kofán territories and work for and against a trio of armed groups: the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the right-wing United Self-Defense Force of Colombia (AUC), and the Colombian military in a largely deforested region plagued by poverty, violence, and generalized anxiety (Ramirez 2002; Vargas 2004 in Cepek 2008:336). Eventually, the Kofán people entered into these socioeconomic dynamics and new territorial perspectives aroused out of the newly formed contact zones with these postcolonial actors and projects.

Today, the A'I Population in Colombia is very reduced. Around 1317 Kofán are distributed in four Putumayo municipalities. Most of them are concentrated in the rural areas where this study is focused on. That is, San Miguel (443 individuals) and

the Guamuez Valley (951). The rest are located in the semi urban settlements of Orito (229) and Puerto Asís (84) (Ministerio de Cultura, 2010). It is interesting that most of the Kofán population is very young. Individuals with less than 29 years comprise 72%. In contrast, the Kofán individuals regarded as the elders (this is 60+) and therefore also known as their 'traditional authorities', represents only 5%; and adult population between 30 and 59 years are approximately 23% from the total A'I population in Putumayo (Plan de Salvaguarda Kofán, 2010). These numbers indicate that the continuation of many Kofán cultural aspects today, especially their language, depends largely on the involvement of its young population in communal activities, ceremonial practices and political struggles. This possibility, however, is constantly threatened by the fact that young Kofán are increasingly interested in living in urban settlements and large cities, while others have been forced to do it because of armed actor's threats in their territories. This affectation can be seen currently in the poor number of qualified A'I ayafangae language speakers. According to the ethnolinguistic census developed by the Colombian Ministry of Culture (2009), this language is highly vulnerable. Almost half of the Kofán population do not speak or understand the language and only 20% speak fluently. Another 20% understand and speak little and 12% understood but cannot speak. In contrasts, 88% of the Kofán total population is fluent in Spanish. This last number is indicative of how white-indigenous dynamics occurring in the Amazon piedmont, which I shall address in following chapters, are transforming in some cases negatively the Kofán culture. To understand the transformations of some aspects of their culture, such as the language, it is necessary to explore a wide array of factors that might have led to their current situation, but I believe it was the process of land lost in particular due to colonization, what signals perhaps the most important negative watershed for the contemporary Kofán territorial and cultural history.

Land claims, Reserves and Resguardos

During the 1970s the Colombian government titled through the INCORA institute-today known as INCODER (Instituto Colombiano de desarrollo Rural)-four Kofán Reserves: Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos (1976); Yarinal – San Marcelino (1973); Santa Rosa del Guamuéz (1973); Afilador Campoalegre (1976) for a total of 28.016 hectares demanded by the Kofán as their core ancestrally inhabited territories (Fundación Zio A'I, 2002, see map.2).

The Colombian government defines Reservas ("Reserves") as distinct units of land for a number of purposes that range from environmental conservation, natural resources extraction, or the protection of indigenous people (Arango and Sanchez, 1997:35). The Reserve title does not guarantee complete territorial sovereignty for

indigenous people since it is a concession of land that the government grant to a group for them to usufruct and protect it but not to own it (*Ibid.*). In contrast, the Resguardo titles are collective inalienable land grants created, for the most part, during the colonial era by the Spanish Crown (Trojan, 2008:169). Decree 2001, promulgated in 1988, defined the resguardo as a special kind of legal and sociopolitical institution formed by an indigenous community or the entire indigenous ethnic group²². The resguardo is an institution specific to Colombia, through which “indigenous communities that hold colonial title to their land or that have been approved as resguardos in past decades are granted a limited autonomy as communal landholding corporations. Given the centrality of the resguardo in indigenous life, it is not surprising that it has emerged in the past thirty years as a pivot around which the indigenous movement has organized, distinguishing Colombian native politics from its counterparts in other Latin American Nations” (Warren and Jackson, 2002: 74).

Table 1. Kofán Reserves-Resguardos reductions (Fundación Zio A'I, 2002)

Reserve	Reserve Original Area proposed (hectares)	Reserve Titled Area (hectares)/Date	Resguardo Titled Area (hectares)/Date
Afilador Campoalegre	9.325	2.000/1976	887/1998
Santa Rosa del Guamuez	3.750	500/1973	756/1999
Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos	5.129	1.200/ 1976	1.140/1998
Yarinal-San Marcelino	9.813	1.118/1973	2.888/1998

As I shall explore in more detail later, the Kofán struggle to transform their territories into 4 reserves and then into 5 Resguardos was a crucial step in the long lasting land claim process. Today, under the Resguardo category the Colombian government has recognized 26.811 hectares, but this include only an small part of the original reserves’ areas proposed by the Kofán leaders in the 1970s, and one more Resguardo of 21,140 hectares, named Ukumari Kankhe (“bear mountain”) titled in 2002 (Fundación Zio-Ai, 2007).

²² See Ramírez 2002; also Jimeno and Triana 1985 on the history of the resguardo

The Ukumari Kankhe resguardo certainly increased the total amount of A'I titled lands and yet the territorial situation for the Kofán is still critical. This is so because firstly, Ukumari is an isolated territory in the foothills of the Andean mountain range and therefore mestizo colonization is active in this area, which together with the Awá indigenous people descending from the highlands presents an important threat to the A'I territorial integrity regardless of the Resguardo legal recognition. Secondly, Ukumari's strategic location (rugged topography, rainforest and border with Ecuador) allowed for illegal arms trafficking, for chemical inputs used to produce cocaine to pass-through the region easily, and for illegal armed actors' hideouts. All these situations carried on by violent actors directly challenge any kind of Kofán autonomy upon this territory. Their territorial situation is critical additionally for the Reserves' transformation into Resguardos during the late 1990s did not have quite the positive impact to secure a Kofán land-base since the aggressive process of colonization that started in 1960s had already affected 85% of the total Reserves territory (Plan de Salvaguarda- Pueblo Cofán, 2010²³). Hence, in spite that the final Kofán territory titled under the resguardo category in the 1990s is close in number of hectares to the reserves' requested area in the 1970s, the territorial constraints continue for it was only Ukumari Kankhe, a massive but isolated, rugged, and vulnerable piece of land that augmented the number of hectares possessed by the Kofán. But the A'I people consider this territory as a shelter for the 'invisible Kofán families', their forebears, which now belong to the mountainous forest, and therefore these lands are not suitable for living.

Bearing in mind these demographic and land issues, I can turn again to the main aim of this thesis, this is, to show how Kofán territorial perceptions emerge out of historical contact zones in which their forms of territorialization have been interacting with other territorialities, which in most cases have caused serious impairments to the Kofán territorial autonomy in Putumayo. From here it would be easy to understand how land reductions fostered firstly, political struggles between the Kofán and the state that ultimately were crucial in making the concept of territory a powerful political tool for the Kofán. And secondly, to understand how the loss of lands and the consequential close cohabitation with colonists, encouraged diverse forms of interethnic exchange and cultural hybridity, including

²³ "In 2009 the Colombian Constitutional Court identified 34 different indigenous groups at risk of physical and cultural extinction. This, combined with the 30 further groups identified by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia – ONIC), means that there are a total of 64 indigenous peoples facing extinction, not only as a result of the conflict and lack of state support, but also because of the presence of large-scale economic projects on indigenous land. In response, the Constitutional Court has ordered the government to develop specific protection plans, in consultation with the 34 indigenous peoples. These Ethnic Rescue Plans (Planes de Salvaguarda) must be carried out rapidly if any further tragedy is to be avoided":

http://www.abcolombia.org.uk/downloads/Caught_in_the_Crossfire.pdf

marriage, co-fatherhood, and, shamanic relations between mestizo people and Kofán families, which constitute the contact zones that I will discuss later.

In each Kofán Reserve, nevertheless, the effects of the encounter between Kofán, Colombian state, and colonist territorialities are different. In Santa Rosa del Guamuez Resguardo for instance, state-promoted invasion by colonists in the 1970's has had tragic consequences, with 80% of the resguardo's lands (2.994 hectares) now fragmented into small family plots of approximately 2-5 hectares. This Resguardo is also juxtaposed with an area under the jurisdiction of the Guamuez Valley municipality, and thus, colonist's settlements such as la Concordia and San Antonio, have been 'legally' located within what used to be indigenous lands (Fundación Zio-A'I, 2002). The same situation occurs for the Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos Reserves where 22% of its total area is superposed with Orito and Ipiales municipalities and therefore subject to decisions took by the regional governments without Kofán consultation. This shared portion has allowed the expansion of colonists' families into the resguardo territory which today presents an invasion of 78% (2989 has) (*Ibid.*). The Afilador Campoalegre Reserve shares 8,5 % of its original area with the Albania and Monterrey colonists' settlements and the Awá indigenous Cabildo of La Raya. This situation means that Kofán peoples are not entirely sovereign over this part of the territory but they have to share their political autonomy upon these lands with other ethnic groups such as the Awá. The Yarinal Resguardo is shared not only with mestizo colonists but also with the Kichwa people of San Marcelino with 70, 5% (6.925 hectares) of invaded territory. All these areas furthermore are deeply affected by oil extractivism, coca crops, and state developmental projects such as the road that led to the International Bridge between Colombia and Ecuador, which was traced over A'I indigenous lands without any form of consultation.

Very likely, all these resguardos would be affected by another national and international superimposed territoriality, namely, the 'Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America' (IIRSA)²⁴. This macro project is intended to develop a complex network of highways and fluvial ports in Putumayo as part of a larger corridor connecting the region of San Miguel with the port of Tumaco in the Colombian pacific coast and with the Belém do Pará in Brazil²⁵. As I have witnessed during fieldwork, and confirmed in renowned Colombian press media, critical documents produced by indigenous organizations, intellectuals and activists (see Mondragón, 2002; Flórez, 2007, Martínez and Houghton, 2008; La Silla

²⁴ <http://www.iirsa.org/>

²⁵ For a critical discussion of the IIRSA project carried by grassroots organizations of the region and international supporters see www.semillas.org.co/descargas/cartilla-IIRSA-2.pdf

Vacia, 2012)²⁶, the IIRSA project has already started with small infrastructure advances such as paving several roads many of them within indigenous territories including the Kofán reserves.

In addition to IIRSA, the exploration and exploitation of strategic resources within indigenous lands in Putumayo has been confirmed by the National Hydrocarbons Agency (Agencia Nacional de Hidrocarburos –ANH)-this is the Colombian institution in charge of granting oil extraction licenses to national and international companies-which has assigned 27.000 hectares, under the name Coatí Block to the ‘Operaciones Petroleras Andinas’ which ceded its oil extraction rights to the Columbus Energy enterprise-Sucursal Colombia . These concessions, nonetheless, are just a small part of what has been clearly expressed in the neoliberal Development Plan of current president Juan Manuel Santos to transform Colombia’s economy through what he calls the *Locomotoras del Desarrollo* (“development locomotives”). Santos’ locomotives are five strategies regarding infrastructure, agriculture, housing, mining, and innovation which are expected to push forward the economic growth more than 10 percent per year (see Estupiñán, and Polanía, 2011: 44-48; Velásquez, 2011)

Not surprisingly, in Putumayo, a region still controlled in some areas by the FARC’ s rebels, all these neoliberal actions are ferociously protected by the state with strong military presence in the region, such as the Army’s military base build within Kofán territories and justified under the counter-narcotics campaign against drugs, terrorism and other threats to Colombian national security.

Ecuador and Colombian Kofán

In spite Ecuadorian and Colombian Kofán had face many of the same threats such as the missionaries’ aggressive forms of territorialization, resource extractivism and uncontrolled colonization, currently, they present marked differences in terms of social cohesion, political organization and cultural integrity. For the Colombian Kofán, the territorial situation is critical. In contrast to the Ecuador’s Kofán population that holds rights to 433.400 hectares of Andean and Amazonian forests (Cepek, 2012:15), in Colombia, as already mentioned, the A’I families have been legally granted with only 26.811 hectares, a number way below -not only their original territory of course- but under the Reserves’ extension that the Colombian government approved during the 1970s. Additionally, such reduced and fragmented territories are embedded in the Putumayo geography of war. Currently there are in this region 16 police stations, 1 Police anti-narcotics base, one National Army

²⁶ For an interesting chronicle of the *Corredor Sur* (“Southern Corridor”) connecting Ecuador and Colombia through the International Bridge in San Miguel see La Silla vacia press article <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/17653> Accessed on November, 2012

Brigade comprising six battalions, 1 mobile brigade, and the main base of the South Navy Force (Asociación Minga, 2008:3). Several groups of manual eradicators of coca crops travel around the department heavily protected by the police and army. Moreover, eight FARC guerrilla's strong and active squads operate in the region, planting landmines, controlling weapons and cocaine routes, and generating a state of general anxiety among local populations. Concomitantly, paramilitaries' primary goal has been to regain control of the middle Putumayo's urban centres, as well as the guerrillas' key routes for drug and weapons trafficking. The militarization of the landscape is evident, and permanent armed confrontation between all these actors shape indigenous and non-indigenous peoples' day-to-day lives.

Anthropologist Michael Cepek (2008) who has deeply studied the Kofán situation in Ecuador, indicates that the Kofán people with whom he worked assert that "their distant Colombian kin have transformed into cucama (mestizos) by abandoning a way of life founded on A'ingae- peaceful sociality, and forest-based subsistence" (336). Such difference of lifestyles seems to be more salient in the Ecuadorian Kofán perspective after the state declared the stretch of Andean foothills and Amazonian forests as both ancestral Kofán territory and an ecologically protected area. With the support of Ecuador's Ministry of Environment, Kofán people secured the right to co-administer the park as the country's first 'indigenous ecological reserve'. "The protected area helped them to buffer the invasion of colonist and has been definitive in the negotiation and relation between the Ecuadorian state and the Cofán peoples" (Cepek 2008:334). While this recognition happened in Ecuador, in Colombia, the Kofán were struggling to resist, negotiate, and culturally incorporate the invasion of their lands by coca growers and indigenous groups from the cordillera, and survive the brutal violence of the state and illegal armed forces. In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that the 2009 Colombian Ministry of Culture census further informs of 148 displaced A'I families (31, 7%) from their territories because of paramilitary and/or FARC's pressures. This situation means that nearly one third of the Kofán peoples has been victim of forced displacement and therefore requires urgent attention from the Colombian government for their abandoned lands are highly vulnerable to new colonists, coca growers and narco-land grabbers. Indeed, this situation suggests a different lifestyle of the Colombian Kofán from their families on the Ecuadorian side.

But in spite this processes of displacement, deterritorialization, separation of their Ecuadorian families and integration into extractivist economies and war dynamics, Colombian Kofán firmly assert they still sustain kinship bonds and preserve many of their traditional cultural practices such as the ritual drinking of Yagé (*Banisteriopsis caapi*, commonly known as 'Ayahuasca' in Peru and Ecuador) and the associated

shamanic practices and medicine. In fact, Ecuadorian Kofán have manifested their intention of re-learning from their Colombian brothers the shamanic and medical knowledge related with the Yagé complex for this particular aspect of their culture is lost as the direct consequence of the active evangelic missionary activities within their communities²⁷. Accordingly, the Yagé belief system as many other Kofán cultural practices and knowledge have not yet disappeared among the Kofán in Colombia, but in fact, as I shall attempt to show along this thesis, A'I shamanism is extremely alive, highly flexible and deeply attuned to the transformations and dilemmas of contemporary Putumayo.

Approaching Kofán people ethnographically and the discussion of Culture

Following conventional anthropological representations of 'the ethnic group' as the object of inquiry, in this chapter I have provided an initial approximation to the Kofán- A'i -people and their territorial history. I deliberately presented 'the Kofán' as a self-contained cultural unity, or to put it differently, a social group with well-defined cultural boundaries. However, as I have mentioned above, along this thesis I shall attempt to call into question the effective consistency of such hermetic and homogenous engagement of different cultural identities, providing instead an approach that allow us to see two concomitant aspects of culture.

The first aspect, which is absolutely nothing new in social sciences, is that cultures are porous; they are open to intermixture with other different cultures, and they are subject to historical change precisely on account of these influences (Stewart, 1999:40). In this regard, a large and growing body of literature in social theory on globalization, transnational nationalism, and the situation of diaspora communities have developed solid arguments against narratives of cultural purity, homogeneity or authenticity, and privileging in turn hybridity, syncretism, mimesis, and mestizaje, among other analytical categories (Bakhtin, 1981; Bhabha, 1994; Friedman, 1997; Mintz, 1998; Hannerz, 2000; de la Cadena, 2005). As Glissant has succinctly put it "Cultural borrowing and interpenetration are today seen as part of the very nature of cultures" (in Rosaldo, 1995: xv) and thus we easily accept that cultures cannot be seen as isolated, object-like phenomena occupying discrete spaces (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992:7). Following these insights, the ethnographic observation of Kofán families and their forms of alterity engagement as a space of cultural interpenetration, will sustain my argument that territorial conceptions are fluent shape-shifting reflections precisely of such changeable identities. This occurs

²⁷ These interests were manifest in meetings and celebrations between the Kofán political organization of Ecuador FEINCE (Federación Indígena de la Nacionalidad Cofan del Ecuador) and ASMIK (Asociación de Medicos Indigenas Kofanes in Colombia), in which participated before fieldwork.

in a never-ending process of cultural contacts that permanently defies spatial boundaries and cultural purity.

The second aspect is that notwithstanding the coherence and necessity to observe cultures as involved in one another, it is also important not to lose sight -especially when observing processes of cultural contact in Amazonia- of how indigenous cultures today are not simply the sum of different cultural fragments. This means that it is necessary to observe that cultural hybridity implies the maintenance of enduring spaces for racial-cultural difference alongside spaces of sameness and homogeneity (Wade 2005:252). As Santos Granero points out “what appear to be expressions of acculturative processes are the result of a long-standing indigenous openness to the other—particularly the white and mestizo others—and the native conviction that the Self is possible only through the incorporation of the Other” (2009: 479). I suggest thus, that we need to pay sufficient ethnographic attention to the role of native perceptions, practices, and forms of alterity-engagement, intrinsic to those indigenous systems of thought, during processes of cultural entwining of already hybrid forms. Approaching hybridity, *mestizaje* or *mimesis* from this perspective avoids the creation of generic paradigms that undermine how the indigenous Amazonian cultural features constrain, lead, and shape contact and intermingling processes (Hugh-Jones, 1988; Albert and Ramos, 2002; Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007).

Relying on these two pivotal aspects of culture, in this thesis I will advocate for a more nuanced approach to the notion of cultural, ethnic, or social ‘group’ in order to dismantle the fiction of seen it as an a priori and enclosed category. While bounded conceptions of the ontology of the group are understandable, especially in political arenas of Indian struggle, and academic introductory sections such as the one presented above, the fact remains that any final definition of what constitutes or defines the group will be tainted with what Havemann (2000:29) calls “essentialising tendencies”. In this sense, I believe, following Latour, that it is necessary to scrutinize more thoroughly the exact content of what is “assembled” under the umbrella of “the social group” (2005:31) for they “are not silent things, but rather the provisional product of a constant uproar made by the multiple contradictory voices about what is a group and who pertains to what” (*Ibid*: 31). Accordingly, along this thesis I shall attempt to show how Kofán peoples and their territories are not merely defined structures and spaces but mutable networks of relationships. We may say accordingly, that despite the illusion of boundaries, cultures -and I would add territories- evolve historically through unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges, and inventions (Werbner, 2001:192).

But let me go further with this vision about the 'social group' and its multiple internal identities, which are, as Kearney (1996:63) puts it, "contained within this unitary category", and ask what happens with this argument amidst conditions of brutal violence, dramatic social division, and new political scenarios of struggle, such as it is the case in Putumayo? I shall attempt to show here that in conditions of violence and social disruption such multiplicity of self-representation forms and identities becomes exacerbated. Without going into depth here, for this discussion will emerge repeatedly along this thesis, I suggest that Kofán peoples as many other groups enduring colonial and then postcolonial violent conditions, have consciously and unconsciously developed fractured, contradictory, mobile, and polysemic identity expressions to overcome and further control threatening sociopolitical and economic realities; a process that constantly defies the idea of the ethnic group as an homogenous category.

Method, fieldwork, and the Ethnography of the Subaltern's Hidden Life

Although today it is clear that indigenous groups are an ensemble of different perspectives, backgrounds, and knowledges, attached together by the elements they consider a cultural root, it is actually very difficult to discard the idea of "the indigenous people" as people with the same identity. This is largely the result of strategic discourses and practices emphasizing cultural distinctiveness developed by indigenous leaders and western allies. An important consequence is that much of Indian life remains hidden under stereotypes of what is the proper Indian as I mention at the beginning of this work. I suggest therefore, that in order to understand why Kofán people engage their territory in many different ways, which in several cases seem to be opposed to what they regard in political scenarios as their unified project of conserving natural resources, respecting their traditional forms of authority, promoting social stability and harmony, and preserving their Kofán culture, requires to observe ethnographically people's behaviours that might be regarded as 'immoral', illegal, and often paradoxical. This is what I refer to as the subaltern's hidden life. Let me take a few steps back and address the origin of this proposal for it was my life and fieldwork experiences with indigenous communities what impelled the necessity to penetrate into this matter.

Fieldwork in Putumayo

In 1999 I arrived to Putumayo, just in the middle of a socioeconomic crisis. The food was scarce for most of the territory was devoted for the production of coca and the circulation of basic commodities was frequently hampered by the constant combats

between the Army, guerrillas and paramilitaries. The aim of my trip to Putumayo was to support a small organization of indigenous peoples struggling to defend the Yagé culture and recover their territories amidst war. However, there was actually not too much I could do for the violent context and the limitations to travel within the region made communications between peoples and communities very difficult.

In spite of my frustrated activist intentions, my local contacts allowed me to stay inside communities and thus experience the day-to-day lives of indigenous peoples, especially the A'I Kofán. I stayed in all the reserves but ended up living in Santa Rosa del Guamuez, one of the most important Kofán reserves located south of the Guamuez Valley. This community is very similar to all indigenous reserves in Amazonia. A soccer field in a central area, some wooden houses built on stilts with corrugated-metal roofs scattered around it, and patches of thick forest intersected with chagras and coca crops. I had a friend there and he introduced me to Taita Cristobal. That very night we went to his '*U'fa tsau*' (ceremonial house), a long wooden house without windows only side walls that rise 1.60 Mts. allowing a big gap between the roof and the walls on both sides of the house from where you can see the forest. At the end of the house there is a little room exclusively for men in which amidst candles, catholic images, quartz rocks, and dried plants, we drank Yagé together. I explained my interest in plants, but specially, the use of natural poisons. That initial topic leads us to a long night of conversation, questions, and laughter. From that night onwards I became very close to him and his family. Every day I helped with the house chores and the chagra work. Taita Cristobal was very nice to me, not only because I was a hard worker, but also because of my experience working with cattle. Very soon I came to be some sort of personal veterinarian in spite of my very limited knowledge in this regard, but just the very basic skills so as to vaccinate his cows, or help the animals during illness, grant me that responsibility.

A year after meeting Taita Cristobal I started to study anthropology and whenever I had the time I was on a bus travelling 14 hours from Bogota through the cordillera and then to Mocoa, the capital city of the department located in the foothills. From that point I could get a truck that after 6 hours of dirt roads and military control posts, would get me to Santa Rosa. In spite of being there for intermittent periods of time, I was very involved with the internal dynamics of the community and family, their problems dealing with the violence and poverty of the region, their involvement in the coca production, but more importantly for me during those days, with all the sorcery practices associated to the Yagé knowledge. I also had the opportunity to work with a nascent Kofán political organization, making contacts for

them in the capital city and finding humanitarian support for indigenous peoples enduring the Putumayo crisis.

In 2005 I left the country. When I came back to Colombia in 2007, the situation in Putumayo was different. There was war-related violence and a strong presence from the government in the form of military battalions, mobile brigades, barbed wire and other forms of military presence, but the armed conflict was not as intense as in previous years. I started working for a well-known environmental NGO around conservation, but in my case, I was focused on food security issues and sustainable production. This brought me back to the Kofán territory and henceforth a new phase started. This is so, for now in the eyes of my old friends, despite of our mutual feelings of friendship and affection, I was not anymore a kid interested in traditions, plants and helping them with domestic community problems. Now I was that person in charge of bringing projects, and therefore, money. Such position opened a new relation in which I had to start dealing with the Putumayo process of indigenous peoples responding to State violence and the consolidation of indigenous organizations asserting their rights to a greater measure of territorial autonomy and self-determination.

Hidden behaviours (the illegal, improper, incorrect, and unlawful)

During these years I witnessed, and in some cases participated directly, in many political achievements and remarkable struggles. However, being part of this situation also opened the door to see the *hidden* side of indigenous lives. From time to time I had to deal with certain leader's use of their official position to acquire benefits for themselves or for their families by allowing mining or infrastructure projects inside their territories; I witness the regular use of strategically crafted discourses to entertain foreign sponsors with enough money to spend on projects or just informal aid; and observed many episodes of indigenous leaders' corruption as part of their agreements with the very sectors they epitomize "the enemy" such as the Army, guerrillas, multinational companies and druglords. At the community level I was in close contact with situations involving other type of hidden behaviours such as internal corruption, domestic violence, thievery, alcoholism, drug addiction and drug production, involvement in extractivist activities, among other practices that were very difficult to dovetail with my own imaginaries about Amazonian indians as 'forest guardians' holding moral codes very similar to mine. After some time dealing with such hidden behaviours I realize the importance not to take them as signs of acculturation, social degradation, or cultural loss. Accordingly, I thought about the 'ethnography of the subalterns hidden life' as the anthropological project of understanding through a much more careful classification and analysis of the

symbols, stories and meanings, the historical production of such actions. And thus, how they are fundamental pieces to explore indigenous cultural transformation from a non-stigmatized perspective.

Anthropology at home?

While it appears that the most appropriate perspective to explore the subaltern's hidden life would have been the 'anthropology at home' approach given my closeness with some of the Kofán families, it was certainly not the case. Since the idea of anthropology at home refers to the kind of inquiry developed in the study of one's own society, where "others" are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity (see Peirano, 1998), this was never my situation. For in spite of my profound fondness and strong bonds with the people that I ended up living with, I never stopped thinking about how different we were. And it was precisely from that clear line that I could see the formation of that *contact zone* between 'their' and my 'society' in which complex and sometimes untraceable cultural dynamics create a third processual space of contact. Only maintaining such sense of 'difference' I could explore how the process of cultural intermingling between different people occurs, and how this process demands maintaining both racial and cultural difference, while creating sameness and homogeneity. I would like to add also, that it would have been so much easier if had the freedom that grants to be a critic of whom we see as part of our same collectivity (anthropology at home) for the moral codes required in this operation, I firmly believe, are much more flexible than when we address that different Other, specially indigenous others.

Ethics

Addressing critically the illegal acts of someone you know, or even more, you appreciate as a friend, is not easy though. Even worse it is to publish such acts in a public document. Accordingly, this kind of ethnography presents an important challenge in research ethics, specially if we take into account that obtaining such information was in my case, the result of a long process of confidence building after years of visiting and living inside the houses of people's that I trust and care; participating in family celebrations and community parties, attending to their funerals, and participating in Yagé ceremonies. My methodology to gather the data presented here is therefore the outcome of seizing existing communication channels and spaces of discussion where we all felt comfortable to talk about delicate issues such as their participation in illicit activities or even criminal behaviours. Moreover, this kind of research must be strictly based on strong ethical foundations and

political sensitivity if we bear in mind that in those contexts where such ethnographic knowledge needs to be produced, indigenous people's lives are constantly under real threat and any information about their ways of living can be used against them. Henceforth the anxious feeling entailed through the entire process of talking about that well known Other.

But despite how annoying this feeling could be, I also understand that ethics are also about being honest with your own perspectives on the matter, and hence the necessity to find the proper and respectful way of unravelling this hidden dynamics. And hence, this is a call for anthropologists to contribute by providing more and wider ethnographic analyses of the reasons behind such contradictory indigenous actions. This thesis is thus a humble attempt to contribute towards filling this gap and to dismantle stereotypic indigenous imaginaries, carefully crafted by some paternalist NGO's, government agents, or romantic indigenist scholars in Colombia that are completely the opposite of the fascinating process of cultural production. In this sense, I believe that Amazonian anthropology together with committed indigenous and non-indigenous activists are ready to address indigenous impoverished circumstances without ignoring the ongoing internal colonialism, but also inquiring whether and to what extent indigenous peoples' own decisions contribute to the maintenance of such internal colonial regimes. Hence, ethnography in general, and sensitive and risky topics in particular, requires not to infantilize indigenous peoples rather understanding their current forms of agency, even if this implies acknowledging what we consider illegal, improper, incorrect, or unlawful behaviours. From here we may understand better the relations between greed and grievance, resistance and complicity, coercion, consent and opportunism; all the type of practices that characterize indigenous relations with the oil industry, the narcos, the guerrillas, the militaries and the state in Putumayo as we shall see throughout this work

Chapter 3

Campa'náe Town: Kofán Shamanism, Historicity, and Place-Making

You want to know about Campa'náe? Asked the Taita through his flashing teeth while lighting a cigarette with some scattered embers from the fire. It was before dawn on August 15 in 2011 in the aftermath of a Yagé ceremony²⁸. I was talking with Taita²⁹ Cristobal about old Kofán towns, so I wanted to know more about Campa'náe town, a name I had heard a few times in the stories of the mayores ("elders"). Since I could not geographically locate it in maps, I thought about Campa'náe as a vanishing memory, just a scar in time with not too much importance for the current Kofán forms of territorialization. But Don Cristobal said:

"That place is very far and high. Up there you have to go through the mouth of the Abusíe meadow, which is nearby the San Miguel River. From there you pass the Taruca creek and then El Betano, which is another creek. Right there, in Betano, you find Comboy...Comboy we call it but that is not the true name. In our language its name is Zapunaike. Well. From that "bocana de Comboy" you walk along that creek, far, far, far, and then, in the upper part is La Bermeja...that is Ecuador nowadays. Up the river, from there, but within the Colombian side, there is Campa'náe. My deceased father told me this because within that time I used to drink remedio (yagé) with my dad alone in the monte (forest-wilderness). He told me the story of that town and the campana (bell) because he was one of the few that knew where the bell was buried. It was a very, very old story, he said. He said the bell was buried and that place marked with a long log, a bamba. They buried the campana with a toddler because that is what they said it has to be done when the bell tolls. That bell tolls only to call the people for work, for Minga (communal work) or meetings. The sound was very, very strong, that is how that sound was. And then, all the pregnant women died with that sound. There were a lot of abortions after that horrible sound. The little children started to vomit and got sick with diarrhea with blood. Then, many people died. Everyone was scared. Thus, they decided to bury the bell with a child. That was in Campa'náe my father told me while drinking Yagé. And there were only Kofán people, lots and lots of them; old Taitas and that

²⁸ Yagé is a plant-based beverage prepared with the Banisteriopsis caapi vine. It is either mixed with the leaves of dimethyltryptamine (DMT)-containing species of shrubs from the genus Psychotria or with the leaves of the Justicia pectoralis plant, which does not contain DMT. This sacred brew has been at the center of social practices among Amazonian indigenous peoples. Best known by its Kichwa name, ayahuasca (aya – spirit, huasca – vine) —literally "spirit vine" or the "vine of the dead"— this drink has been used by Amazonian peoples for myriad purposes; healing, divination, spirituality, emesis, purging, warfare, and social reproduction.

²⁹ Taita is the term employed by indigenous groups of the Colombian Amazon Piedmont for shamans.

people live there, but no cucama (mestizo colonist) people. Just us; this is why the elders use to say that people that had not died with all that disease, because of that sarampión (measles), they fled away. Many stayed there and died with the bell. A'ingae (people) were ending. But the rest came here through the Guamuez River. But the bell stayed there.

And there are a lot of people today that want to find it; they are desperate to know where the bell is buried. My deceased dad spoke to me that when people asked him about that burial, he deceived them, saying he did not know anything. He lied and said that he could not remember, he just answer that it was buried under a bamba. But yes, he knew because he saw when the priests that came later unburied the bell. And he went to that place. He knew how to talk to the people there and told me how to do it myself. He knew where the bell was because he was a boy when some priests took it away to San Antonio, and then, because they were friends of the Siona people, they took the bell there”.

In his wondrous Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino notes how "Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased" (1979:87). Yet, the Campa'náe story is fascinating because it completely goes in the opposite direction. Here, the Taita's words not only impede the erasing of the memory-image but inject it with life. His account, in an overtly subverted version of the modern linear reading of time (since the Jesuit town of Campa'náe very likely vanished at some point after the 18th century, thus the impossibility of the Taita's father to "talk to the people there" at least in our rational terms³⁰) allowed Cristobal, the storyteller, to interact with vanished immaterial or mythological geographies. Such a window, in which words serve as keys to unlock what is assumed to have evaporated over time, alert us to a different temporal understanding of space and through that, of territory. His reading of the past differs thus from "our making history" that operates by digging through layers of time. Rather, in this case operates "a mythopraxis that is narrated as past and future in a shamanic key" (Fausto and Hackenberger 2007:14). It would seem

³⁰ In a different version of this story presented in the Plan de Vida de la Nacionalidad A'l Cofán (2013:34) in Ecuador, it is said that the bell was buried in a place called Limoncito because of the effects caused on people's health after the missionaries rang the old bell. Because of the diseases brought by the bell, the Kofán abandoned the missionaries' settlements and travelled along the San Miguel River to reach La Concha del Betano and from here to Chandia'nae (in what is today Ecuador) to a place known as Makaamae. Other families returned to a place called Tayosu Kankhe, which is considered the place of the ancient elders. From this point some Kofán families travelled until what is today Santa Rosa de Sucumbios, Rancheria and San Jose. Another group of families descended and founded what is known today as Afilador-Campoalegre and Santa Rosa del Guamuez in what is today Colombia. However, in this version there were two bells, one remained buried in Limoncito but the missionaries kept the other. One day, a Taita was detained in Pasto (Colombia), after three days he disappeared from the jail and appeared in his house. He was detained again because of sorcery charges and the authorities demanded him to prove if he was capable to control the forest animals as might be expected of any respectable Taita. With his knowledge, the shaman brought to the city of Pasto several white-lipped peccary (Tayassu pecari) and then he transformed into tiger shape. The authorities believed him and because of that, they gave him the other golden bell. The story finish saying that this is the reason "this place is called Campana'en Canqqe" (*Ibid*: 34), however, there is no geographical reference to locate precisely where it is.

that from the fragmentation and disorder of such layers, as spaces of shamanic interaction with colonial contexts fraught with pain, disease and social disruption, new territorial dimensions emerge as sources of contemporary shamanic power.

My aim in this chapter thus, is to explore how the juxtaposition of indigenous and missionary territorialities during the colonial encounter in the 17th and 18th centuries in Putumayo is currently produced and mobilized within social memory. I shall attempt to show how historical territorial events and its agents are actively conceived in Kofán's Pintas during Yagé ceremonies. Pintas refer to what indigenous peoples also define as 'visions', or using Noll's (1985) term "mental imagery". Mental imagery is thus conceptualized as an "ability that can, allowing for individual differences, be developed into a skill" (*Ibid*: 444), which in this case, help Kofán shamans to acquire shamanic power. This chapter nonetheless, is not particularly focused on the Kofán complex conceptualizations of power. I am rather interested in observing the role of time and space within Kofán Pintas during the process to obtain shamanic power, and therewith, to illustrate how this small Amerindian group creates non-geographical and mythologized territories where Indian-white colonial relations are incorporated into and expressed through ritual performances and narratives in the present (see Taussig 1984a, 1987; Rasnake, 1988; Silverblatt, 1988; Harris, 1995; Santos-Granero, 2004a;). More precisely, this is about how certain "narratives of the past are used to construct the present" (Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007:4), and hence, how historic events relating to colonial contact zones in Putumayo, crawl back through the layers of history, emerging with new shapes and particular purposes today. In this chapter I further employ the exploration of Kofán shamanic elaborations of time and space in order to discuss how concepts and practices such as historicity, orality, colonialism, resistance, cultural contact and shamanism are pivotal elements in Kofán creations of a shape-shifting concept of *territorio*.

Spatio-temporal distortion

The days after I heard the Campa'náe story from Taita Cristobal in Santa Rosa del Guamuez, the Kofán reserve where I carried out most of my fieldwork, I felt I had made an important breakthrough in my process to understand Kofán conceptual constructions of their territories. This was so for Campa'náe impelled me to think Kofán present territory not simply as the product of the accumulation of colonial historical events, but as an active and very vivid recreation and interaction in the present with such events from the past. I started to think that Kofán deliberate fragmentation and reorder of temporality, as essential aspects of the Campa'náe mythopraxis, was indicative thus of a very complex and probably impenetrable

historic process of melding and transformation of diverse cultural contacts and relations which currently inform Kofán perceptions of their territories.

This Kofán practice of spatio-temporal distortion within shamanic narratives hence, is not a wayward construction. The overlapping of mythic Campa'náe as an ancestral place, the historical Campa'náe with the more recent unburial of the bell by priests, and the contemporary Campa'náe, is certainly a territorial meaning-making process portraying the possibilities of people's internalization and reappropriation of diverse colonial geographical elements and conditions of repression, marginality and injustice, which, in a fascinating way, produces meaningful landscapes for the Kofán people.

To understand this, let me start particularly with the role of the iconic bell. I believe that Taita Cristobal's attention to this artefact could be understood today, during intimate ceremonial moments such as the one I had with him, as a residual master symbol from the Kofán colonial past; reflecting through a long, complex and perhaps untraceable process, the imposed order of time within the missions. As I shall explain in more detail later, the Jesuit and Franciscan strategy to control people and increase productivity within towns such as Campa'náe, was based on a strict organization of time and activities by means of routinized tactics of authority, themselves normalized through the establishment of rigid work schedules. Missionary' towns and missions were highly structured socio-political entities in which control over village's Indians was almost absolute (Parker 1985 in Little 2001). Certainly, built social environments do not determine human conduct, but yet, they do have effects, sometimes quite potent. They can enhance cultural values, encourage certain kinds of social behaviour, and preclude alternative possibilities or, perhaps more accurately, make them quite difficult (Wright, 2005:437). With the help of powerful massive church bells, time was divided into routines of production and praying; the space in turn, fragmented and reordered into classifications and uses. Eventually, the entanglement of natives and missionaries mentalities formed a framework for understanding and using time and space, always maintained by the priests through the employment of a wide array of punishments and tortures. Perhaps this is why the colonial atmosphere of discipline and pain generated by the missionary disciplinary system, appears in my friends account, transformed into iron and sound. Remember that: "That bell tolls only to call the people for work, for Minga or meetings. The sound was very, very strong".

The political resonance of the bell, as a form of authority entrenched in Cristobal's story, opens another very interesting question regarding the relation of sound, memory and landscape. For it not only images of colonial symbols which find their

way into the present, but their inherent sounds can also be transformed through shamanic practices to digest meanings and create vivid landscapes in which violence itself has a sound. The Campa'náe mental imagery is in this sense illustrative of "landscapes as a cultural process" (Hirsh, 1995), which has not only a spatial, but also a deeply temporal dimension (Ingold 2000, Bender 2002), and furthermore, with its own intrinsic memory-auditory experiences. As Santos Granero (2004b) points out, landscapes may not be reduced to a specific sight or vista but also find its expression in notable acoustic sensations (e.g. Gell 1995, Feld, 2012). The sound of the bell, or even more, the sound of the elder's voices that died because of that violence, enter through the sorcery of words and Yagé into the shamanic realm of dialogue between different times. Strikingly, this memory process informs new place making processes, and here thus, we see Campa'náe among other colonial reappropriations that makes so fascinating the Kofán territorial conception. For Taita Cristobal then, the voices of these highly esteemed Taitas, the mayores ("elders"), who took Yagé long before his father and him in places such as Campa'náe, appear now in Yagé ceremonies, in the deep forest, or in the world of dreams, collapsing centuries of time into "compacted nuggets of magical meaning" (Taussig, 1984 a). Following Hill (1996:2), Taita Cristobal's historical consciousness could be seen to reveal "a reflexive awareness on the part of social actors of their abilities to make situational and more lasting adjustments to social orderings", an idea founded in turn, on the perception that "the historical past...is inhabited by fully human, cultural beings who, although perhaps living in different conditions from those of the present time, had essentially the same powers for making changes as do people living in the present" (Taussig, 1988b:6-7).

However, I certainly do not see this action as a cultural manoeuvre to bring back people and restore some imagined harmony disrupted by the colonial agents and missionaries. The purpose of interacting with immaterial geographies and peoples is often related to the acquisition of sorcery knowledge for defence and attack. As well as healing powers, songs, spells, darts, and other weapons can be learned and grabbed from these spheres of interaction. In this sense, the "deep mytho-historical presence of dark shamanism, contemporary with, if not actually preceding, the original emergence of persons and shamanic techniques indicates that dark and light, killing and curing, are complementary opposites – not antagonistic possibilities" (Whitehead and Wright, 2004:3). As such, these spaces with different temporality are not cultural shelters for the experience of a socially imagined past order. As we shall see shortly, the turmoil, violence, sickness, death and disorder brought by the colonial regime derived not only in the increment but also the formation of more complex shamanic forms of defence and attack. These mytho-historical places thus provide contemporary shamans with curing or killing powers

since they are dimensions in which the old Taita's power was formed in brutal conditions. And these conditions of turmoil, violence, sickness, death and disorder brought by the colonial regime are probably very similar and equally productive in many ways to the ones currently active in Putumayo; hence, as I shall attempt to demonstrate throughout this work, A'I shamans seek such immaterial 'conflictive geographies' as sources of knowledge and power regardless of the time in which they existed.

The bell and the rest of the geography of conflict to which it belongs, is important because of its power to symbolically condense the death brought by epidemics in missionary towns but also the possible remedy to counter such damages. This shamanic inter-action with the old bell opens in the present a possibility for shamans to kill and cure at the same time. In this sense, Fausto contends that "Amazonian shamanism thrives on ambivalence" (2004:172). The origin of such ambivalence, as I will explore in much more detail in the last chapter of this thesis, is the inherent uncertainty in the processes and consequences of shamanic entanglements with both human and non-human forms of alterity, but also, I suggest, with artefacts filled with symbolisms and meanings such as the Campa'née bell.

Artefacts as Santos Granero (2009c) has consistently demonstrated "(...) are often attributed the role of primordial building blocks in Amerindian constructional cosmologies (3)" inasmuch they are in some cases considered to have particular subjectivities. This is the case of the bell and the entire ambivalent Campa'née shamanic mental imagery, so important for Taita Cristobal for they represent the two possibilities of danger and illness, but also, of creating and capturing beneficial power. Such power comes from the ambivalent possibility of using the bell's deathly visions for the shamanic healing and ("cleansing") of the territory or the patient's body. So yes, the bell is dangerous, but Taitas always have a *secreto* ("secret") to counter dangerous threats, that is, the mythical burial of the bell. Hence, danger and cure are constitutive of the bell's shamanic narrative and it is this exactly, the kind of mental imagery, the great pinta, for its ambivalent power that Taitas collect within the navigation of history during Yagé ceremonies.

Michael Taussig, writing on Putumayo shamanism, envisions brief references to the past as images that bring with them a certain magical power. The connections between history and memory, he writes, "(...) would seem to have little in common with the historicist view of events unfolding progressively over time. On the contrary, we are startled by an image from the past, a magically empowered image flashing forth in a moment of danger (1987: 367)". In this sense, Taita Cristobal's

account evinces how shamanic power, is not fixed in the past but fluid in time, a paradigm of the Putumayo shamanism that I witnessed in a different moment while travelling along the banks of the Caquetá River, bordering with the Putumayo province. When asked about how he knew a specific medical formula to cure kidney illness, Taita Paulo noted how he had:

“(...) grabbed it from the air... But you have to know how to do that. ‘There’ is where the elders left it centuries ago, so only the good drinkers of Yagé can catch it”.

According to this, it is not only shamans capable of flowing without time or space constrains as it has been noted since early anthropological works about shamanism (Eliade, 1959, 1964; Laing, 1967; Jones, 1968; Bourguignon, 1970; Peters and Price-Williams, 1980) as in more recent analysis (Laughlin et. al, 1992; Jordan, 2001; Wright, 2013) but shamanic knowledge itself can also be deposited -and thus flow “in the air”- by shamans from other past times to be used by Taitas with enough skills to interact with this spatiotemporal crevices in which such knowledge is hidden.

However, access to knowledge has different levels of restriction and forms of penetrating it. Therefore the ferocious competition among Taitas to access that power, and hence, the smart secretive attitude of Cristobal’s father when asked about the whereabouts of the bell. This old powerful Taita knew the importance that the bell location had, even though it is very likely that there is not a specific physical location, but, again, that is not the important point here.

The important point is how from the present, Don Cristobal, following his father’s knowledge, can access through his Yagé pintas to these spatiotemporal crevices in which such knowledge is concealed, creating concomitantly non-geographical and mythologized landscapes where Indian-white relations are incorporated into and expressed through ritual performances and narratives (Vidal and Whitehead, 2004; Uzendoski and Calapucha-Tapuy, 2012). Campa’náe illustrates in this regard how forces conceived as external to the originating shamanic cosmologies have historically influenced the Putumayo shamanism and therefore, how the ritual practices of Taitas and indigenous peoples of this region must be seen as intimately linked to engrained alien cultural systems, such as the missionary. As such, it became clearer for me why shamanic perceptions of history and space, which are not exclusively for the Taitas, complement the physical perception of reality with parallel spaces that increase the complexity of how Amazonian peoples perceive the world.

In this respect it is also noteworthy that the creation of these reality perceptions are not merely fictional spaces experienced in something that we could regard as a separated 'another dimension'; it is far more complicated than this. The 'realness' of these forms of territorial perception may stand from the fact that they are historical products of interactions between very accurate knowledge of the physical landscape and very complex cultural and shamanic system of spatial perception. This is indicated in Don Cristobal's instructions on how to find Campa'náe³¹, through masterfully melding precise geographical markers with intangible directions in order to find a non-geographical place: "you have to go through the mouth of the Abusíe meadow, which is nearby the San Miguel River. From there you pass the Taruca creek and then El Betano, which is another creek. Right there, in Betano, you find Comboy...Comboy we call it but that is not the true name. In our language its name is Zapunaíke. Well. From that "bocana de Comboy" you walk along that creek, far, far".

In this text, stories and actualities are merged so that holding to a difference/binary between myth and history, ritual and episode, symbol and utensil are made impossible (Juschka, 2003:98). This conception contrasts with Eric Hirsch's understanding in which landscape is a cultural process between an everyday foreground actuality and an idealized or imagined background potentiality (1995:3). Though I share the idea that landscape, in the same way as territory, is a cultural process, I believe that addressing Kofán constructions of the space by separating two different grounds-the real and the imagined- obliterates the fact that it is typical of Amazonian indigenous peoples to engage their worlds without this dichotomic perception of the space. Although there are numerous examples within Amazonian cosmologies of structured classifications of the world into different domains (see Hugh-Jones, 1979; Van Der Hammen, 1995; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Londoño, 2012), I believe such conceptions are different from the dual model suggested by Hirsch. In fact, it is rather common to find in diverse ethnographic materials of the Amazon that shamans, for instance, possesses the ability to travel across ritual, psychic, material, intangible and even body landscapes defying ideas of rigid boundaries between such spaces. (See Harner, 1973; Posey, 1982; Villoldo, 1990; Schultes 1992; Chaumeil, 1992; Santos-Granero, 2006). And this is specially so for indigenous cultures with Yagé as a vital cultural axis. Accordingly, might it not be better to say that there is not a clear division between the Putumayo physical landscape and the Taita's mental imagery of Campa'náe? That the two grammars of the space constitute a single territorial perception during ritual moments such as

³¹ In fact, the suffix 'nae' means river or creek in A'í ayafangae (or A'í lngae) language.

the Yagé ceremony or the act of storytelling? I believe so, for the Kofán mental imagery seems to reject differential representations of the territory during ritual situations; consequently, 'real' material landscapes and the mental imagery of Campa'náe and other missionary Pueblos de Indios (Indian Towns) founded by the Spanish missionaries, are spatially structured together within the shamanic geographical perceptions. Such territorial engagement reminds me of Malinowski's (1922) comment while observing the enchanting geography of the Trobriand Islands, where "Myth has not only crystallized into magical formulae but into landscape" (303).

Campa'náe is thus a mythscape indeed, but a very real one. As such the interactions between supposedly distinct expressions of the territory, both physical and immaterial, articulate explicitly myth and history as undivided practices. As Rasnake clearly expresses:

"Symbolic forms, and especially myths, thus picture the past as an arena in which the present situation of paradox is created. Myth becomes history -the mythic vision becomes imbued with consciousness of time and transformation- and, at the same time, history becomes myth- "real" events in the past, events the observer confirms from other sources as actually having occurred, are modified and shape not only to conform to principles of order in a particular cultural tradition but also express the contemporary perception of the meaning of the past events; and this is done in such a way that the remembered transformation creates contradiction, or a paradox, that is yet to be resolved" (1988: 140).

But Campa'náe I shall clarify, as the contemporary expression of how certain Kofán individuals perceive the meaning of past colonial events, employing Rasnake words, is but one remarkable example among other non-geographical landscapes and places emerging of these perceptions, that ultimately, I argue, constitute Kofán territoriality. Taitas that I interviewed during fieldwork permanently spoke about places in the Andean cordillera, forests close to Ecuador, strange foreign cities, Valleys in Nariño department, and even 'deserts', frequently visited by themselves during the Yagé ceremony, in order to interact with indigenous ancestors and families but also with entities with physical features clearly associated with the missionaries' appearance. All these geographies further evince how indigenous perceptions of their territories, at least in the Colombian piedmont, are not pristine imaginaries of white-free landscapes, rather they are the ongoing product of intercultural contacts forming entwined cultural systems of symbolic and material exchange (Taussig, 1987; Hugh-Jones, 1988; Albert and Ramos, 2002;); and

therefore, the purpose here is to highlight those intercultural relations as constitutive of the Indian territory, for as Rubenstein asserts, whenever culture and history are kept apart, essentialism will be the result (2002: 50). Hence, as I will discuss in more detail in the last part of this chapter, it could be argued that contemporary indigenous constructions of the Territory concept are to a great extent a transformative action upon history (Schama, 1995; Bender, 2002; Stewart and Strathern, 2003), but a history of contact. And this argument has profound political implications in contexts of land rights and territorial sovereignty. Since indigenous' territorial agency is linked to the problem of producing transformations in a world that is not seen only as a product of social-material conventions but rather as the effect of interacting with diverse forms of reality. In other words, the complex ontology of the territory defies categories attempting to tame its meaning and fix its physical form, as many public policies in Colombia are intended to.

*Different cultures, different historicities, multiple territories*³²

In light of my wish to understand the mechanisms whereby Kofán individuals reappropriate historical events of colonial intercultural contact and from this construct meaningful conceptions of the *territorio* today, I would like to address in this section the issues of memory, temporality and space from the contribution of diverse thinkers.

Cross-cultural variability in conceptions of time and space has been a central topic in anthropology (Geertz, 1973; Bhabha, 1990; Gell, 1992; Fabian, 1983), but it was Durkheim (1912), more than one hundred years ago, who insisted that the category of time was neither a universal a priori category nor an individualized processing of experience. The category of time, like space, number, and cause, is itself a cultural product, issuing forth from words and actions in society (McGovern, 2013). In turn, the culturally specific understanding of time is foundational to individuals' attempts to exercise agency in the societies in which they live. This is the case with the mytho-historical geography of Campa'náe, which demanded a different reading of temporality since the European/modern notion of time I was taught supposes, as Patrick Menget (1999) has pointed out, "the construction of a single totalizing narrative as a succession of events and phases lived by an ethnic group". In contrast, the ways indigenous peoples "conceptualize the past", as Harris (1995:10) has noted,³³ do not necessarily "fit in any straightforward sense into our historic

³² The statement 'Different cultures, different historicities' appears in Marshall Sahlins' introductory chapter of his book *Islands of History* (1993).

³³ Olivia Harris has conducted anthropological fieldwork in Northern Potosi, Bolivia. Her work explores in depth the Aymara-speaking peasants of the *ayllus* and their model of past periodization. Harris questions in particular how the Spanish conquest of the Andean

mould". In indigenous Amazonia, conceptions of history and time differ from the modernist rationality and order, and henceforth, demand alternative ethnographic approaches; otherwise we might be, as Fabian (1983:4-5) suggests, imposing anthropological temporal-evolutionary schemas that imply the naturalization of a universal history. This imposition, through what he calls the "spatialization" of time according to a taxonomic model is part of the anthropological intellectual tradition, and thus, the foundation for the classification of different societies based on their level of social and political development. As Fabian notes, anthropology in essence was the epistemological grounding for colonialism and imperialism, where "all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, some downstream" (*Ibid*: 17). Relying on this intellectual foundation it became possible to justify colonial enterprises on the basis of helping societies develop and progress to achieve the heights of civilization. Such imposed temporalities on different societies deny the fact that Amerindian systems of thought and action tend to dismantle the western unilinear periodizations of time employed by historians. The example of Campa'náe as a mytho-historical location and shamanic geographical referent still active today, exemplifies how Kofán, as many other Yageceros³⁴ dislocate and reorder sequential models of history by collapsing "our" commonsensical notion of time. Hence my point that indigenous people's appropriation of the past in the Andean- Amazonian piedmont seems to be anarchical and rebellious in its rejection of chronology and historical accuracy (see Taussig, 1984a), subverting imposed ethnocentric versions of history and producing in this case complex material and shamanic landscapes.

In this regard, landscape- like territory, I suggest, - is "the work of the mind" as Simon Schama contends in *Landscape and Memory* (1995:7). Schama asserts that landscapes result from the application of human agency to specific natural settings over time. "It is our shaping perception that makes the difference between raw matter and landscape" (Schama 1995:10). As a result of human agency and perception, landscape becomes the carrier of the "freight of history, its scenery built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock" (*Ibid*: 5). However, it is my intention to expand Schama's geological metaphor and demonstrate how history interacts with myth in ways that the "strata of memory" representing organized layers of time (periods, dates, momentums) as juxtaposed layers of rock, diverges from indigenous views of history. When people build their social past through oral expression and material practices in the present, they also dissolve and melt any

region has been elaborated officially from a European perspective, as a salient historical moment. The author reflects on the local views of this past that diverge from the official version by dissolving the strategically constructed and imposed ruptures between periods.

³⁴ This is the common name in Putumayo for Indigenous groups with the Yagé ritual at the center of their cosmographies.

possible stark division between the strata of memory; and this flexibility of time and space largely determines how people experience territory today. Let me go further with Schama's geological metaphor since it can be misleading to represent the interaction and mobility of memory layers. When he says that the landscape is "built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock", it is very similar to what the geologist Roderick Murchison theorized in the mid- 19th century, on how landscapes and mountains were made up of layers of rock laid one on top of another over time and equally of how western history periodizes the past, that is, adding younger layers on top of older ones solidified after years. Murchison's insight about geological processes, in the same manner as historicism, was a beautiful logical and plausible simple pattern. However, the process of how certain indigenous people build their history from the present in the upper and middle Putumayo may be better represented by another geological metaphor derived from the insights of the geologist Charles Lapworth³⁵ at the end of the 19th century. While studying the biostratigraphy of the earth, Lapworth showed how mountains (as history for our interest) are formed. Observing the fact that there are old rocks that can be seen sitting on top of the young rocks and reprocessed on the ground, he realized that this process involved some sort of motion. Old rocks in the same manner as historic events in the present, have been brought up, reprocessed and expanded in an ongoing process. This is why, in Amazonia, as in the rest of Latin America, "old, new and hybrid forms coexist, thus invalidating approaches which assume that there has been an evolution in which the old is superseded by the new" (Rowe and Schelling 1991:18). As such, multiple times, pasts and presents, cohabit, intermingling diverse forms of reality perception.

The Taitas remarkable capacity to collapse and fragment their territorial history during the Yagé nights in Putumayo further illustrate this necessity to explore Amazonian indigenous social philosophies of time and space; and thereby to strength the anthropological project of understanding histories and historicities in Lowland South America (Hill, 1988; Bruce and Ramos, 2002; Hirsch and Stewart, 2005; Santos-Granero, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Uzendoski, 2010; Peluso, 2013). During these ceremonies the traditional healers dive into dislocated times, allowing them to experience or to visit colonial towns and catholic missions; places which in strict historical, physical or visible terms no longer exist. For the Taitas and indigenous people in Putumayo, these techniques to disorder time and re-appropriate the historical product of the interactions between different kinds of people are extremely real, constituting one among many of the possible views in the kaleidoscopic perception of territorial reality.

³⁵ "Eminent Living Geologists: Professor Charles Lapworth". Geological Magazine, New Series, Decade IV, VIII: 289-303. July 1901.

This Kofán alternative perception of time and space requires an anthropological understanding that considers its chaotic and disordered elements as intrinsic and very meaningful part of their worldviews. And thus, I am advocating for something that is not new to anthropology indeed, “the fact that social life is imbued with paradox and contradiction. Both elements seem to be unavoidable prerequisite for ongoing social action” (Rasnake 1988:136). And the “inevitability of contradiction”, wrote Rasnake “becomes especially clear when one attempts to trace out the connections between the social order, the shared systems of meanings” (*Ibid*: 136) and the territorial history for the purposes of this work.

Hence, in contrast to a history that is written with respect to chronology, a linear progression of dates were events must be placed in their appropriate temporal context (Hirsh, 2007:159), in Amazonia, indigenous individuals or collective constructions and enactments of the past from the present might be better associated with Benjamin’s “dialectical images” as Taussig (1987) suggested more than two decades ago. Instead of measurable and organized periods, epochs, and events, dialectical images emerge as those fragments that create a mosaic of history. “The dialectical image is critically interruptive in the same way that the “historical object” in historical materialism is. Both are monads (self-contained units) that serve to break up smooth, capitalistic conceptions of time by a sudden shock of juxtaposition. This interruptive shock, which gives us necessary distance for critical interruption, allows us to take the dialectical image ‘out of context’ and examine it: Present and past illuminate one another in a “constellation with the Now.” (Pensky, 2001: 217). Benjamin’s dialectical images may inform us of a different perception of time and space, and thus they are as Sobchack, (1997:4) put it, “a site and sight full of contradictions and open to excavation”. In Putumayo, such colonial imaginaries find their way into current landscapes, wildly dancing in peoples’ historicity, place-making and storytelling practices without fixed dates of origin, left aside thus, of any form of strict periodization in the western sense. They are flexible in its meaning and form since they can be adopted collectively or individually to be reprocessed, changed, neglected and constantly retold (Taussig, 1987; Buck-Morss, 1991; Pensky, 2001).

Acknowledging relativity in time-space perception nevertheless presupposes certain limits. This is to say, that alternative indigenous constructions of time and space such as Kofán reconstruction and animation of colonial imaginaries within present territories does not imply the complete absence of indigenous historical accounts in the sense we usually give to history and periodization. Indeed, it is precisely in the observation of the audacious and chaotic indigenous forms of

articulation of order and disorder, that is, linear and non-linear readings of the past, where revealing and singular ways of constructing temporality and history emerge. The work of Gell (1992) supports this relation. He provides his own defence of cultural relativism with sure but measured steps. His argument juxtaposes the imaginative construction of time in cultures with what he regards as the objective conditions of existence in the world. Objectivism is thus tied to relativism. Hence, when Kofán Taitas talk about disappeared ancient Indian towns and missions as shamanic existent locations today, or when the Taitas enter into shamanic trances and cure patients with the power of a crucifix or a Virgin Mary holy card, as I shall describe later, we can see that all these historic elements born from white-Indian contact in a remote past -as they themselves recognize it- have simultaneously been transformed in the present, and therefore they do not belong to some kind of primordial encounter of cultures but to an alternative conception of time with a sort of reappropriated temporality of contact. However, as Taussig (1984a: 88) suggests, this is not a process:

“(...) in which "elements" from each society were "syncretized," as the concept in common anthropological usage would have it.

The "bits and pieces" that remain of these religions in current indigenous narratives and practices, Taussig points out:

“ (...) are thus not testimony to the tenacity of tradition, as the historicist would argue. Instead they are mythic images reflecting and condensing the experiential appropriation of the history of conquest, as that history is seen to form analogies and structural correspondences with the hopes and tribulations of the present”.

Current indigenous territorial perceptions are thus not the straightforward product of Spain's violent subjugation of the pre-Columbian world more than five hundred years ago. The missionaries' spatial and disciplinary regimes have entered into an ongoing dialogue, negotiation, and contestation with the already complex native cognitive categories, transforming in turn how the space is "produced", employing Lefebvre's (1991) terms. These processes continue today, constantly creating diverse expressions of the union of the distinct intercultural systems that live, evolve, and thrive in these very same places; nowadays even more complex since Amazonian indigenous peoples have entered into wider global networks of communication and politics (Turner, 1992; Perreault, 2003; Ulloa, 2004).

As this might lead us to expect, Amerindian epistemic distortion of history is not a capricious way of rendering the past in the present, nor a simple effect of multiple voices defining it at the same time. Rather, it is a mechanism of indigenization of modernity and through which “memory is shaped and employed to influence and make sense of sociopolitical contexts (Peluso, 2013:16). What is clear from this process, as Whitten and Whitten (2011:170) indicate, is that among indigenous peoples of northern South America, historicity engages with spiritual forces, conjured during ritual situations, to conflate images from mythic times with past colonial and postcolonial encounters. The historical ongoing conflation of all these images as intrinsic part of Kofán engagements of space/time, ultimately define the meanings of its territory. This is why, without denying the legitimacy of more ordered and well defined territory versions, such as the ones deployed by the indigenous movement and presented at the introduction of this thesis, yet, at the local sphere, I have witnessed alternative meanings of *territorio*, oscillating between the material and fantastic, and mediated by disruption, fragmentation, and often, contradiction.

Historicity and Ethnography

This shape-shifting quality in the meanings associated with the concept of territory, as a reflection of the multiple Kofán ways of reshaping history, lead us to the concept of historicity that is explored by Hirsch and Stewart (2005) and Whitehead (2003), as an appropriate notion with which to register the significant ways in which the social past and future exist in a kind of present, simultaneous manner (*Ibid*: 160). According to these authors, historicity is different way of understanding people’s relations with memory and time, and hence, crucial for ethnographic analysis aimed to understand historical social processes and the myriad of possibilities in which persons operating under the constraints of social ideologies make sense of the past, while anticipating the future. Historicity, as Hirsch and Stewart point out, “describes a human situation in flow, where versions of the past and future (of persons, collectives or things) assume present form in relation to events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions” (2005:262).

In this vein, De Certeau (1984: 20) underlines the dangers of abstracting historicity from indigenous everyday life, precisely because it removes knowledge from its context of practice, interaction and manipulation, placing it within a new and isolating scientific framework that, ultimately, robs crucial meaning from it. On her part, Rappaport (1988: 719) notes “as it arises in the course of everyday activity, history takes forms that are frequently invisible to the observer because they are

brief, compressed, cryptic, and sometimes do not appear to refer to the past at all". I would like to add that such invisibility of historicity in the context of indigenous territorial analysis derives again from the residual anthropological tendency to disregard paradoxes and contradictions as meaningful elements. This tendency transforms them into 'coherent explainable' elements that fit with synchronic-structuralist anthropological scopes that perceive the world in terms of binary opposites, such as myth and history (Hill, 1988; Harris, 1995; Rasnake, 1988; Silverblatt, 1988; Rubenstein, 2002). Michael Taussig's (1987) has faulted the social scientists for imposing order upon data that has meaning only for westerners steeped in positivism. Whitten, guided by Sahlins' notion of the structure of conjuncture, also insists that "If we are to understand the indigenization of modernity we must move into the deep metaphors of indigeness itself—the *longue durée* undergirding the conjuncture—not transform these systems of signs and symbols into a Western mode" (2008:25).

In recent decades there has of course been a fundamental shift of emphasis, and many anthropologists and historians have turned to the study of colonialism and its impact on how indigenous peoples conceive time and history (Harris, 1995:11). Being deeply influenced by this perspective, I consider the articulation between ethnography and historicity as unavoidable for understanding how territorial histories that people recount are connected with colonialism and present politics. This is what Schapera (1962: 152) calls the "social past", namely, "the political uses to which versions of the past may be put, the communicative forms these histories may take, and the social occasions on which they are disseminated within any particular community" (in Hirsch and Stewart 2005:268). As such, we need a combination of historicity and ethnography to dissect these complex process of the past and future assuming present form; specially if we are to comprehend the ways in which indigenous political views of the territory clutter, reintegrate, and reorder, elements of the past into the present and how these in turn help direct, legitimize, and control diverse (political, ritual or productive) actions around land, resources, and processes of self-representation.

Indigenous historicity will be especially important in postcolonial Amazonia, since within the complex and commonly tyrannical dialogue with the "narrative of the nation" (Bhabha, 1990:309), their history is often denied or transformed into popular stereotypes of either barbarians or noble savages, living in pristine conditions (Torgovnick, 1991, Kirsch, 1997; Serje, 2005; Kuper, 2005). National imaginaries about the Other, or as I call the in chapter 7, the 'Andean Amazon state myths', this narrative of the nation is subject to what Bhabha (1994) has referred to as "a time-lag" (236-56), which means that the imagined unity of the nation can

never catch up with the discrepant shreds and patches of cultural signification produced by its plural people. This asymmetrical relation between the indigenous and the nation-state historical narrative is the engrained contradiction of the postcolonial state formation. In order to guarantee coherence and consolidate its unity, the nation state relies in the contradictory construction of a double time where:

“The people are the historical “objects” of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse of authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past; the people are also “subjects” of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the peoples as contemporaneity” (*Ibid*: 105).

But once again, recognizing native’s alternative forms of historicity to the nation’s history does not imply an absence of indigenous historical accounts, in the sense we usually give to history; neither does it mean that indigenous societies are imprisoned by the ‘machine of myth’” (Fausto and Heckenberger 2007:14). In fact, as Rappaport notes: “When associated with political strategies, oral traditions, rituals and symbolisms, assume an entirely different character to when they are approached simply as myth. While they are practical in that they derive from activities that solve problems on the ground, they accomplish this action by forging a moral link to a distant past” (1998:208). This is the case of Campa’née and the whole piedmont mytho-historical geography- experienced by the Yagé people as a fluctuating and multiple sided history, continuously reformulated because of the new social and political reappropriations; and this, I suggest, is one of the many reasons behind the shape-shifting character of present-day indigenous representations of the territory. From this point of view, indigenous’ perceptions of their territories are not uniform given the multiple ways in which people reconstruct its history, as such, the territory, I contend, is “not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination” (Roseberry 1994:361). The concept therefore, is born from the dynamic politics of history and thus embedded in people’s everyday lives. This is why it can be read from empirical and very politically practical versions as the ones employed by ONIC, OPIAC or AICO indigenous organizations during a moment of crisis (see Introduction) or imaginary, and mythologized accounts, that may appear to outsiders as irrational, contradictory or paradoxical as Taita Cristobal shamanic territory.

My question in this regard is whether that mutability of the *territorio* concept is useful in any sense for indigenous peoples? In the midst of the violence and havoc that prevail in the Putumayo, I believe, it is this shape-shifting character of *territorio* that allows the concept to endure, assimilate and ultimately, reconfigure indigenous relations with external forces determined to dominate and homogenize it. The ambivalent nature of the territory concept 'works' for the Kofán, precisely because of its fleeting meanings, all the more powerful because they are undefined, unfixable and polyvalent, allowing opposition or negotiation in modern changing conditions such as the ones induced by the process of colonization, extractivist economies, the militarization of the landscape, and the state formation process in Putumayo as we shall see in the next chapters.

Rethinking the concept of resistance through 'disordered' memory

Despite the political intentionality inherent to the polysemic character of the *territorio* concept and the non-linear and disordered readings of the past, I have reserved myself from labelling these creative forms of re-appropriation of history and meaning as synonyms of resistance. I am aware of the theoretical "Romance of Resistance" (Abu-Lughod, 1990), whereby "despite the considerable theoretical sophistication of many studies of resistance and their contribution to the widening of our definition of the political, it seems to me that they are ultimately more concerned with finding resisters and explaining resistance than with examining power" (*Ibid*: 41). Such excessive attention to the concept has led to understandings of the ubiquitous power and resistance as the essence of the "micro-fascism of everyday life" (Waltzer, 1986:63), and the fact that the "new functionalism", consists of "translating the apparently trivial into the fatefully political (Sahlins, 1993:17)". Following Michael Brown's concern on the morally guided and theoretical attrition of the concept of resistance, I concur "(...) that the moralism implicit in attributions of resistance, and in agonistic models of culture in general, be brought to bear with a sense of balance and rigor rather than as a form of intellectual mimicry or moral self-validation" (1996:733). Because this postmodern optimistic solution is "informed by explicitly moral sensibility, something largely absent from ethno science, structuralism, and other theoretical fashions that have held sway in anthropology, there is an inexorable tendency to spill over contexts of questionable relevance, since no analyst wishes to be seen as politically naïve or morally insensitive" (*Ibid.*). As such, popular scholarly tendencies assume the concept of resistance as some sort of messianic argument so routinely cited as if it were the panacea to almost every problem that involve unequal relations of power. The problem with this, I believe, is that more often than not, resistance becomes an easy

opt-out for thinkers to describe the world as we would like it to be, rather than as it is.

While I consider the openness of the concept of *territorio* and its history as a creative political weapon in Putumayo, I do not homologate that to a hopeful project of liberation and effective resistance to the ghastly forces of physical and cultural destruction that have long operated in the region for centuries. Peter Gow reaffirms this perspective when discussing the complexities of observing historical agency. “The present study” he writes,

“(…) would have achieved little if all it said was that what Piro people have done, historically, is react to those features of the ongoing consequences of European colonial expansion that have impinged upon them. Instead, it is necessary to demonstrate that the specific form of successive colonial situations arose from within the ways Piro people set about constituting them. This is not because, in the sentimental language of resistance theories, Piro people are not passive victims but active agents. For much of their recent history, Piro people have indeed been victims of exploitation, brutality, and injustice, in situations where they had no say and few means to fight back, and it would be grotesque for me to pretend that things had been otherwise. Instead, the reason why it is necessary to demonstrate that the specific form of successive colonial situations arose from the ways people set about constituting them is because Piro people are made by other Piro people, and have no choice but to constitute the world around them in ways that are intrinsically meaningful to them” (2001: 303).

Avoiding any moral fervour however, I firmly believe that the disordered appropriation of the past embedded in the territory meanings in Putumayo, reflects active biographical and collective ways of processing and reformulating a history that is full of brutal violence and prone to neutralize any account of social history that is framed according to people’s own terms. Such a process helps people, in Gow’s words, “to constitute the world around them in ways that are intrinsically meaningful to them”. While the conscious or unconscious products of such re-appropriative processes may not evidence resistance as such, they nevertheless clearly illustrate that historical agency and its multiple readings of relations of power in colonial and postcolonial contexts do not constitute the simple narrative taught in some schools of the powerful conqueror and the oppressed, passive Indians; neither the romantic opposite, where resistance becomes the writer’s political resource for injecting, depending on the case, false optimism in conditions

of brutality, or complexity by “labelling resistance any ephemeral form of popular culture in contexts of political oppression” (Brown, 1996 : 730).

Furthermore, relations of power operate in a more complex ways since the oppression and imposition of control is not simply the effect of a dichotomous opposition between the power and the powerless (Mbembe, 1992, 2001; Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 2003; Hiddleston, 2009) in the form of missionary-Indians or state-society relation. The relationships between indigenous populations and the missionaries, with all its symbolical, spatial, economic, and political interpenetrations such as Campa'náe and the entire Yagé cultural complex that I will address in following lines, illustrate this point. Hence the difficulty of using resistance as a formula that mechanically explains power exertion and local reactions. But furthermore, this non-dichotomic perception of power relations is especially appropriate at the local Amazonian indigenous scale, where forced imposition of the ways of understanding space occur not only between colonized and colonizer but also within colonized spheres, namely, the communities, settlements or reserves. In upcoming chapters, I will examine instances where contemporary indigenous positions echo colonial alliances with dominant foreigners, such as the oil companies, the guerrilla or drug lords. Power in this perspective, is not only wielded by the state or by the sovereign subject but is produced in much more intricate and localized social systems, and hence the necessity to shift focus from what Mumby (2005) calls the dualistic to a dialectical relationship between control and resistance. Such dialectical understanding of power provides a stronger analytical tool for exploring history, identity formation and territorial disputes, challenging any possible oversimplified vision of ahistorical, passive indigenous people suffering the imposition of an alien history, land despoliation, and forced silencing without any active engagement.

In this chapter I have attempted to show the relation between Kofán complex conceptualizations of time and space within the Taitas mental imagery of Campa'náe, in which colonial Indian-white relations are incorporated producing in turn non-geographical and mythologized territories today. Such an example of the Amerindian capacity to defy history if understood as “the construction of a single totalizing narrative as a succession of events and phases lived by an ethnic group” Menget (1999:153) is indicative of how Amazonian indigenous peoples such as the Kofán construct territories from a non-dichotomic engagement of Spanish colonial relations but rather as contact zones in which subjects' ideologies intersect, and become constituted in and by their relations to each other within asymmetrical relations of power and violence (Pratt, 1992). Contact zones, as I have mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, questions the one-sided imposition paradigm among

colonizers and colonized, dissolving binary models of alterity and introducing ideas of copresence, interaction, enmeshed understandings and practices (*Ibid*: 7), continually reproduced and reformulated through indigenous cultural mechanisms. But before continue exploring the notion of contact zone, which actually guide this entire thesis, let me propose and address two questions behind the whole story of Campa'náe and thus, Kofán intercultural constructions of the territory. Firstly, how was the colonial missionaries-Indian encounter of territorialities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that led to cross-cultural territories such as Campa'náe today? And how could the colonial ideology, with all its anxieties, impositions and violence become ingrained so deeply in peoples' perception of the space to the extent that it survives even today?

Chapter 4

Missionaries and the Disciplinarization of the Landscape

The story of Campa'náe illustrates the multiple ways in which indigenous views of the territory clutter, reintegrate, and leak elements of the Putumayo colonial past into the present, and how these in turn help direct, legitimize, and control diverse (political, ritual or productive) actions around land, resources, and processes of self-representation. The exploration I would like to address in this chapter thus is about the type of mechanisms, techniques and strategies employed by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries to transform indigenous forms of spatial engagement, and therefore territorialization, in the Putumayo-Caquetá regions during the 17th and 18th centuries. And furthermore, what sort of exchanges, what sort of discourses and violence, and shared constructions of meaning by any mode occurred between the colonial missionaries and Indians that led to cross-cultural territories such as Campa'náe today? My intention with this historical analysis of this encounter that unfolded between 1602 and 1790 in the region, is to provide a historical framework with which to better understand the process behind the types of intangible and real territories that exist today in places such as Putumayo. This chapter is henceforth about the role of missions, Pueblos de Indios (Indian villages), and Reducciones³⁶ in transforming native relations with the space through diverse disciplinary mechanisms, which eventually became inscribed in people's landscapes and culture. I selected these particular these imposed forms of settlement because they are crucial for our understanding of the role of space in processes of colonial repression and violence and, more importantly, for the exploration of how those past situations are currently reappropriated and enacted through ritual, political, and shamanic forms of historical agency linked to territory, as the example of Campa'náe stands for.

Early missionizing process

During the Age of Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries), the Spanish Empire underwent a new phase of expansion, mainly political and economic in inspiration, but with religious implications (Lynch, 1999:1). Along the upper Putumayo and Caquetá Basins (see chapter 1, Map.1), first the Jesuits, subsequently the Franciscans and finally the Capuchins, sought to transform indigenous territories through the imposition of modern modes of production, European-rational forms of daily life, and western economical productive relationships with the environment

³⁶ *Reducciones* were urban centers created by Missionaries helped by Spanish colonial authorities through massive, forced resettlement of the indigenous population from diverse ethnic groups.

(Friede, 1947; Bonilla, 1968; Casas Agular, 1999, 2001). Aside from their differences all missionaries' territorialities stressed a similar geopolitical aesthetic, based on a utopian vision of discrete and geometric spaces. In order to consolidate their project, missionaries together with civil authorities, attempted to reorganize the space and people by means of "techniques of power" (Foucault 1984), in ways that dispersed or concentrated individuals and resources and ordered the regimes of everyday life. Following Foucault's perspective on how the power is constructed and disseminated (1972, 1977, 1983). I suggest, drawing on historic evidence, that the missions and pueblos de Indios (Indian villages) founded by the Spanish missionaries were nodes from within which a new identity and territorial configuration was weaved. They served to reorganize and transform space into what would become later a "modern" space, and time into a routinized, repetitive, and internalized set of disciplines and the secularization of practices. Around the world missionary activities have been a crucial factor in the emergence of secularizing realities (Miller, 1970; Viswanathan 1989), largely contributing to the spread of the types of discourses and practices on which, later, the state's identification of ethnic identities and territorial frontiers became based. In this sense, as Pels (1997:172) notes, "religious and secular colonization, therefore, occupy common ground".

Not only in the Amazon piedmont region but also throughout Amazonia, the missionaries' arrival implied profound transformations in people's socio-political, environmental and economic relations, thereby re-shaping previous forms of territorial engagement³⁷. Their aggressive territorialization strategy of imposing missions and supervised villages (Reducciones) for fixing populations into the landscape disrupted the high mobility patterns that have structured the socio ecological relations of many Amazonian societies in pre-Columbian times. Consequently, ancestral regional and extra regional webs of economic and cultural exchange were dismantled (Renard-Casevitz, 1988; Dreyfus, 1992; Ramirez, 1996). The demographic concentration of people enabled the devastating effects of epidemics among several ethnic groups (see Langdon, 2007 for the Amazon piedmont; Whitehead 1993 for Amazonia and Guayana; Chambouleyron et al. 2011 for Brazilian Amazonia), distorting previous mobility and settlement patterns and creating internal conflicts linked to sorcery and war (see Alexiades, 2009:1-43). Concomitantly, many of these missionary villages became areas of refuge for other indigenous people escaping from slave raider's incursions of Hispanic or enemy groups (Santos-Granero, 2009). Ultimately, these centres enabled different forms of multi-ethnic cohabitation that prompted new systems of cultural interpenetration

³⁷ For indigenous-European contacts and intra-communal warfare see Ferguson, 1990; Whitehead, 1988; for indigenous-European contacts and changes in native trade systems and economy see Reeve, 1993

(Taussig, 1987). Furthermore, given that the new territorial configuration led by the missions was intrinsically tied not only to the project of the Catholic Church but also to the forces of colonialism, imperialism, and mercantile capitalism, their actions provided the building blocks for a long-term globalization process of the Amazon (Cushner, 1980,1982; Reeve, 1993). Most colonial missions became secularized during subsequent cycles of agro-extractive development (Alexiades 2009: 21).

In the Putumayo and Caquetá regions, as Lynch (1999) has pointed out, economy, religion, and political violence melt within the colonial territorial discourse since the new frontiers of the empire, or its weaker edges, were usually fortified not only by soldiers but also by priests. In the upper part of the Putumayo-Caquetá regions, this is, the Andean Amazon piedmont, most of the foothills groups were forced to resettle, to pay tribute and were evangelized; yet some others confronted colonization and launched war against the Spaniards, dispersing their settlements and living in unreachable parts of rivers and minor streams in communal houses around a warrior leader (Buenahora, 2001:49). These groups became highly mobile and attacked Spanish villages kidnapping women and killing the Indians who had accepted colonial rule. This process of indigenous' rejection of the landscape-disciplining model was further punctuated by the burning, drowning, dismemberment, and humiliation of individual priests at different point in times (Friede, 1952; Kohn, 2002).

In spite of these physical forms of rejection, there was a parallel process in which colonizer and colonized cosmographies penetrated each other. My use of term 'cosmography' follows Little's (2001:5) own adaptation of a concept originally drawn by Boas. Little defines cosmography as "the collective, historically contingent set of identities, ideologies, and environmental knowledge systems developed by a social group in order to establish and maintain human territory. Cosmographies encompass the symbolic and affective relationship a group maintains with its biophysical environment producing situations of direct conflict, as would be expected from the direct overlap of territorialities" (*Ibid*: 5).

Framed by violence and brutality, the religious, economic, shamanic, medical, and political interactions between missionaries and indigenous peoples, I suggest, led to situations of mutual influence, accommodation, and interpenetration of cosmographies, take again the Campa'náe example or as I shall describe in more detail later the entire Yagé shamanism of the Kofán people. This intercultural system, contact zone, or middle ground, triggered new epistemic approaches to the territory for all parties involved, and new cosmographies and territories continue to emerge to this day in places such as the Putumayo. Again, as Langfur (2006) rightly

emphasizes, this perception should not be taken to indicate an absence of conflict and violence. Indeed, “perhaps the most important feature of this encounter is the insight that extreme violence was itself a form of symbolic communication and material exchange that was key to the way in which ethno-political groupings defined themselves and their relationships with others” (Whitehead, 2008:1).

A short example of this historical violent interaction and current reappropriation might be the current fear of certain Kofán Taitas of the cucos. These are small evil anthropomorphic beings with priest-like features such as long beards, white skin and robes. Cucos live inside the trunks of old trees, attacking persons walking along solitary places, and taking them to live inside the trees. Where, as the old Taitas told, cucos have they worlds. Accordingly, the presence of cucos is used to restrain people circulation in some areas. In this simple story I see Whitehead’s insight on how violence served as a catalyst for processes linked to the construction of intercultural meanings in the Amazon Piedmont. Violence has been one of the main channels of meaning production and circulation between natives and external forces since the missionaries’ arrival through the contemporary age of armed conflict. Hence, while “in many orthodox historical and anthropological accounts violence is pictured as the absence of order, a breakdown in social and cultural functioning” (Whitehead 2008:1), I suggest we approach violence from a different perspective. Historical violence and disorder in Putumayo have not only led to a breakdown in social and cultural functioning but, rather, are themselves forces involved in the creation of spaces of interaction, the circulation of power, and cultural production. The ethnographic case of Campa’náe in the previous chapter, the cucos’ story, and the emerging forms of Yagé ceremonial practices that I would address in following chapters, illustrate how geographies of pain, fear, disease, violence and terror generated by the colonial contact may also create spaces of power and knowledge, thereby imbuing culture with new meanings and practices, and further entwining the powerful with the powerless (Taussig, 1984a, 1984b, 1987; Silverblatt, 1988; Gow, 1993, 1994; Albert and Ramos, 2002). In the same vein, Michael Taussig (1987) analysis of “the culture of terror and the space of death” created in Putumayo during the rubber boom of the late 19th century, points usefully to the way in which violence and terror have profoundly entwining effects on the colonist and colonized cultural structures. Taussig goes back to explore the foundations of the colonial reality that occurred in the New World calling the attention on the reasons behind that Indian and the African became subject to an initially far smaller number of Christians. “Whatever conclusions we draw as to how that hegemony was so speedily effected” he says, “we would be most unwise to overlook or underestimate the role of terror. And by this I mean us to think through terror, which as well as being a physiological state is also a social fact and a cultural construction

whose baroque dimensions allow it to serve as the mediator par excellence of colonial hegemony. The space of death is one of the crucial spaces where Indian, African, and white gave birth to the New World”(*Ibid*: 1).

Violence and terror are in this perspective intrinsically linked with cultural changes, reformulations, and mutual interpretations. Hence for indigenous peoples of Putumayo, enduring the European conquest and colonization, the arrival of guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the state military impositions, these spaces of death, as Taussig suggests, blend as a “common pool of key signifiers or caption points binding the culture of the conqueror with that of the conquered. The space of death is preeminently a space of transformation: through the experience of death, life; through fear, loss of self and conformity to a new reality: or through evil, good” (*Ibid*: 1). And this is precisely what I shall explore when observing Kofán Yagé shamanism, born out of the interethnic contact situation, and nourished by all forms of colonial and postcolonial violence and terror.

The political and social context that opened the way for evangelization

According to Bonilla (2006:57), Hernán Pérez de Quesada arrived in what is known today as the Putumayo³⁸ in 1542. Quesada left Santa Fe de Bogotá in 1541 accompanied by a massive expedition of 240 Spanish and hundreds of Muisca Indians (*Ibid*: 57). The magnitude of the project reflected the stubborn search for glory, honour and the riches of “El Dorado”, supposedly located in some distant Andean-Amazonian corner. The Spanish search for El Dorado was an interesting example of how the action of mythologizing the landscape was not exclusively an indigenous practice. Spaniards also created fantastic visions of the space, derived from mediaeval imaginaries that included dragon-like beasts, satyr-like humans, and in this case, cities of gold. For diverse reasons, indigenous populations reinforced such myths inscribed in the space, bounding systems of thought and creating mutually fed realities about humanity and the landscape.

After facing many predicaments, Pérez de Quesada found the land of the Mocoa people. These people already knew the destructive effects of Europeans. In 1535, the Spanish army led by the conquistador Juan de Ampudia had killed and displaced many of them from the highlands, near the Valley of Sibundoy. Large part of the Mocoas’ population descended to the lowlands seeking for shelter (Ramírez, 1996; Gómez, 2001). After Hernán Pérez de Quesada completed his bloody military sweep

³⁸ The region today recognized by the political geography of Colombia as “Departamento del Putumayo”, belonged in colonial times to the Great Territory of Caquetá whose capital was Mocoa. The department was recognized first under the category of “Intendencia” in 1905 and then became Departamento in 1991.

of the upper Putumayo, these lands were officially claimed for the kingdom of Quito and therefore belonged to the Viceroyalty of Peru. By 1557, the Viceroy Andrés Hurtado de Mendoza, awarded not to Hernán Pérez but Francisco Pérez de Quesada with the governorship of the newly conquered region. That same year the newly elected governor founded the Province of Mocoa, situated in the banks of a small lake with the same name (Casas, 2001:220-224). In parallel with the foundation of Mocoa, the Provinces of Putumayo and Sucumbíos³⁹ were created as part of a regional strategy to control indigenous force of labour and exploit the tropical riches, especially gold (Velasco, 1981). From this point the colonial power made its way, creating new imaginaries of the territory, its riches and savage inhabitants, thus mobilizing human and economic resources to integrate these lands into the crown domains.

Early mechanisms of territorial control and local reactions

Between 1542 and 1563 Spanish colonists settled in Pasto funded various cities in what is today the Colombian southern eastern foothills. The first foundation of Mocoa, which is the capital of the Putumayo Department today, would not last. Like every element of the Putumayo landscape, Mocoa traversed a cycle of destruction and reconstruction fuelled by intermittent Indian revolts. This context of local resistance and violence was largely the direct consequence of the institution of Encomienda⁴⁰, Created first in the Andean highlands and introduced in the lower Amazonian region in 1560, the Encomienda might be seen as the first model of land planning designed outside of the Amazon (see Muratorio, 1991:2). The royal documents clearly stated that the encomienda's main objectives were essentially the creation of villages and the involvement of the local population into the imperial feudal economic system. The encomienda had three main purposes: a) to establish fixed and stable centres of production and consumption b) to promote mineral extraction, and c) to manage the Spanish owned agricultural production (*Ibid*: 2). The encomienda not only imposed an economic model of production and domination of the land and indigenous labour; it also served as a mechanism for regional land-use planning that forced local populations to restructure their social and spatial relations, restricting their mobility and interrupting pre-colonial exchange networks, thus expanding the territorial control of the Crown.

³⁹ Also known as San Miguel de Sucumbíos

⁴⁰ Through the encomienda the Spanish royalty granted rights over land to an individual, the 'encomendero', who in turn could demand tribute from the Indians living in those lands (Renard-Casevitz, 1988; Reeve 1993). Such rights were not transferrable and were valid for a fixed term. An encomendero was legally responsible for the protection and religious welfare of Indians but not for the condition and size of the encomienda when the grant expired. Abuses, mistreatments, and even torture were thus commonplace, especially given the fact that Indians were not considered during much of the colony to have souls and thus be fully human (Londoño, 2012; Adorno, 1988)

Implementing the encomienda was often far from straightforward, however. In spite of the coercive methods of the encomenderos, the region entered into a convulsive period marked by outbursts of violent resistance (Ramirez, 1996; Franco, 2001; Friede, 1952). This, coupled with the relative scarcity of gold surface deposits, the technical impediments of extraction and the difficulties imposed by living in a harsh environment, isolated and distant from the closest cities of Pasto and Popayan, suggests that the administration of the encomiendas was indeed a complicated endeavour that demanded enormous financially uncompensated investments of labour.

In this violent environment, and after regular small attacks, a crowd of angry Mocoa Indians eventually destroyed the nascent city of Mocoa, which by 1561 was a small village of eight hundred Indians and only ten Spanish settlers (Casas, 2001:224). Mocoa like Avila, Archidona and several other colonial towns in the region were destroyed in response to attempts to implement the Encomienda system. Mocoa however, was a crucial geopolitical node within the region to articulate Spanish networks of trade between the cordillera and the lower lands. Therefore, In September of 1562, Mocoa was re-built in a different location by the captain Gonzalo H. De Avendaño. Following orders from the governor of the general province of Popayan, Pedro Agreda, the captain renamed Mocoa as “San Miguel Agreda de Mocoa” (*Ibid*: 224).

The encomienda remained a vulnerable institution during the 17th and 18th centuries since securing the indigenous labour force was increasingly difficult, not only because of the open resistance, but also because of the deadly cycles of epidemics that decimated the native population across western Amazonia (Little 2001:42). Consequently, the high mortality rates and displacement caused by epidemics, combined with the unsuccessful violent methods of the encomenderos to fix and control indigenous populations demanded the use of other strategies of domination and control. This incapability of encomenderos to dominate the Indians opened thus a new opportunity for Catholic missionaries to consolidate their power within the Eastern Provinces, through a system in which a new type of individual could be constructed, watched over and regulated by a range of disciplinary systems built upon the combination of enticement, deceit, and force. This process of surveillance and control, and the strategic negotiation with the colonized via morality as well as politics and culture, set the bases of the Spanish colonizing model for the management of the Putumayo and most of the Amazon region (Goulard, 2010; Londoño, 2012).

The Jesuits and the Eastern Provinces

At the beginning of the 17th century, the legendary Jesuit martyr Father Rafael Ferrer, was designated by the College of Quito -at that time the governing body of all Jesuit activity in this area of the new continent -to carry out the recovery of Mocoa, Sucumbíos and the Putumayo provinces (Franco, 2001; Kohn 2002; Cepek, 2012). In 1602, Ferrer arrived to the territory of the bellicose Kofán with several orders and guidance designed by the College of Quito to definitively install the colonizing model for the control and management of the region. With strong hand and an impressive ability Ferrer became an important figure especially among the A'I Kofán people, supposedly numbering as many as twenty thousand in the seventeenth century (Ferrer, 1995 [1605]: 390). Envisioning a vast indigenous area to implement the missionizing project that ranged from the inter-Andean valleys and hills down to the Amazonian forests below, Ferrer, as indicated by Velasco (1981), instructed the missionaries not to tackle the issue of religion with the "barbarians" until they had fully earned their respect and made them fully dependable. Missionaries were to target the indigenous authorities as their sole and permanent interlocutors; also taking advantage of relations with local authorities to enhance their public recognition so that the local power structure remained strong and useful to the colonial power. These indigenous authorities were explicitly targeted to receive intense religious instruction. After being suitably indoctrinated, such authorities were put in charge of spreading the colonial ideology regarding economic and religious values within their communities (*Ibid.*).

As Stanfield (1998:9) points out, Jesuits missionaries employed the mixed strategy of offering material inducements, most commonly metal tools, with strong doses of violence to concentrate and then indoctrinate Indians. Once they were able to get the Indians into the missions, they relied on the power and prestige of indigenous authorities normally called captains, to cajole or convince their people to stay and work in these new but alien settings. However, in numerous South American lowland societies lacking states or hereditary chieftaincies, as it is precisely the case of the Kofán people, political pre-eminence was established through a complex of magical aggression and cure that pitted rival shamans against each other as poles of faction and leadership formation (Solomon, 1983:413). The Spanish identified that Taitas were the only possible political contact from where to start the missionizing process. And hence, in forest zones bordering the Andes, priests such as Ferrer entitled Kofán shamans with the Quechua term *kuraka*, which the Inca and Spanish governments used to designate state-endorsed ethnic lords or chieftains (Oberem 1971:226; Harner 1972: 77-133; Robinson 1972; Whitten 1976:141-163; Porras 1979:28). This point, as I shall explain in more detail later, is part of the

constellation of political codes and symbols exchanged between Indians and Europeans that structured many of today's indigenous cosmologies in Putumayo.

The Jesuit strategy for territorial control led by Ferrer was therefore to relocate indigenous groups into large, sedentary Reducciones and Pueblos de Indios along the rivers of the region, where the natives were to be evangelized, learn agriculture and give up their so-called savage customs, and in general, become civilized within the European mould of the time (Buenahora, 2001; Little, 2001; Langdon, 2007). Within the first two years after Ferrer's arrival, the Jesuits established a series of small towns along the major rivers of the region. Towns such San Pedro de los Kofanes, and the now mythic Campa'náe, concentrated former mobile A'I Kofán dwellers of the Putumayo into permanent settlements (Vilanova, 1947:24). This iconic priest crossed paths, rivers and jungles within Siona, Inga and Kofán territory congregating dispersed Kofán families "from Duino and Payamino in the north, and Azuela and Aguarico in the south and forming two more settlements: Santa Maria and Santa Cruz. In 1604 they counted 6.500 Christianised Indians, either baptized and neophytes" (Franco, 2001:168). Around 1610 according to Spanish chroniclers, the Jesuits concentrated more dispersed population in the new "cities" of Alcalá of the Golden River also referred to as Alcalá de los Kofanes on the banks of the river Aguarico (Robinson, 1979; Blomberg, 1996).

As the Indians under Spanish rule were forced to live in Pueblos de Indios and work for the settlers in so-called *encomiendas*, previous indigenous relations with the environment and neighboring groups changed. The new pattern restricted the traditional mobility between the Andean Cordillera, the valley and the lowlands that characterized pre-colonial trade and intermediation between regions (Ramirez, 1996; Stanfield, 1998; Gomez, 2001; Renard-Casevitz, 1988, Myers 19818). The increased sedentarization disrupted on the one hand the vertical way in which Andean-Amazonian groups used their territories based on different altitudinal levels (Serje, 2005a: 86). On the other, sedentarization affected the complex and fluid network of trade and exchange that articulated distant ecological zones, heterogeneous languages and distinct socio-political (Ramirez, 1996; (on the importance of sedentarization as a state and missionary objective, see Rival 1993:136)).

As occurred elsewhere in colonial America during the 17th and 18th centuries, in the Amazon piedmont, direct contact with Europeans brought with it both disease and new highly desired goods, The initial process of depopulation caused by disease epidemics transformed indigenous spatial distribution and severed pre-Columbian indigenous trade relations (Ramirez, 1996). However, the subsequent introduction

of European goods by Jesuit missionaries created other interregional and regional trade linkages not only in the foothills but throughout Western Amazon. As Reeve (1993:108) points out, “drastic population reduction would have caused a breakdown in trade if it had not been for the introduction of novel European goods”. As such, epidemics fostered displacement, dispersal and mobility while new trade linkages were maintained precariously. This juncture allowed the continuity of intertribal connections, punctuated however by the destabilizing effect of the Spanish forced labour system, particularly the *encomienda*, which regularly stimulated the flight of Indian population (Bonilla, 1968; Uribe, 1980; Gomez, 2001).

Franciscans’ power and territorial expansion

In 1632, the rebellious Eastern Provinces were assigned to the Spanish Franciscans of Quito for the Jesuits had lost most of its territorial control (Arcila, 1950). After requesting the joint support of the ecclesiastical authorities in Quito and Popayan, the Franciscan project penetrated into the foothills and lowland’s jungles of what is today the Putumayo Department (Casas, 2001). The entry point and what would become for a long time the front door and required stop for subsequent missionaries, was the Kofán settlement Ecija de Sucumbíos located on some point of the San Miguel River (Buenahora, 2001:48). Ecija was a nodal point, allowing missionaries to access and control the rest of the Eastern provinces and settlements located along the Putumayo River (see Pineda and Llanos, 1982). Gradually, Franciscans established several small *Reducciones* on the banks of the Putumayo River, in which Catholic faith was imparted and the Indian work exploited. By 1693, twenty-eight missions or towns had been established in the Putumayo (Stanfield, 1998: 9). At this point, the Franciscan territoriality extended not only to the Putumayo River, but also had reached the banks of the Caquetá River (Casas, 2001: 220). In 1695 the Order had full authority over the missions of the great Caquetá and Mocoa provinces, controlling the territories of *the Neguas, Caguies* and some *Coreguaje* settlements (*Ibid*: 220-221). Despite the distance and the impossibility of the missionaries to found Indian villages in more distant areas, they managed to establish precarious relationships with nowadays extinct groups without proper ethnolinguistic classification⁴¹. This phase was brought to a halt in 1721 by an Indian rebellion in defense of polygamy, during which six missionaries were killed. By 1745 the Franciscans had recovered and now administered ten mission stations in the Caquetá and nine in the Putumayo (Lynch, 1999:1). The Franciscan territorial regime expansion throughout the Caquetá and Putumayo region was contested at the same time by peoples such as the *Payugage, Andakis, Yaguarsonga Guaques,*

⁴¹ For instance the Ayamas, Zaibaras, Ologuajes, the Siamecos, Zinjés, Ziroquies, Venuyares Bitomees, Ibicurulos, Curusaguas, Masasees, Zensetaguas, Allamas, Taumeas and Zorimanes (See Franco, 2012).

Coreguajes Macaguajes and other rebel nations that joined a dispersed force around the region killing Franciscan friars all around the western Amazon region until 1790 (Arcila, 1950; Bonilla, 1968; Lynch, 1999; Casas, 2001).

During the second half of the 18th century the heightened revolutionary circumstances and strong indigenous resistance, together with the lack of economic and technical support from the ecclesiastical authorities located in Quito and Popayan impeded the Franciscans to continue expanding the system of missions and Reducciones. The lack of support evinced the Spanish disinterest in a land that proved not only difficult to conquest but also becoming a terrible investment after the gold mines were depleted (Stanfield, 1998; Casas, 1999, Buenahora, 2001). What used to be mythologized landscapes of wealth and riches became more and more a deception for the crown and hence its increasing indifference towards the missionaries' claims.

Disciplining the landscape

Missions, Reducciones and Pueblos de Indios, I argue, were effective in constructing new forms of indigenous territorial perception for they acted as systems that distributed, fragmented and organized indigenous space and time through what has been appropriately named by Foucault (1978, 1997) as "the capillaries of power". This is, power that stretches into the smallest and most private aspects of life. In these systems, also following Foucault, the colonial biopower (power that controls the way people live their lives as physical entities, through hygiene, public health, formal education), attempted to construct a specific type of individual. The concept of biopower however, is opposed to "sovereignty," a form of control with a longer history that operates negatively through processes of restriction and removal (e.g., of property, of taxes, and of life itself). Biopower, in contrast, is productive in that it functions positively through knowledge, management, and formation of the totality of human life. In addition, the system is guided by diverse mechanisms to measure, calculate and rationally order all aspects of life (governmentality). I will use in this sense, the concept of biopower and governmentality as the pivotal elements of both Jesuits and Franciscans to dominate not only by force but through much more subtle techniques, the rebellious Indians of the Putumayo-Caquetá regions. Accordingly, I sustain, that biopower and governmentality were materialized in a set of practices such as religious teaching, demographic and settlement planning, massive involvement in colonial education, dressing codes, time schedules, and family values, together with a strict control of economic relations -including productive processes and trade systems-, all of them spatially concentrated in or articulated with missions, pueblos de indios and Reducciones. The extended control of this

system set the missionaries in a special position at the juncture of colonial technologies of domination and self-control” (Pels, 1997:172).

Hence, it is precisely in the institutionalization of these technologies of control both directed to individuals and collectivities where we find part of the explanation behind the deep penetration of the missionary ideology beyond the use of violence and fear that explains its current emergence in new cultural and territorial reinterpretations of the pasts such as Campa'náe. In this regard the first inevitable procedure in order to control indigenous populations was to concentrate them. During the first years of presence in the Putumayo as such, the Jesuits were diligent in their evangelical and missionizing efforts for in a short period of time, several native groups previously dispersed in numerous scattered locations joined missionary networks, mainly attracted by material enticements such as machetes, pots, mirrors and fishing hooks (Buenahora, 2001:55). After being concentrated in missions, indigenous peoples had to rearticulate their ways of engaging spatiality for their long houses or dispersed settlements were no more the main axis of social life. In this sense, as Peter Gow suggest for the Bajo Urubamba region in Amazonian Peru:

“Missions transformed the large riverine settlements of indigenous Amazonian peoples into the first “cities”. They introduced the spatial hierarchy that still characterized the region, with the centre controlled by the religious authorities of the mission order and by much less prominent white civil authorities. Around the mission were the barrios of the Indian converts, and beyond them, in the forest, the pagan Indians who refused mission life” (1994:106).

The architecture of towns was advantageously for priests as a measure that allowed discipline and surveillance by concentrating apparently disconnected people into a bounded geographical place. Hence, all towns were built according to a similar organization of space around the main Plaza (square) or Centro. In the very exposed middle of the plaza instruments of corporal punishment such as human yokes and flagellation logs where located (Aprile-Gnisete, 1991). On one visible side of the square, they ordered the construction of the Christian church or temple. This was built off the ground so that it could be better seen from everywhere. Next to the church was to be built the rectory. On both sides of the temple, government offices and other civil institutions as well as the residences of the main civil authorities were placed. These places were organized through straight roads with houses built at regular intervals, all oriented towards the central square in front of the port (Negro 1999). Within the towns, the improvement of production would take place

following a strict re-organization time and activities by means of routinized tactics of authority many of them guided by the sound of bells such as the one in Campa'née town.



Figure 4. The town of Colón (Upper Putumayo) Founded by the Capuchin Father Fidel de Montclar in 1916 following the same spatial organization employed by Jesuits and Franciscans three hundred years before (CEPAC, 1916⁴²)

The bell's sound meaning thus, seems to be directly associated with the strict regulation of time. In the same fashion as Rubenstein (2001:273) has described for Missions in Ecuador, a fixed part of the day was spent in study, a fixed part working in the gardens. It was also represented spatially, by moving students from dormitory to chapel to classroom to dining room (*Ibid*: 273). Today, following the colonial Spanish plan of a town organized around a plaza, all indigenous houses face not the main square, but an open soccer field.

The concentration of Kofán people

Recognizing the importance of the works of Juan Friede (1952), Sergio Ortiz (1954), Scott Robinson (1979), Mario Califano and Juan Ángel (1995), Miguel Angel

⁴² (Capuchin Provincial Archive of Catalonia, Putumayo mission Photographic archive

Cabodevilla (1996), Eduardo Kohn (2002), and Michael Cepek (2012) in gathering and synthesizing the Kofán history, it is surprisingly to note the lack of information about the Kofán before the mid-twentieth century. Taking into account the scant ethnographic and archaeological information about Kofán settlement patterns from both Colombia and Ecuador⁴³, the available information indicates that Kofán peoples in pre-Columbian times were nuclear-family units with highly mobile patterns (Kohn, 2002). Archaeological data of the Valle del Guamuez and San Miguel region is particularly scarce. However, the works of Maria Victoria Uribe (1980) held in the heart of the Kofán territory in Colombia, that is the middle valley of the Guamuez River, tacitly⁴⁴ support the idea of the Kofán as a highly mobile group if not seminomadic. Despite most of the archaeological research in the area focuses on the interethnic Andean Amazonian relations of exchange, the outcome of these studies suggest that the only riverine settlements with evidence of dense population along the Guamuez were temporal; and very likely, given the superficial location of the rests, belong to more recent periods” (Uribe, 1980:260-261).

Confirming evidence of Uribe’s archaeological conclusions about the Kofán highly mobile family behaviour came also from the fact that no actual cases of Kofán malocas or long houses of any kind have been reported in chroniclers or missionaries’ writings during the 17th and 18th centuries; in contrast to diverse accounts of this period that commonly report this type of settlement pattern for other neighboring groups (Renard-Casevitz, 1988; Stocks, 1983; Radding, 2005; Arboleda, 2004). Thus, although the Colombian historian Juan Friede (1952) uncovered evidence of large Kofán villages along the San Miguel River in the 18th and 19th centuries -which I suggest were the vestiges of the Jesuit and Franciscan missions and pueblos de indios- I also believe, following Kohn’s investigation, that Kofán population of the 17th seem to have comprised a ‘loose nation’ “(...) that shared the same language and united under common leaders during crises” (Ferrer, 1995 [1605]: 401); (Velasco 1979 [1789]: 257-8); (Ordoñez de Cevallos, 1989 [1614] in Kohn, 2002: 431).

These data must be interpreted with caution since it requires much more research, nonetheless it certainly does suggest the possible absence of steady and densely

⁴³ Mario Califano and Juan G. Ángel mention at the introduction of their book (1995) on Kofán myths: “the missionaries disarticulated the big families of the “malocas”, establishing settlements constituted by single-family houses around a square and a Church”. However, there is no supporting data for this assertion regarding the specific Kofán case. It seems more a general introduction, with not too much detail upon the Ethnohistory of the group. In this sense, the comment could be applied to all the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

⁴⁴ Uribe’s archaeological research (1980) is intended to prove the complex economic and cultural network that connected the Andes with the Amazon. Her objective is not the study of regional population densities or settlement patterns. However I use her general comments on this regard to support my argument. It is very important thus to underscore the inexistence of hard archaeological data for the Kofán case.

populated Kofán settlements when the Jesuits and Franciscans arrived. It is therefore likely that Kofán families in Putumayo were numerous but dispersed following a family-household pattern within the region of the Guamuez, San Miguel and Aguarico Rivers, reaching mountainous regions as far as Oyacachi in present Ecuador (Velasco 1979 [1789]: 257). This model suggest that pre-missionary Kofán families lived in the same fashion as some of them did after the missionaries withdraw from their territories and before the process of land encroachment derived from the oil economy during the 1970s decade. This is, as mobile family units with sporadic encounters between friends or relatives for hunting, gathering, and shamanic exchanges as some of the testimonies I shall present in the following chapter may be indicative of. Furthermore, intermittent contact with groups from the highlands such as Ingas and other nowadays-extinct groups, as part of a very complex trade network (Ramirez, 1996) were common too.

Yet, in sum, I have not been able to find ethnohistorical evidence of pre-Columbian Kofán longhouses or extensive family cohabitation in missionaries or colonial agent's reports, letters, or accounts, in fact very common for their neighbouring groups, such as the Siona, Inga and Coreguajes. The absence of steady settlements suggests a different form of Kofán territorialization from its neighbours the Siona for instance, in spite that they share several cosmological aspects associated with the Yagé ritual, agricultural production and medical practices. Consequently, it is plausible to say that the Kofán mobile settlement pattern was drastically affected by the forced concentration. This affectation will be more explicit in the next chapter when I address how these changes of the Kofán traditional forms of settlement had significant influence in the ways and contents of Yagé shamanism as practiced today by Kofán shamans.

I would like to underscore the fact that my theory about the Kofán settlement pattern change must not be consider as a complete transformation since many Kofán Indians consistently abandoned the missions or actually never visited them, preserving thus the atomized settlement pattern in the rainforest. Furthermore, fleeing and disbanding has probably been the most common Indian strategy to avoid the impacts of colonial slavery, epidemics and violence (Alexiades, 2009: 10). As such, many Kofán families sought to escape from the missions by increasing their mobility and penetrating deeper into the rainforest (Velasco 1979 [1614]; Ordoñez de Cevallos, 1989; Ferrer, 1995 [1605]).

This is the reason why, I believe, in 1907, a century and a half after the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries abandoned these territories, the explorer Walter E. Hardenburg travelling down the Putumayo River found Kofán families living

scattered in small, dispersed settlements about two days' journey apart. "They had but recently established themselves here" he wrote at one landing point, "abandoning their village on the other bank of the river on account of a severe epidemic that had broken out among them and killed nearly half their number" (Hardenburg 1921: 92 in Wasserstrom et al. 2011). This dispersed settlement pattern was reinforced again after a measles outbreak in 1912 that virtually ended missionary efforts in the upper Putumayo. At the early twentieth century, the Capuchins built three missions in the Putumayo, San Miguel and Aguarico rivers territory, hoping to "reduce" and civilize dispersed Kofán and Siona groups. At Puerto Asís, they organized boarding schools for native children. But their project ended abruptly in 1923, when a visiting friar brought measles that ravaged the Indians (Robinson 1979).

According to Alba Moya (2000), "the Kofán abandoned San Miguel el Nuevo, founded in 1918 at the mouth of the Rio Teteyé, and fled once again to isolated areas. Most of them went to live along the Aguarico and other remote spots on the Rio San Miguel and Guamués" (Wasserstrom et al. 2011:425-426). In fact, Milciades Chaves and Juan Friede found evidence in 1945 of this "vestigial" disbanded pattern of settlement differing from the demographic concentration presented by other indigenous peoples of the region including missionized Kofán. Chaves wrote on his report that the Siona Indians live grouped while the Kofán and Inga are dispersed. Accordingly, the author name Kofán inhabited areas rather than contained places of settlement such as: "the banks of the Guamuez River, from Luzon banks until some kilometres above San Antonio; in the San Miguel River, around fifteen kilometres above Santa Rosa, and some others in the confluence of the Putumayo and San Miguel River" (Chaves, 1946).

Chaves study seems consistent with previous Father Ferrer's accounts of the difficulties of grouping Kofán families from Duino and Payamino in the north, and Azuela and Aguarico in the south; and also with Garcia's (1985:63-70) studies of Spanish chroniclers in 1610 about the Jesuit's efforts to concentrate Kofán dispersed population in the new "cities" such as Alcalá of the Golden River, located nearby the area where Chaves held its ethnologic research almost four centuries after.

But concentration was only part of the process. It was also necessary for the missionary system of landscape disciplinarization to create boundaries. In this regard, Santos Granero suggests in his analysis of the relation between Andes and Amazonia, that boundaries and differentiated spaces are "reinforced through an opposition to what is perceived to be, and constructed as, non-social spaces, namely the forest, the desert, the cold mountain regions, or any other environment thought

of as the realm of other, different beings. Characterizing their inhabitants as non-human or barbarian through processes of “othering” reinforces the non-sociality of these spaces” (2002:546). This is why, I believe, that missionaries relied on a practice that was not altogether unfamiliar to locals, and which amounted to a ‘sacralisation’ of geography aimed to separate and classify the already disciplined spaces. The missionaries implemented thus some existing indigenous spatial rules and symbols related to the landscape in order to turn it into a ‘holy space’ in catholic terms. For instance, embedding a cross in the middle of the towns to affirm the spaces that were ripped from the evil’s domain became an important practice. In this regard Father Fray Anguita wrote in 1632 that: “(...) the chief Copaya of the Seños province (currently part of the Amazon piedmont region), hearing of the cross of Christ, raised its own in the square of his people, which was the sign of land possession” (Anguita [1632] in Arcila, 1950: 358). In the same fashion as the Copaya indigenous peoples, many other groups adopted the use of gigantic crosses for their own magical protection against enemies and malign forces lurking around their settlements (*Ibid*: 358).



Figure 5. “Mission’s chapel and cross in Kofán Village, Putumayo” (Friede, 1945)⁴⁵

Sacralising the landscape with massive talisman-crosses was thus a new practice in the process of changing the emotional links between people and their land. That is, the production of locality “as a structure of feeling” (Appadurai 1998: 181). It is noteworthy that such process was so deeply internalized by Kofán peoples, that

⁴⁵ Friede, Juan. 1945 FG-2855. Capilla misionera: cruz y casa de misión en el Putumayo. Instituto Colombiano De Antropología e Historia ICANH.

today, in several of their settlements such as the Afilador-Campoalegre reserve, an enormous cross stands in the middle of the community. I found fascinating the use of crosses embedded in the space for it surprise me how powerful this symbol became among indigenous peoples of the piedmont that it could actually cultural and ontologically separate the evangelized town's of 'people' and the wilderness' savages or '*aucas*' which is the term employed by missionaries and then Indians for non-evangelized people. But furthermore, because the magical and political separation of the 'holy-domestic' town and the 'untamed-devil's wilderness', marked with the visible central cross, introduced a mechanism for land planning through which the idea of land as private property -a concept thus far inexistent for indigenous peoples- was established for the houses and plots articulated around the cross or central square.

This model of urban land planning relying on European conceptions of the space, that is the architecture of reticular paths, central squares, and religious and political buildings located in the middle of towns was partially institutionalized, not only in the Amazon piedmont but also in the rest of the colonial Spanish territories throughout the 17th century (Aprile-Gnisset, 1997).



Figure 6. "Rectangular indigenous village (Siona-Kofán)" (Cháves, 1945)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cháves, Milciades. 1945. Aldea indígena (Siona-Kofán) de plan rectangular. Instituto Colombiano De Antropología e Historia ICANH.

However, as Elden (2012) suggests, those architectural principles were developed for European cities, and not for the tropics "(...) in which only recommended corrections and compensations to matters such as climate and geology that are outside of human control could be made (*Ibid*: 245)" Consequently, the application of these modern principles, expressed through urbanism in Amazonian missions and towns created conditions of overcrowding that favoured the already mentioned spread of epidemics, killing its inhabitants and dispersing diseases that wiped out distant populations (for a review of sources see Newson, 1998:42-63).

It was not only the imposed division and reclassification of the space that changed indigenous relations with their territories, but also the priests' strategic mechanisms to involve indigenous peoples in the governance of such new ways of territorialization. Example of this is the annually elected indigenous "Governor", "Captain" or "*Cuaraca*" that abided the missionary orders and tasks, watching over people's behaviour and deciding over labour division (Uriarte, 1986:175-176). These authorities were delegated with tasks of control and disciplinarization such as: to give good example and be in charge of the church cleanliness. They must also ring the bell - that powerful sign of authority that still resonates in Kofán Yagé visions and dreams - in the correspondent days, and to be sure that the people pray together or punishments were brutally exerted (Casas, 2001). Governors, Captains and Curacas had to ensure that no one left the town; they had to report the sick and new births; and make sure "that the doctrine pervades everyday but also during the holidays, processions and dances" (Uriarte, 1986:179-180). Indigenous governors as well, must work hand-in-hand with the missionaries to establish productive systems, not merely to sustain the economic life of the missions and towns but also to guarantee the geographical fixation of people.

This is largely why, I suggest, mission's productive systems introduced cattle breeding and foreign domestic animals to the missionary economy around 1750 for this productive system hampered people's former mobility. Father Juan de Santa Gertrudis (1956) reports how father José Carvó introduced to the Amazon piedmont, from the city of Pasto and through the town of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, more than 23 bovines in 1752. He also informs about the introduction of goats that have been brought from the Gran Pará (*Ibid*: 260). Santa Gertrudis himself recounted how his painstaking trip was a prodigious effort of mendicancy and transportation for this purpose: (...) "at San Agustín his Indian drovers had to open a road through the jungle to Caquetá, where he counted 357 head of cattle and 830 sheep, for distribution to the various mission stations" (Lynch, 1999:19). Mission's cattle breeding was popular but hardly constituted any important source

of income for the missionaries (Lippy, 1992) yet, it transformed both landscapes and the social relations encompassed in them. Indigenous people started to live in or close to the missions, working for the priests in cattle breeding activities such as cutting down the forest in order to have pastures for the animals. As such, it is plausible to think, I believe, that cattle breeding reinforced the separation between the untamed and evil's wilderness and the civilized clean spaces characterized by organized towns and pastures, naturalizing among indigenous peoples a dichotomic landscape. This point is certainly speculative and suffers from a lack of data to back it up, and hence, it certainly requires further research. However, I would like to suggest that in the same way that Catholic crosses embedded in the middle of Indian towns affirming the spatial colonial domains, it is possible that cattle became a symbol of identity differentiation between the civilized Indians and the pagan dwellers of the forest for it created two different socio ecological domains.

Consequently, the forest as a "theatre of a subtle sociability" (Descola 2005) - meaning all the complex networks of socio-ecological relationships with forest beings and sites which are central for Amerindians cosmologies (Van Der Hammen, 1991; Descola and Pálsson, 1996; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Descola, 2005; see also chapter 6) - changed with the introduction of cattle. In order to obtain what people required from the forest it was not necessary anymore "to tame, seduce and coerce a host of leafy, furry or feathery beings, that only differ from humans by the variety of their appearances and by their lack of articulated language" (Descola, 2005: 23)". But it was knowledge, European knowledge upon animal management to be more precise, what provided the key language, within this new form of territorialization, to interact with the environment. Accordingly, indigenous peoples learned this new language in the form of cattle breeding-knowledge and techniques brought by missionaries, replacing the old codes of communication with those beings and entities, so devilish in the eyes of the priests, with domestic practices to produce milk and meat in regions such as the upper and middle Putumayo and Caquetá regions. The important point here thus, is that priests introduced a foreign form of knowledge in order to change social and productive relations, which was certainly internalized by Indians and then reproduced by them. And this is precisely how biopower works, not through coercion but through the adoption of the power by the downtrodden subject.

Finally, I would like to mention that the missionaries "art of government"-and this is in Foucault's vision "the conduct of conduct" (1991) was furthermore enforced through diverse mechanisms to measure, calculate and rationally order all aspects of indigenous lives (governmentality). This is illustrated in the censal reports required by the Spanish Crown as part of the payment procedure of the priests. The

bureaucratic process to access such payments demanded the missionaries to certify the Colegio de Misiones (Mission's College⁴⁷) that they had been successful in the process of expanding the colonial regime. As any bureaucratic procedure it required to present the paperwork to prove the annual accomplishment of tasks. These documents had to provide information on the foundation of towns and the consolidation of their economic systems, but also collect and systematize information about the population concentrated within towns, Reducciones and missions (Casas, 2001:220). Census, measures, categories, and quantitative data in general, fed the missionaries' reports (Casas, 1999, 2001). Those documents, despite their simplicity and lack of concrete information (*Ibid*: 220), expressed a new form of government characterized by the employment of practices concerning the administration of life, with particular emphasis on demographic measurements for controlling purposes. Such mechanisms, I believe, are further examples of biopolitics as well, for they were developed to "rationalize problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birth-rate, longevity, race" (Foucault, 1997:202). The new reports embodied thus a new form of introduced bureaucracy, exposing how the early biopolitical processes born in Europe were awkwardly transplanted onto the new colonial soil.

In 1759, the Jesuits were expelled from the Portuguese territories, an example that was followed by the French in 1764 and the Spanish in 1767 (Little 2001:20). The Franciscans were next; at the end of the 1790s decade they have completely abandon the Putumayo. But the effect of their governmentality and biopower mechanisms are more than alive today within people, such as the Kofán, territorial perceptions and social memory.

For this research, I adopted two methodological strategies to understand Kofán constructions of the territory. Firstly to review as many as possible documents on their history, which are in fact very limited. The second step was to enquire ethnographically about how Kofán individuals understand and experienced such history. The first step required an historical approach, which I have provided in this chapter about the mechanisms, techniques and strategies employed by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries to transform indigenous forms of spatial engagement. Now, I would like to address the second step, this is, to present the ethnographic data that shows how social memory about colonial encounters is created and re-created by different generations of people in the face of changing cultural encounters (High, 2009: 720). In the next chapter thus, I explore possible links between the

⁴⁷ During the 18th century, Western Amazonian missions operated under the orders of hierarchically higher missionary headquarters such as the *Colegio de Misiones of Popayan* located in Andean cities.

missionaries system of landscape disciplinarization already explored, and contemporary Kofán Yagé⁴⁸ shamanism in Putumayo and its implications for current territorial perceptions.

Chapter 5

“The Wild Mass”

Historical Nature of Shamanism and Colonial Contact Zones

In this chapter I would like to propose some tentative ethnographic connections between the missionary’ model of disciplining the landscape explored in chapter 4, and the current Kofán Yagé⁴⁹ ritual in Putumayo, by suggesting some ways through which several elements of such model might have been adopted, transformed and subverted. Hence, it is about the symbolic process that accompanies colonial violence as intrinsic part of intercultural contact zones, and the processes that have led to contemporary forms of shamanism and indigenous territorial perceptions in the Colombian Andean - Amazon piedmont. Again, I am following Michael Taussig’s (1984a, 1987) idea that violence and terror are crucial drivers of cultural change, reproduction, and mutual interpretations of the colonist and colonized cultural structures. Thus, within “spaces of death”, as Taussig suggests, readings of the Other blend as a common pool of key signifiers or caption points binding the culture of the conqueror with that of the conquered. I argue in this sense, that the material exchanges and cultural interpenetration during centuries of interactions between missionaries and indigenous populations have been crucial in molding current styles of shamanism among the Kofán and other groups in the Colombian Andean Amazon piedmont. Certainly, the missionary –Indian encounter is one among many events explored in this thesis with direct influence in processes of indigenous cultural transformation and shamanism. My particular interest in this contact zone nonetheless, comes from the fact that the product of this interaction is still palpable as a subtle, yet forceful and eminently political intertwining of the memories of the victors with those of the vanquished (Taussig 1987:375); and this formula of Indian

⁴⁸ Yagé in Colombia or Ayahuasca in the rest of Western Amazon countries is a sacred brew that has a long history of ritual use among indigenous groups of the Upper Amazon. It is made from the stem of the ayahuasca vine (*Banisteriopsis caapi*, or in Quechua, “the vine of the ancestors”) and the leaves of either the chacruna (*Psychotria viridis*) or chagropanga (*Diplopteryx cabrerana*).

⁴⁹ Yagé is a plant-based beverage prepared with the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine. It is either mixed with the leaves of dimethyltryptamine (DMT)-containing species of shrubs from the genus *Psychotria* or with the leaves of the *Justicia pectoralis* plant, which does not contain DMT. This sacred brew has been at the center of social practices among Amazonian indigenous peoples. Best known by its Kechwa name, ayahuasca (aya – spirit, huasca – vine) —literally “spirit vine” or the “vine of the dead”— this drink has been used by Amazonian peoples for myriad purposes; healing, divination, spirituality, emesis, purging, warfare, and social reproduction.

reappropriation of colonial memories would be present alongside the Putumayo ethnic history.

My argument in this chapter is largely indebted to some ethnographic works developed during the last three decades of Amazonian anthropology (Langdon, 1979, 1991, 2007a, 2007b; Taussig, 1984a, 1984b, 1987; Gow, 1994). I consider them as probably the most insightful explorations of the complex historical processes with direct influence on how Yagé shamanic practices have been changing according to circumstances of contact, particularly in hectic contexts of violence. Accordingly, these works have unpacked and cast light on this wide and complex theme of shamanism, cultural exchange and colonial encounters.

Michael Taussig's exploration of colonialism, curing practices and sorcery in Putumayo (1987) is an insightful example of the interpenetration of the imaginaries of colonizer and colonized. The extensive work of Jean E. Langdon has also contributed to a large extent for our knowledge and better understanding of the indigenous interethnic dynamics related to shamanism in Putumayo. Langdon (1981) explores how the artefacts and supernatural knowledge associated with the Yagé complex were traded throughout the lowland areas of the Putumayo and Caquetá rivers of Colombia; the Aguarico River and its tributaries in Ecuador; as well as the adjacent Colombian highlands in pre-Columbian and colonial times. Focused on the Siona and Sibundoy people mainly, Langdon has expanded this framework tracing Yagé shamanic and healing practices until more recent times as a form of dynamic network associated with political contexts and contemporary forms of indigenous self-representation (1991, 2006, 2007). In the Amazon context, where situations of contact and exchange between different peoples have been occurring through history, Calavia Sáez (2011) suggests that the ayahuasca "is a type of alloscope, if this is what we want to call an imaginary instrument capable of producing understandable images of the Other – be the Other cosmological or sociologic – this way giving a cause and a key communication" (141). Working with Piro people in Peru, Peter Gow (1994) examines the formation of present-day "ayahuasca shamanism as a system of knowledge developed in colonial towns and Catholic missions in the 1600's by those Amazonian peoples struggling against colonialism. The author propose that Yagé shamanism was regionally spread by the impacts of the rubber economy in the transition from the 19th to 20th century, and then consolidated in contemporary urban areas. Gow does not claim that shamanism did not exist prior to colonialism, only that its current form cannot be understood outside of the colonial context. That is, current ayahuasca shamanism is not a creation of the colonizer; rather, it is a response of the colonized (Rubenstein, 2002:50). Gow has clearly acknowledged the lack of data in his own work to further

substantiate his argument, calling thus for deeper and extensive research in this regard.

Turning now to the Putumayo region, the next lines are intended to complement the debate on Yagé shamanism, cultural exchange and colonial encounters with some ethnographic insights about potential relations between missionizing and territorialization historic processes during 17th and 18th centuries and current Kofán Yagé shamanism. Like Gow, I do not pretend to offer conclusions on this matter, but rather to prompt more questions around the mutability of indigenous historical knowledge and its capacity to be enacted in present cultural forms. It is therefore an attempt to “imbue historiography with ethnographic insight” (Salomon, 1999: 19). This micro- historical analysis thus, is an exercise to underscore the necessity to understand the Putumayo territory and its peoples, as a zone of intercultural contact where differences are worked through political, ritual, economic and violent practices, forming thereby systems of material and symbolic inter-dependence with long lasting cultural effects.

Old Indian stories in the Valle del Guamuez and San Miguel: “El Yagecito nos lo mandó mi Taita Dios” (The Yagé was sent by my Taita-god)

Without much observation, Yagé shamanism in upper and middle Putumayo today clearly reveal the adoption of several colonial-catholic tropes such as the ritual use of candles, mirrors, the virgin Mary or saint’s images, small swords, crucifixes, songs, and the use of incense resins in the European religious fashion. This is not recent and references to these practices date back to the arrival of Father Ferrer to Kofán territory in 1602. Eduardo Kohn (2002) notes that:

“By the beginning of the seventeenth century, montaña [piedmont] people such as the Kofán were beginning to adopt a much larger range of Catholic icons and understandings. In 1603, when Ferrer had just begun his missionary work among the supposedly unpacified Kofán, he was surprised to find a genuine, uncoerced interest in the new religion. Ferrer discovered that several of the Kofán lords had already been baptized elsewhere and had already taken pains to bring an image of the Virgin Mary to their settlement” (*Ibid*: 555).

Since colonial times, Catholic elements such as statues, paintings and bells have enriched Kofán cosmology (Borman, 2009); and all these symbolic elements have been charged with multiple meanings and purposes either for healing or sorcery. However, there are other aspects of the Yagé rituals, related to the contact zone with

Catholic missionaries, which have not been treated in much ethnographical detail. In order to illustrate these aspects let me start with some ethnographic fragments that condense what I have discussed over time with A'I elderly shamans, which might be helpful for exploring the contemporary Yagé ritual as the ongoing process of a long lasting contact zone between indigenous peoples and the missionaries' project.



Figure 7. The esteemed Kofán elders (dateless picture)⁵⁰

Taita Cristobal:

Previously, no! ... Who had 'U'fa tsau' (ceremonial house to drink Yagé) like this? No one ... they (the elders) went out to drink Yagé alone, in the forest. Well, sometimes they sought to drink with old already known Curacas, but normally they drank alone. And before, if they wanted to visit others, they had to go far away, days of walking and canoeing.

Doña Martina:

My daddy, he drank only in his house. Not like this U'fa tsau, very pretty and well organized. He enjoyed to drink like the very elders, so he had a very tiny house in the monte (wilderness, forest), and he knew how to go there, in his

⁵⁰ CPAC (Capuchin Provincial Archive of Catalonia, Putumayo mission Photographic archive).

house; but solito (alone), always solito. That house was little, very little before. So the elders, yes, they had small places to drink Yagé too, but just a little wood house, like a wood room rather, and there each family with their casita de remedio (Yagé House) close to home, use to drink Yagecito.

Instead, my uncle Querubin⁵¹, since he is a Curaca like the Mayores from other times, he decided to build a big U'fa tsau, so as this, with a kitchen, an altar, and all the Kofanes went there, to that nice house that was different. And they use to plant sugarcane, pineapple, and tobacco... but not my father's 'U'fa tsau, neither my uncle's was like that, with wood tables, no! Before, the floor was pure earth.

“So when did they begin to have U'fa tsau such as Querubin's place, and no small houses?” I asked Taita Eulalio.

Taita Eulalio:

That was later... don't you see, the elders learn in the monte (wilderness), like my deceased daddy, he was one of the latest. In his tiny house, he use to make a little bulge with cardboard or leaves and drank Yagé alone ... that was there (pointing to the garden where he grows his Yagé plants), and there alone, so nobody knew that he was a good Taita. Oh! Poor him. So when he died, we finally knew he was a Taita. But because he was so silent we did not know. That day my dad died we almost burned with thunder. The house was on fire, Virgin Mary! And there was a black man leaving near here who said: “Oh god, your father has been of those who have strong science ... but nobody knew that he knew how to drink with the grandparents, with my deceased grandparents! he drank with them. But from time to time, he visited living Taitas leaving far away, along the San Miguel River. When my dad passed away I went there and talk to them I don't remember the name of that Taita, but he said my daddy was drinking Remedio alone since he was eight years old. My father, he was good! I remember when I was a child, when giving us Yagé, he used to says: I am only giving you this so you can kill birds and feed your mother, that and for no more, so you can hunt to give food to your mom ... so that is the way he advised us. That is how we were taught, drinking Yagé and hunting. That was how the old Taitas cook Yagé; my dad was like them, a good hunter and Yagé drinker, and that is why he was so well preserved.

“How did the young learn if they only visited the elder Taitas from time to time?”

⁵¹ Taita Querubin is still alive and is considered one of the lasts Kofán Curacas today. He is widely recognized –within national and international levels- for his long political involvement and leadership of Kofán territorial and cultural claims.

Don Manuel:

Well, those who lived in the jungle taught themselves, like Taita Juan, my dad. He had pushesu (wife); he was a well-preserved cook⁵². Then after, he found one, my mother. She prepared the food for him, only her... no one else, both solitos (alone). That is how it was it when they were learning. But later, Taita Salvador came to live in Luzon so they came to drink with my father sometimes. And my father went to hunt over there once, where they say that there is a creek, close to what is now the village of the Tiger. That creek is called Cerrillo (Tayassu tajacu- Collared Peccary-), or the Saquirá'e creek; that name is because over there were many of those animals, so they named after that. My dad was there to hunt and found Yagé in the monte. So he decided to build a small house, very little. Because before it was not customary to make a big house, so my father and Taita Salvador saw there was beautiful Yagé, so they make a hut each one but not close to each other. My daddy built the hut first and went to take Yagé there. But before that, he sent a message to my mommy saying: "I found Yagé here, I'm going to try it; so he already had some pots to cook; good pinta (visions) there he said. So he sent a message again to my mother. And sometime after we went to live there. His compadre, Taita Salvador, did the same. But they only stayed there for a little while.

Taita Moisés said also that:

"Yes, my grandfather told me about Taita Manuel. He went down the river alone in the time of the mayores (ancestors), and made a little hut. And there, he was ready. So he started to cook Yagé. I will take it now he said, and cook a good pot of remedio. He did so, cooked and drank it. With the first big cup, that drunkenness came, strong, very strong. He was like that, cooking alone and drinking from his little pot. He was like that until midnight. Then he went to look the pot. Good, he said, there is still more, so he grabbed the pot and tas! he drank the rest. Jesus Christ! All the Yagé from the pot in a sip! So he went to sleep and it was like sending a bolt of thunder, the poor just fainted. So my grandfather told me that Taita Moisés was able to recover more or less at three or four in the morning. And that happened because he heard the danta (Tapirus terrestris) out there visiting him. And he was lying there like dead, he said a "little bit more and that animal would have stepped on my face" (laugh), but he did not notice anything he said, that animal was silent. And then it

⁵² Cook is the term employed by the Kofán Taitas to name the men who have undergone an apprenticeship of several years drinking Yagé, demonstrating enough competence in the preparation of the brew and helping the Taitas during the Yagé ceremony. However, the Taitas sometimes call other Taitas "Cooks" as a form of camaraderie.

dawned while he was still singing, but nobody was around, he was alone there, so he decided to live there. And then the family came and said to him, now sing Taita and he sang”.

Changing settlement patterns and the bifurcation of the Yagé learning model

These common accounts about the esteemed Taitas or mayores led me toward further questions about the formative processes of contemporary Kofán Yagé shamanism in the Valley of Guamuez and San Miguel River, and the residual historical role of the missions. I notice that the current form of Kofán transmission of shamanic knowledge, which is acquired through intensive training with a Taita, which is a “master shaman”, present important differences with the system depicted in these testimonies. The elders interviewed described that the common way old Taitas learnt was in isolation and in very mobile places. They underscored also their solitude during those moments but acknowledging some common contacts with other Taitas to hunt, find Yagé and relocate their houses. As such, the common denominator of all these accounts is the absence of any notion of established “master-pupil” relationships, rather personal explorations with Yagé, closely tied to a very mobile nuclear family. I suspect that today’s model of “master-pupil” relationship was strengthened, if not entirely formed, after the missionary contact zone, since it may not have succeeded in the mobile Kofán conditions of pre missionary times. This model required the stability and demographic concentration offered by Pueblos and missions where close cohabitation between the Taitas and his apprentices, or at least frequent and extended contact situations allowed creating that sort of bond. My point hence is that the system of learning in the isolation of the forest inferred from these testimonies might be seen as evidence of a parallel form of shamanic training that preceded and survived in parallel with the Catholic forms of education deployed in missions and Pueblos de Indios.

As I described in chapter 4 in much more detail, it is very likely that Kofán families in Putumayo were numerous but dispersed following a family-household pattern within the region of the Guamuez, San Miguel and Aguarico Rivers. This model suggests that pre-missionary Kofán families were mobile units with sporadic encounters between friends or relatives for hunting, gathering, and shamanic exchanges as in Manuel’s story about his father’s encounters to go hunting with another Taita. Thus, what I found in current testimonies of Kofán people such as those highlighted above, is that they describe their ancestors as periodically moving around the territory as seminomadic and itinerant, reinforced with many stories of old Taitas constantly canoeing along the length of the Guamuez River as part of this inland and riverine mobile pattern. This mobility in turn, seems to be related with

old shamans learning the science of Yagé (as they call it) in isolation. Building small and temporal huts: “ellos cocinaban el remedio solitos (they cook the Yagé alone) in the monte (wilderness). From time to time they visited more experienced Taitas, or search for wild Yagé with a Taita friend or relative, but there are no signs of a teacher-student model, neither of populous collective ceremonies before the contact with missionaries.

It is true however, and I concur with Jean Langdon (2007:10), that it was fundamental for the process of becoming a Taita to travel and visit other Taitas in order to acquire the ritual or shamanic knowledge, known as Pinta or visions associated with specific spirits and songs. “The knowledge and capacity of a shaman to travel to different realms of the universe, the spirits he knows and the pinta he dominates is unique, based on his personal capacity and experiences of drinking with other shamans. (...) In order to increase their power, shamans are always visiting others to learn their pinta,” (*Ibid*: 10) wrote Langdon after her own long experience with Siona healers in Putumayo.

For the Kofán case, I contend, these encounters between shamans were part of a system of knowledge exchange and shamanic bounding based on reciprocity rather than a hierarchical pedagogical system. The pre-missionary shaman’s learning process therefore seems to be circumscribed to some sort of family microsphere, and thus oriented to its welfare in health and alimentation terms. If this argument is correct, I believe that the missions and Pueblos de Indios settlement pattern transformed partially the way shamanic knowledge was transmitted. Within missions, and towns, shamans could have steady and close relations with not just kin but other Kofán (and other groups) such as Inga, Siona and Coreguaje apprentices as it happens currently.



Left: Figure 8. “Kofán family fishing hut”(Cháves, 1945 ⁵³) Right: Figure 9. Nuclear Kofán family” (Friede, 1945 ⁵⁴)

Together with the leadership accrued to colonial shamans by colonial authorities and missionaries described in chapter 4, intense cohabitation allowed the formation of new social roles that embodied political and shamanic knowledge. Within the colonial contact zone, these shamans gradually and not uniformly, articulated two cultural worlds crafting a different teaching system of shamanism, only possible in steady centres of population such as the missions but not in seminomadic and itinerant lifestyles.

I must clarify nevertheless, the fact that this particular transformation of the Yagé pedagogic practices were partial since many Kofán Indians escaped from the missions and towns, sometimes even destroyed them, or actually never lived inside them, preserving thus the atomized settlement pattern in the rainforest. Hence, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, many Kofán families sought to escape from the missions by increasing their mobility and penetrating deeper into the rainforest and very likely their descendants were found at the beginning of the 20th century by explorers such as Walter E. Hardenburg (Hardenburg 1921: 92 in Wasserstrom et al. 2011). In addition, disbanding and fleeing was reinforced again after the measles outbreaks of 1912 and 1923 that virtually ended missionary efforts in the upper Putumayo (Robinson 1979). According to Alba Moya (2000) the Kofán abandoned San Miguel el Nuevo, founded in 1918 at the mouth of the Rio Teteyé, and fled once again to isolated areas. Most of them add Wasserstrom (et al. 2011) went to live along the Aguarico and other remote spots on the Rio San Miguel and Guamuez (425-426). This “vestigial” disbanded pattern of settlement, differing from the demographic concentration of Kofán families, is probable what Milciades Chaves

⁵³ Cháves, Milciades. 1945. Cobertizo de pesca de indígenas kofán. Instituto Colombiano De Antropología e Historia ICANH.

⁵⁴ Friede, Juan. 1945. Familia nuclear de cinco hijos. Instituto Colombiano De Antropología e Historia ICANH.

(1946) and Juan Friede (1952) attested in 1945 when they reported that “the Siona Indians live grouped while the Kofán are dispersed”. This is why I believe the pre-missionary form of isolated learning of the Yagé shamanic knowledge may have survived in parallel to the hierarchical model, and I suggest, that it could be seen in the elder’s testimonies presented.

Epidemics and the strengthening of Yagé curing shamanism

Not only was the knowledge transmission system transformed, or rather divaricated, with the change of the settlement pattern but also the uses and ends of the Yagé ritual. While spending some years with Kofán families I noticed a clear difference between the frequency of hunting issues and stories discussed by the eldest Taitas during Yagé nights -even in places with complete absence of game animals for decades- in contrast with the frequency of medicine issues and techniques discussed by the following generations. In this regard, hunting issues were fundamental aspects of elder Taitas interactions when having Yagé ceremonies. With particular enthusiasm they tell and discuss hunting issues and shamanic techniques intended to guarantee the abundance of game and the safety of the hunter during the searching of animals. This role of Kofán Taitas in this sense is very similar to what Alexiades describes among the See Eja, an indigenous group of people living in South-western Amazonia in the border areas between Peru and Bolivia. Alexiades indicates that *eyámikekwa*, a ritual specialist identified by the See Eja as the traditional healer serves as intermediary through which people can establish and sustain critical exchange relations with the different spaces of the universe, and particularly, with the hunting animals. Such relations guarantee collective welfare through hunting and the lack of possible aggressions on behalf of supernatural agents (diseases) (Alexiades, 2000:196).

Curing themes were also very common but there was no evident predominance of these as central topics. The explanation for me was not that complicated: a decrease in wild game and fish reserves after the 1970s colonization, the oil industry invasion (Cepek, 2008; 2012), and war violence in hunting territories resulted in a substantial shift from hunting and fishing to agriculture and raising livestock. Increasing population density and decreasing land availability contributed directly to a decline in health as seen with higher malnutrition levels (Salinas, 2011) and parasite loads (Fitton, 1999). Such changes completely eroded Kofán hunting practices, especially for the latest generations. In turn, all these socio-environmental problems caused physical and spiritual illnesses; hence the natural increased use of Yagé as a medicine rather than a shamanic hunting practice. Although I do believe that the socio-environmental degradation of the 1970s onwards reoriented the Yagé

practices toward curing purposes mainly (see chapter 12), I argue that missions as well had an important part in consolidating the Yagé ritual as mostly a healing and medical practice long before these more recent processes of social and ecological change.

In the testimonies presented, the Yagé complex, despite its intimate importance and association with healing practices, had a predominant role for hunting issues. In family isolation, infections and maladies were probably very important affairs, but fishing and hunting were also in the spotlight of the shamanic practice. During several Yagé nights with the few elderly Kofán Taitas still alive in the Colombian Kofán territory, I found that Yagé “*conjuros*” (spells), “*Rezos*” (prayers) and songs are largely related with stories of animals such as the danta (*Tapirus terrestris*), paujil (*Crax sp.*), Cerrillo (*Tayassu tajacu*), Zaino (*Pecari tajacu*) and many other game animals of the forest. However, the only few and very elder Taitas that still knew this specific shamanic knowledge, expressed that they have learned from their grandparents, which surprisingly for me, never attended to the more recent capuchin missions in Putumayo. It began to occur to me that this was likely some sort of remaining shamanic knowledge which survived because it never entered into close or steady contact with the first Jesuit and Franciscan settlements neither with the later capuchin’s missions. Taita Eulalio’s comment about his early years drinking Yagé with his father (“I am only giving you this so you can kill birds and feed your mother, that and for no more, so you can hunt to give food to your mom eating ... so that is the way he advised us”) is also suggestive of a different type of ritual firmly engaged not only with medical but hunting issues as well.

In contrast, the increased importance of Yagé as medicine (the fact that it is currently called *Remedio* in Spanish) dovetails rather with the devastation and confusion derived from the epidemic spread brought by the missions and towns, an aspect clearly stated by Taussig (1987), Langdon (1991), and Gow (1994). In this sense, the incremental use of Yagé as medicine but also for shamanic defense and attack may have resulted from combined factors brought by the missions and Indian towns during Jesuit and Franciscan times -and very likely reinforced during the failed Capuchin boarding schools and mission projects of the early 20th century in this region- but mainly as a consequence of the introduction of unknown Old World diseases for which there were no effective botanical or mineral remedies. These diseases thus may have been perceived as only treatable through the power of Yagé as an integral medicine for complex illness. The magnitude of the devastation and spread of these epidemics might be proportional with the increment of the Yagé use to counter such threat. Furthermore, the combination of these unknown diseases with the geographical concentration of people also led to the intensification of social

anxiety and thus shamanic warfare. This formula is actually the rule for the Kofán territorial history, and as I shall present in the next chapters, their contemporary internal sorcery and violent conflicts are intrinsically tied with the same type of colonial forces, nowadays related to the presence of armed actors, the social, environmental and physical pollution caused by cocaine and oil activities, and the state territorial abuses.

Contact and emerging expressions of shamanism

The missionary period induced transformations in Yagé training methods and purposes, but as part of this contact new shamanic practices were also invented and/or recreated. The changes in ritual spaces exemplify this. As outlined above, the control of the space and the body was inherent of the disciplinary system developed by Jesuits and Franciscans. The church's spatiality embodies this ideology by defining the altar on one side, the place for ornaments and artefacts, and the people's proper place. This is, the architecture of organization and fixation of elements.



Figure 10. "Altar made of bamboo and catholic saints inside Kofán house" (Cháves, 1945⁵⁵)

The expansion of missions and towns in the middle Putumayo, structured around the church as the axis of all social activity, may lead us to expect that the previous mobile and humble Yagé huts in the forest were no more the only shamanic

⁵⁵ Cháves, Milciades. 1945. FG-1645. Altar con santos católicos cubierto y hecho en guadua. Instituto Colombiano De Antropología e Historia. ICANH.

“temples”. Nevertheless, the re-appropriation of the Christian architecture was certainly not a process of mere syncretic adoption. Kofán ‘U’fa tsau’ (ceremonial house to drink Yagé), I believe are the products, so to speak, of the historical and cultural ‘digestion’ of colonialism, in which subversion of the church-ordered space, occur amidst the brutal purging of body and mind. Penetrating chants encouraged by the inebriating effect of the burning *pegote* (resin incense), intersect the healing role of the Taitas with their sorcery skills to cure or destroy during the same night. Infernal hallucinations of demons and sinners in hell, take on a fantastic appearance together with natural wonders such as old forests, crags, mercurial rivers, and the Andean mountain ranges; elements that fill the shamanic cabinets of the Putumayo Taitas. The central Catholic church corridor through which the silent individuals walk in order to receive the holy sacrament of communion, is transformed here into a threshold where Taitas literally march during the ceremonies with firm and very loud steps; or dance cutting across the house while soundly blowing their European harmonicas while waving their curing fan of leaves, making all their patients wake from their profound dreams and visions.

The *chuma* or *borracheira* (drunkenness) in their terms, allow shamans and people to interact with “*la gente de antes*” (earlier people) and their territories in missionary settlements such as Campa’nae. The ceremonial night, with all its elements from ongoing intercultural contact zones, are the historical product of the dialogue between engrained colonial relations and the Yagé people active forms of indigenize them. In arguing this, I follow Overing’s (1983–1984) lead, who pointed out that from a native Amazonian point of view, society and people can exist only through the incorporation of foreign entities and forces that might be potentially harmful. An aspect underlying most of the Kofán encounters with Others, especially dangerous, such as the guerrillas, the army or the colonists as will be later shown. This point demonstrates the obsolescence of syncretism as an explanation of the changes in ritual spaces after contact; rather it points to the idea of an incredible indigenous cultural capacity to incorporate and reprocess contact situations. As Kohn (2002:554) rightfully asserts:

“Indeed, an examination of popular attitudes toward Christianity throughout this period of contact indicates that the adoption of the Christian ideological apparatus— either wholesale or in piecemeal fashion—was widespread and apparently spontaneous. Nevertheless, this local interest in adopting exogenous cosmological currents is not easily amenable to analysis under the traditional rubrics of “syncretism” or “acculturation” because these concepts do not capture the ways in which alien belief systems are selectively adopted and harnessed for very local interests—interests that are often in diametric

opposition to the dominant norms of the foreigners who introduced these beliefs in the first place (see Watanabe, 1990)".

As part and effect of intercultural contact zones, multiple and seemingly contradictory versions of the past emerge in different contexts, and thus we find not only symbolic and material spaces such as the 'U'fa tsau' but a greater complex intercultural spatiality that includes for instance the colonial Campa'náe or San Pedro de los Kofanes colonial towns simultaneously sharing the Taitas shamanic cartography with urban cities as Mocoa and Bogotá. Here, the politics of the colonial intercultural encounter can be fragmented and reordered, regardless of time and space constraints. In this mobile shamanic map, the Taitas can walk through the mythologized ruins of Indian towns, or hunt and fish colonial pintas (visions) and shamanic tactics from the forests and rivers of history; and all these pieces and fragments they will eat and purge them in the present during the wild mass.

But are Taitas in occupying positions within the collective imagination as merely an adaptation of what used to be the priests' role, or are they perhaps rebelling against the social memory around this role? As Peter Gow suggests: "One of the most remarkable aspect of the ayahuasca curing session is the way it implicitly parodies the Catholic Mass. This is most dramatically evident in the way in which shaman blows tobacco smoke over each little cup of ayahuasca before it is given to the drinkers" (1994:107). Langdon as well, indicates how:

"(...) shamans also assumed certain priestly functions and perhaps increased their status and prestige by this association. The Siona often remark that the shaman is to the Indian what the priest is to the white man, the individual named by God to control and protect his people. In times past the shamans performed marriage and other rituals directly borrowed from Catholic ceremony" (1991:57) (...) "The hallucinogenic brew is drunk from a clay chalice looking remarkably like the communion chalice. Dreams and hallucinogenic visions also suggest this association. In a vision that confirms one's status as a master shaman, the novice journeys to the house of God in the heaven realm, where God gives him the commanding stick and tells him to watch over and direct his people" (*Ibid*: 57).

Answering the question posed above, I believe that in Kofán shamanism we find concomitant elements of mimesis and rebellion. The Taitas conduct this *ceremonia* (ceremony) as they call it, knowing that there is also the possibility of being dominated by the Yagé power; a menace they modestly accept, reinforcing the equal condition between healer and patient, power and powerless. Might this be another

form of inverting the missionary authority role by replacing it with a shaman-priest, eager to accept its sameness with the other, even if only during the ceremony? Is this a subversion of the priests' authority by putting in the same scale the shaman-priests and the patient when both vomit, suffer, share, and clean during a ceremony punctuated by the questioning of hierarchy? Such questions belong to a larger discussion that I would like to propose for further research. However, I certainly believe that ceremonial performances that play and invert colonial relations warns anthropologists, as Laura Graham points out, to be sensitive to the potentially instrumental roles such performances have in the achievement of significant indigenously defined goals, even when they appear to lack an explicit political aim that is readily apparent to outsiders (2005: 626).

It is important to highlight in this regard, that this political and historical shamanic re-appropriation of history, is by no means a neat and ordered process. Collective and individual shamanic agency, have been interacting along the Putumayo history, reinventing constantly practices such as the Yagé ceremony. The Yagé shamanism we perceive today is therefore mutable and not completely uniform product of several spheres of intercultural exchange through time and diverse locations in Putumayo. In this sense, "the negotiation of historical knowledge does not necessarily conclude in an overtly historical representation of any sort: 'History, in this sense, is not only the proof or the product (...) but also the stuff of the process of everyday life' (Cohen, 1986: in Rappaport, 1988:718).

Contact zones and changes of indigenous power structures

Another important element of the colonial middle ground, which may have helped shape the Putumayo Yagé complex relates to the Spanish strategy of explicitly identifying shamans as political and 'pedagogical' authorities. As Salomon points out, "During most of the 18th century the Spanish crown ruled aboriginal America through a system of hereditary colonial chieftaincies and native magistracies. The colonial chiefs, who had inherited the Quechua title Kuraka (ethnic lord), were more commonly called caciques" (1983:414). This type of titling wrote Solomon, "occurred in peripheral groups which were often noncentralized small societies lacking the institution of status lineage. In such instances "chief" status was arbitrarily imposed by the Spanish" (*Ibid*: 414). I contend that this was very likely the case for the Kofán A'I people.

In Western Amazonia, missionaries, but specially Jesuits did manage-through prodigious effort to create a new set of interrelationships in the region (Friede, 1952; Velasco, 1981; Reeve, 1993). In this new political sphere in Putumayo, Kofán

shamans were able to achieve positions with certain grade of agency. The curaca-shaman role spread given the interaction of shamans with priests such as the iconic Father Ferrer, who formed strategic alliances with the only indigenous individuals with recognized power among their peers in a geographically dispersed society. Such political and symbolical codependence grew to the point that occasionally, colonial authorities placed themselves at the mercy of shamans or sought to become shamans (*Ibid*: 414); this seems to be the case of Ferrer and his extensive native knowledge of medicine and shamanism (Franco, 2001;Kohn 2002).

In this regard, Jean Langdon indicates for the Siona that:

“It is not possible to discover from the historical literature whether this role was so extensive prior to the Conquest, and I have suggested (1985) that the role, at least in part, was a consequence of the first contacts with the Franciscans. Moreover, Siona oral history suggests that the shaman's role was perhaps a result of the Franciscans' attempts to control the Indians. These tales are useful in suggesting some of the changes in the shaman's role and status that resulted from the first contacts, and it appears as though the role was strengthened” (Langdon 1991:57).

As mentioned before, missionaries were advised in their institutions such as the Jesuit College of Quito, to target firstly the indigenous authorities as their only and permanent interlocutors. This way the priests could enhance their public acknowledgment while the local hierarchy remained useful for the colonial power. Kofán people however, were the type of small peripheral group described by Salomon, without centralized power, lacking the institution of status lineage. Therefore “Shamans and their clientele acted more effectively as factions capable of adjusting power relations, and they adapted to the colonial situation in varying ways. They counteracted and immobilized jural authorities by forming adverse, but not always overtly mutinous, factions; or, they infiltrated and preempted colonial offices” (Salomon, 1983:414).

This new political figure of the Curaca was related to the imposed colonial hierarchical structure of the *cabildo* (community council), another example of political-symbolical codependence that allowed for the limited fluctuation of power within the complex colonial tissue. Subordinate to the *cacique*, the Spanish state created a category of native magistrates, constables, and bailiffs who collectively formed a *cabildo* in each jural community (Roniger, 2000:223). These positions rotated annually and were symbolically legitimized by giving “*Varas de mando*” (commanding sticks) to the elected indigenous authorities (Sevilla, 1976).

The relations between shamans as new political leaders with the missionary and regal power ensemble, as a form of early state, suggest the initial political formation of the Putumayo territories as dynamic and violent spaces of cultural and political dialogues. Accordingly, it also indicates how the encounter of territorialities and cosmographies fostered the creation and intensification of fragmented, multivocal and polysemic perceptions of the territory as a product of such encounter (for this same point in postcolonial situations see Rival, 1996:156-158; Little, 2001; Rubenstein, 2001). This is so, since intragroup relations changed by adding new social and political differences and positions redefining indigenous forms of self-representation within and out their ethnic collectives. In this sense, Solomon (1983) points out that by 1700:

“Caciques everywhere found their role as intra communal leaders and spokesmen to be in conflict with their role as intermediaries and tribute guarantors for the Spanish state. Their titles were the jural equivalent of Spanish hidalguía (nobility) and they normally adopted a Hispanicized lifestyle likely to alienate them from their indigenous subjects. They often exercised their privileges through exploitative business relationships with the governed” (414).

Again, shamans and individuals of the past, in the same way as indigenous populations in the present, faced Fanon’s (1968) “split of the colonial native” when coping with and incorporating alterity framed by conditions of oppression. In these situations the dominated “wants both to occupy the place of the colonizer and to maintain his difference from him, as well as his anger towards him; colonizer and colonized thus identify themselves on the basis of this doubling of self and other and the alienation that arises from it (Hiddleston, 2009:117). This predicament should be understood, not from the empty and pointless discourse on cultural authenticity or spuriousness, but from the kaleidoscopic forms of people engagement with changing social, territorial and political realities.

Here I must necessarily curtail my explorations of the colonial contact zone and contemporary Putumayo shamanism since this requires first expanding our Kofán ethnohistorical knowledge, a field of research that is still being developed. With these suggestions I hope to make a contribution, but it is presently beyond the scope of this work to engage in a larger ethnohistorical discussion. Rather what this thesis is concerned with is the mutual permeation of colonial codes, symbols and practices’ debates.

In this sense, the possibility of a distinct form of shamanic knowledge transmission before indigenous contact with missions that may suggest an important change in how Yagé apprentices were trained after evangelization in the form of master-pupil relationships; the fact that epidemics brought by missions and spread by colonial agents, missionaries and Indians, contributed toward strengthening the role of Yagé as a medicine that somewhat diminished the importance of Yagé in practices for hunting and settlement relocation; the new of houses for the Yagé ritual that we see today, subverting and materializing the indigenization of the church temple, and the Taita' performances during Yagé sessions, entailing mimicry and subversion of the priest's role; and the fact that Taitas act as figures of political authority in the middle Putumayo, a role very likely inexistent prior to contact, suggest the importance of the missionary-Indian contact zone for the Kofán culture today. All these elements derived from the early Kofán-missionaries contact zone, and the multiple indigenous ways of reappropriating and enacting those past situations of contact through shamanic forms of agency linked to territory, indicate how in Western Amazonia it is more accurate to conceive of "indigenous history, not the history of the Indians" (Fausto, and Heckenberger, 2007) as the outcome of complex sociopolitical, material and symbolical relations of power between different types of persons.

PART 2

Chapter 6

Pa'tssi Ingi Ande: Kofán relational territorialities

At the introduction of this thesis I mentioned that my broad purpose here is to suggest how we might more successfully read, interpret and understand the often-fugitive meaning of Kofán *territorio*, rather than finding a final consensual representation. This is, for as several scholars such as Keith Basso have insightfully asserted long ago, in any community, the meanings assigned to geographical features and acts of speech will be influenced by the subjective determinations of the people who assign them, and these determinations, needless to say, will exhibit variation (Basso, 1996). Accordingly, the space that people perceive and construct, the space that provides cues for our behaviour varies within the individual and cultural group, hence that territorial perceptions might differ from person to person, and from culture to culture (Hall, 1969; Downs, 1970; Tuan, 1977).

However variable and subjective the way people within the same group understand the territory, I also argue that there is a core connection between diverse forms of territorial conceptions within ethnic groups. Finding this linchpin element is my starting point and thus, the object of analysis of this chapter. In order to find this connective element I focused on daily discourses about territorial issues among Kofán families and individuals, but more importantly, I paid particular attention to the Taitas conversations during Yagé ceremonies. Both of these discursive arenas served me to socially and ethnographically situate my research, and from the combined observation of them, I was able to identify connections and coincidences between what is told at the individual and the collective level about the territory. In this sense, I found that in order to talk about *territorio* in A'ingae language in any of these social spaces, Kofán people use different words that form the complex concept of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. This notion, which might be roughly translated as: "all this is our land" combines the words *pa'tssi* ('everything', 'completeness'), first-person-plural pronoun *ingi* (ours) and *ande* ('soil', 'land', 'country'). The use of *pa'tssi ingi ande* within Kofán orality is not a generic term to describe a piece of land, but is a complex concept comprising particular relationships between the materiality of land, the specific knowledge about the land, and the identity of the knower of that land. But the crucial aspect I would like to unravel and explore in this chapter is the fact that when Kofán individuals talk about what constitutes *pa'tssi ingi ande*, their testimonies lead invariably to stories of contact. Instead of a conceptual definition, people always referred to *pa'tssi ingi ande* by telling me stories of trading or hunting

partnerships among relatives and friends, about alliances or confrontations between shamans or about the necessary dialogue and negotiation between Kofán individuals and ambiguous human and non-human beings inhabiting the forest and mountains. All these answers consistently suggested, I argue, that the very notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande* brings with it the implication that *territorio* for the Kofán, no matter the different subjective interpretations, is itself relational.

Pa'tssi Ingi Ande “means all these that you can see”. Said Taita Cristobal:

“it is that tree where that elder Taita was buried under, it is also my family living here or in Afilador. All that is our ingi ande. We know what is because from time to time, my family and I could travel around and find my cousins. We used to hunt with them for some days, so we know quite well this lands. This is why I can talk about territory for all those experiences, but also because I have learn about the Yagé so I can go and talk to other Taitas where they live but also visit those who are already dead”.

As in Taita Cristobal's comment, several other interviews presented this consistent use of images of contact and interaction in order to define their territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Accordingly, I have grounded this thesis on this relational view of the Kofán *pa'tssi ingi ande* as the core element that connects diverse Kofán territorial narratives and therefore my point of departure to explore ethnographically how the territory seems to be ontologically constituted by a wide array of different forms of relationships.

As Hierro and Surrallés (2005) contend, much has been written about the intimate relationship that different indigenous groups establish with their territories within the framework of their respective cosmologies (2005:126). And in this large field of enquiry, I am aware that the idea that territory is best understood as a social fabric is certainly not a novel argument in anthropology concerned with the nature of sociality and alterity in indigenous Amazonia (see Descola, 1986, 1992; Descola, and Pálsson, 1996; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Vieco et. al. 2000; Chaumeil, 1994; 2005; Santos-Granero, 2004, 2009; Calavia, 2005; Echeverri, 2000, 2005; Ventura i Oller, 2012). The problem nonetheless, as Surrallés (*op.cit*) points out, is the fact that in spite of the broad acceptance of the social fabric argument, far fewer attempts have been made to describe exactly what these relationships that form it consist of.

Accordingly, it is my intention to enhance and expand this widely accepted disciplinary premise about relational territories in Amazonia through the exploration in the first part of this chapter of certain Kofán mythic-territorial

conceptions, which comprise a set of specific relationships with potentially harmful or beneficial beings, animals, and other Kofán. From here a complex social fabric emerge which I contend is the vital substance of the A'I territorial conception. Then, in the second part of this chapter, I will discuss how such Kofán relationships with human and non-human others were the central elements to construct the territory for the elders that experienced the Putumayo before the aggressive oil driven colonization of the late 1960s. However, I must clarify that my intention in this chapter is not to provide a vast cosmological analysis of the Kofán people. Rather, I attempt to provide some the conceptual basis that support the idea of relationships as foundational elements of the Kofán territorialization in order to examine in following chapters how the modern system of relationships, or “contact zones” (Pratt, 1992) between the A'I people with neocolonial forces in Putumayo such as oil, colonists, cocaine, and armed actors are not apart from long-standing social and cosmological indigenous structures. Thus, before we get into these forms of relational territories and interculturality in contemporary Putumayo, and the transformations these processes caused to the pre-colonization concept *pa'tssi ingi ande*, I will address some of the Kofán cosmological aspects of this complex concept and its associated tradition.

The always-threatening presence of vajos

In Santa Rosa del Guamuez resguardo, I asked Taita Miguel if he could tell me what the atesu'cho⁵⁶ used to say about what is the territory? He answered thus:

“About *pa'tssi ingi ande*?” Yes, it is all these we know well”, sweeping the air with his hands in a circular movement indicating everything around:

*“It is those places where dantas (tapirs) and monkeys thrive and you go there and see them (...) it is those paths the Kofán used to walk and track animals for days (...) but knowing all this is not that easy. You have to know. You must have a good grip of the Yagé science like our deceased elders did; they knew how to talk to the vajos for they were the animals' owners and they could be very mean. Like that tiger that was born from the soul of a dead Taita, he was a powerful vajo. He was clever and was observing when all the Kofán people under the chontaduro palm (*Bactris gasipaes*) eating the fruit. Everybody was happy. Seeing this, the vajo sent all the animals there, ants, tigers, and snakes*

⁵⁶ Atesu'cho means in A'ingae language 'person who really knows'. This term is used to designate Taitas with a wide knowledge of medical and sorcery practices; they are considered experts in Kofán history and therefore of the A'I territorial history of mobility and contact. Because of this knowledge they are also regarded as *autoridades tradicionales* ('traditional authorities'). Today many Kofán assert that there are no more real Atesu'cho after the arrival of colonists to their lands, only Taitas with great medical knowledge but not the integral kind of wisdom and practical knowledge that the Atesu'cho had.

and killed everybody. Days after, some Taitas tried to reach the vajo and talk because they were afraid of him; but also they wanted to suck his knowledge, or rather that the vajo oshaeñe the Taitas (give power-training). But after all their efforts trying to reach the vajo, that thing killed them for it was too powerful.

Vajos and cocoyas in Kofán cosmography are regarded by people as dangerous, tricky, and devilish forest's beings (see Borman, 1976:9; Califano and Angel, 1995). They lurk in the wilderness adopting anthropomorphic or animal forms and often appearing in front of people during hunting parties. In spite the potential illnesses it might entail, for the Kofán is crucial to establish relationships with these beings, for they can provide shamans and hunters, with different knowledges or skills. As for other Amazonian cultures (see Whitehead and Wright, 2004), one of the most important reasons behind the need to establish relationships with vajos and cocoyas is not only their capacity to reveal secrets, spells and medicines, but also very important, for they are in control of the animal game. Vajos and cocoyas are what anthropologists have archetypically called in other Amazonian regions the 'owners of the animals', the species' spirit-master, or game-owners (Descola, 1986, 1992; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Kohn, 2007,2009). Analysing these kinds of beings among the Achuar of Peru and Ecuador for instance, Descola describes how hunting implies a triangular relationship and negotiation between the hunter, the hunted animals and a series of go-betweens (2005: 23); these are what Descola refers as the "mothers of game", a race of sprits who owns and protect the animals of the forests, and the *amana*, the prototype of each hunted species, described as a perfect and larger than life embodiments of their conspecifics (*Ibid*:23). Such size-augmented morphological feature is the same for the vajos that Kofán as well consider the owners of the animals (Califano and Angel, 1995: 129).

For the Kofán families living on the Ecuadorian side, Cepek's (2008) refers also about the necessary relationship between shamans and powerful beings such as the cocoyas:

"My Cofán consultants told me that a powerful shaman can cure, call game, and ensure a maximally conflict-free social state. These positive capacities, however, are won at the price of identifying oneself with all that is violent and morally condemned. If a shaman can cure a person of being 'caught' by a cocoya, it means that he speaks the language of the cocoya and controls the entrance and exit to its house, where he will lock it up, thus effecting the cure" (*Ibid*: 346).

Cepék's analysis in Ecuador informs us of a central point for the analysis of Kofán in Colombia, which is that positive shamanic capacities, "are won at the price of identifying oneself with all that is violent and morally condemned" (*Ibid*: 346). And this is crucial if we are to comprehend the nature of A'I relationships with the aggressive colonists or armed actors operating in their territories. As I shall explain in more detail later, within Kofán Yagé shamanism, the process of power acquisition requires inevitably establishing relationships with sources of conflict, disturbance and both symbolic and material violence in order to produce new forms of curing and healing. Take for instance the Taita's shamanic visits to Campa'náe, that colonial missionary town destroyed by disease epidemics in the 17th century (see chapter 3). This is why, as I shall attempt to show in further chapters, the Kofán entered into a complex process, in which the original sources of danger but also of power such as the cocoyas, were superseded by more modern forms of malign beings such as the guerrillas and Army soldiers. This occurred after the A'I people's processes of partial withdraw from a way of life founded on A'I sociality and forest-based subsistence due to the environmental transformations occurred in the Guamuez valley and San Miguel municipality. Let me show other examples of 'traditional' Kofán territorial relationality before elaborating further on this point.

Pa'tssi ingi ande 'is' the visible and invisible A'I Kofán

Another essential thread weaving the Kofán's social fabric is the relationship between them and the invisible A'I families. *La gente invisible* ("invisible people") or *La gente de monte* ('people from the wilderness'), which are regarded by the Kofán as people with the same physical features and cultural practices of the visible Kofán. They could be directly seen sometimes in isolated places or perceived during Yagé ceremonies or altered states of mind induced by plants, in which invisible Taitas appear only to give advice or attack. They can also adopt the shape of a ttesi (jaguar-*Pantera onca*) or a cushava con'sin chorongo (woolly monkey -*Lagothrix lagothericha*; *L. infumata*) but sometimes smaller species such as birds, which are capable of assaulting Yagé drinkers and hunters.

According to Kofán Taitas, after the colonization of the Guamuez valley in the 1970s, invisible Kofán families prefer to inhabit isolated locations, overall, the higher and forested region, on the base of the western Andean slope. Both Ecuadorian and Colombian Kofán consider the invisible people as inhabitants of the territory with which they interact regularly either physically or through their Yagé pintas (visions). In the same way as with the cocoyas, invisible people can be enemies or allies, and this ambiguity made it often difficult for me to differentiate them in Kofán narratives from common malign spirits as the vajos. However, what is clear is that

los invisibles are social counterparts of the A'I humanity. Illustrating this point is the fact that is common to hear how some of the already deceased Kofán Taitas, *los mayorcitos de antes* ("the esteemed elders from the past") that inhabited A'i *pa'tssi ingi ande* before the intense process of interaction with white people, preferred invisible wives. That was a way to guarantee that the Taita would become more powerful than the rest of the Taitas, this is so for invisible A'I women would allow the shaman to penetrate into the world of the invisibles where secret sorcery and medicine could be accessed. Furthermore, entering into this realm would make shamans more skilled to deal with dangerous entities such as the vajos, cocoyas and cuancuas. For instance, when I asked Taita Alviro how was *pa'tssi ingi ande* in the past and what kind of contacts were common between A'I and the invisibles, he told me an old Kofán story:

"There was a man working. Cutting down trees in the forest. Two tigers came out and sat on one trunk that the man had cut. The man was not scared with those animals in front. So the tigers got bored and leave. The next day the man returned to that place and started to work again. The same tigers returned but now they were people, champi'ai people from the forest and said to the man: We are here to cure you. The man said 'alright'. One woman, a woman from the forest (invisible) that was single, cured him. After blowing medicine and using the leaves to clean the man, the forest woman said 'you cannot sleep with your wife tonight, you must sleep apart'. So the man started to live like that, apart from his wife. But the man's first wife noticed this. 'Why he is not coming to sleep with me anymore? I'm going to find out during the night who is he sleeping with.' Then, she grabbed her husband hammock and shook it hard. The forest woman jumped out of the hammock. She was mad and said to the man 'since your woman scared me I'm going to kill her'. The next day the woman awoke sick with fever. Her hands were numbed and shrunken. His husband drank Yagé and cured her. The forest women never appeared after that around the house. But she looked for his husband sometimes in the forest, bringing gifts such as cooked manioc".

As the previous account attests, contact with champi'ai, is potentially harmful as with the Taita's wife attack, but it can be also beneficial as with the part that the shaman was cured. The benefit could go further and become a strong relationship between human and non-human entities. Taita Angelito, for instance, was a Kofán elder that recently passed away. He used to live in a remote forest of Ecuador, close to the San Miguel River in the border of Colombia. In spite he lived most of his life in almost complete isolation, without wife nor offspring, in a small house entrenched in the mountains away from settlements and communities, it was possible to find

within his U'fa tsau (house of Yagé)⁵⁷ where he conducted ceremonies mostly alone, a lot of unnecessary seats for visitants. The reason is that the participants of the Yagé ceremonies he guided were his own large family 'de invisibles' (of invisibles), which as he said, used to be in charge of his care in case of illness. He asserted thus, that thanks to the help of the invisible people working his chagra (household swidden garden), he survived periods of disease, during which he was unable to work. This example of Taita Angelito shows how kinship and the production of the space employing Lefebvre's (1991) terms are mutually implicated. Peter Gow (1995) has insightfully addressed this point in his analysis of the lived human landscape of the Bajo Urubamba in Amazonian Peru, explained by Gow as the product of kinship help between indigenous families. For the Piro people inhabiting this region, the process of place-making is a sort of relational tissue between families participating in practical cycles of gardening and forest regeneration, mediated by shamanic agency. This process is addressed in mythic narratives whereby elders relate details of events associated with particular places to younger kin, enabling the landscape to later "implicate" all these kin relationships. In this sense, what people 'see' when they look at the land is kinship. Gow (1993) argues furthermore that Piro people produce themselves as people through the production, circulation and reciprocal sharing of food. He asserts that just as kinship is produced in this manner, so the vegetation pattern around the village is seen as the loci of kinship. Accordingly, it is through the process of implication of kinship and the land that Piro notions of place and space emerge (see other examples of the relation between kinship and landscape in Munn 1976 for Papua New Guinea; and Cronon 2003 in New England).

Regardless of the theoretical differences, diverse authors have shown that peoples' interactions with their natural environment form the bases of their social practices and understandings of the social (Bird-David, 1992; Bloch, 1992; Ingold, 1994; Rival, 2005). Challenging ideas of nature and society as dichotomic categories, in this view, the environments that constitute territory are far more than the lands for subsistence and social reproduction limited to a local group that exercises control over space but a complex integral social sphere (García and Surrallés, 2005:15). Here thus, the epistemological production of 'nature' –and therewith *territorio*– for people such as Taita Angelito, seems to occur not merely through the material processes of transforming the forest into productive landscapes by cutting down trees and planting sweet manioc, yams, palms and so on in his chagra, but rather,

⁵⁷ The U'fa tsau *Casa de remedio* (house of medicine) or *casa de Yagé* (house of Yagé) is a wooden house, typically raised on low stilts to stand above the floor. It is divided in a long, wide and open corridor where people set their beds on both sides, hang their hammocks or put some chairs, to sleep during the Yagé ceremony, with an exit only for women at the end. On the other side there is a room for the Taita. In this part of the house is the altar filled with images of saints, candles and talismans. Next to altar is the *La cocina* (the kitchen) where the Yagé pot is set and the door only for men.

nature and territory, are ontologically linked to networks of active and functional relationships with other beings. This is what I see condensed in Taita Angelito's coproduced chagra with his invisible kinship as an articulated moment in an active network of social relations and understandings (see Massey 1993:66), which itself represents the entire relational idea of *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Besides the system of relationships between Kofán and invisible people that produce particular landscapes such as Taita Angelito's chagra, invisible people as well have their own social spheres in which parallel forms of territorialization complement those of A'I. Accordingly, the type of sociability ascribed to ukabate (invisible people) is equally complex. Like humans, these other beings in the same way as the vajos are reputed to live in communities, in subterranean houses, located sometimes in salt licks, hills or river rocks. Taita Cristobal mentioned in this regard:

Yes, ukabate are va'tti'su a'i ('native from here') indeed. They are like us but now we live differently because of the cucama. Before we used to share pa'tssi ingi ande, yes, the territory, all these, with no division because of the saminge na'e (San Miguel River –marking the border between Colombia and Ecuador). They used to be in the wilderness. They were like us pure A'I, with tte'tto cha'jin (tiger fangs) necklaces around their necks and beautiful feather crowns. You could not see them easily, because they could be animals and if you don't have the knowledge you can see that that is not a wild pig for instance but people. And people, not cocoya, because cocoya could look like people but they are devils that always want to kill people. Ukabate instead know how to kill but they are not looking to harm everybody. They drink chicha (manioc beer), and have their houses; they cultivate their own chagras and have their own U'fa tsau (Yagé ceremonial house).

Similar forms of non-human territorialization are extremely common among other native inhabitants of the South American lowlands (see for example Weiss, 1975; Jara, 1996; van der Hammen 1991; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Viveiros de Castro, 1998, 2004). And thus, as Descola points out,

“In spite of their internal differences, all have as a common characteristic that they do not operate clear-cut ontological distinctions between humans, on the one hand, and a good many species of animals and plants, on the other. Whether visible or invisible, whether anthropomorphic or theriomorphic, most entities present in the world are linked together in a vast continuum articulated by a single regime of cultural prescriptions and sociability” (25).

All the Kofán testimonies I have presented illustrate the classic principle in Amazonian anthropology in which “from the point of view of native Amazonians the realm of the social involves not only human beings, but also animals, plants, objects, and a host of invisible beings, who, although not exactly the same as humans, are nevertheless considered to be human in essence” (Santos Granero, 2007:7). The fascinating part, from my point of view, is that Kofán storytellers refer to the territory not as the scenario in which all these processes of interaction occur, but it is the process of sociability as such what seems to be the territory itself in their narrative forms. Accordingly, these stories about interaction were the direct answer to my questions about what constitutes *pa'tssi ingi ande*, and hence, it could be argued that in the A'i perspective what we name as territory is the shaman's relation with invisible people in tiger shape and the wilderness' wife, Taita Angelito's intimacy with la gente del monte and his coproduced chagra, or the Kofán conception that invisibles have their own settlements and social life. All these narratives and its predominant element of contact rather than conclude in an overtly final definition of *pa'tssi ingi ande*, suggest that to talk about territory is consubstantial with talking about alterity encounters.

Building the territory through family solitude, collective interactions, and shamanic alliances and confrontations

Now I would like to address the final and of course more obvious aspect about the idea of relational territories. This is that its constitution is not only dependent of the relationships that Kofán people may establish with non-human entities but also with other Kofán. The pattern I found in Kofán narratives about how was the *pa'tssi ingi ande* social dynamics before the colonist's invasion is interesting for it suggest a subtle equilibrium between solitude and sociality. The Kofán strong sensitivity towards this balanced social behaviour, which in other words means to be able to live in moderate family isolation with periods of contact between relatives, friends, Taitas' apprentices and so on, is important for it suggest the high level of disturbance experienced by A'I families after the aggressive processes of colonization of their lands. When I asked Virgilio about how *pa'tssi ingi ande* was before the colonist's invasion he answered:

“Before the cucama people (mestizo-colonists) all these lands where filled with guaras, monkeys and dantas. I used to hunt them with my wife, just the two of us alone, searching for animals in the ombáccuni (headwaters) of many different creeks. We had si'nge tonsan'cco (a grill to dry meat) so we could stay for days hunting by ourselves. But during those days there was a lot of game around so after finding a big animal we used to stop on the way home to chop

the animal into parts and leave some of the meat in my cousin's house. We stayed there but not for too long, and then we continued walking home. That was how used to be”.

Time and time again elders such as Virgilio told me the same story about families living in relative isolation, hunting alone in the forest and walking around the territory to find medicine plants. This isolation was punctuated by periods of contact in which Kofán visited friends and relatives to share hunting meat, to provide medical-shamanic treatments or just for the pleasure of seeing the family. Since these repeated stories of isolation/contact are what I obtained to my questions about the meaning of territory, I found that the notion of territory is unsurprisingly grounded on these human sociality dynamics. In the following fragment Don Manuel, an old Kofán, resumes this isolation/contact dynamics while introducing shamanic alliances among Taitas as another linking fiber of the territory social tissue.

“Well, those who lived in the jungle taught themselves, like Taita Juan, my dad. He had no pushesu (wife); he was a well-preserved cocinero⁵⁸. Then after, he found one, my mother. She prepared the food for him, only her... no one else, both solitos (alone). That is how it was it when they were learning. But later, Taita Salvador came to live in Luzon so they came to drink Yagé with my father sometimes. And my father went to hunt over there once, where they say that there is a creek, close to what is now the village of the Tiger. That creek is called Cerrillo (Tayassu tajacu- Collared Peccary-), or the Saquirá'e creek; that name is because over there were many of those animals, so they named after that. My dad was there to hunt and found Yagé in the monte. So he decided to build a small house, very little. Because before it was not customary to make a big house, so my father and Taita Salvador saw there was beautiful Yagé, so they make a hut each one but not close to each other. My daddy built the hut first and went to take Yagé there. But before that, he sent a message to my mommy saying: “I found Yagé here, I'm going to try it; so he already had some pots to cook; good pinta (visions) there he said. So he sent a message again to my mother. And sometime after we went to live there. His compadre, Taita Salvador, did the same. But they only stayed there for a little while”.

The essential elements in the previous story about what was *pa'tssi ingi ande* are once again the emphasis on solitude always finely nuanced with a brief but

⁵⁸ Cocinero is the term employed by the Kofán Taitas to name the men who have undergone an apprenticeship of several years drinking Yagé, demonstrating enough competence in the preparation of the brew and helping the Taitas during the Yagé ceremony. However, the Taitas sometimes call other Taitas “Cooks” as a form of camaraderie.

meaningful contact with a relative or friend. This pattern of indigenous families living apart from each other but engaging periodical contacts has been commonly described in other Amazonian groups. For instance, Rubenstein (2001) indicates that the Shuar people in Ecuador based their forms of sociality in this same way. However, since the 1980s, the Shuar started a political process to be recognized by the state while defending their rights. This process, encouraged and assessed by the Catholic Church, induced several changes in terms of mobility and settlement for it was necessary “that the group as such would exist as a group, for the families lived apart and one individual could not defend himself while an organization could better guarantee safety” (interview fragment in Rubenstein, 2001:277). As part of this process, the Shuar changed their isolation/contact model into the formation of centros, which are nucleated Shuar settlements. At the same time that the centro by concentrating people, made it easier for Ecuadorians to control Shuar, it also gave Shuar an interest in maintaining peaceful relations among them. Furthermore, older Shuar welcomed this change because they wanted trade goods from the missionaries, and young Shuar liked it because it gave them an arena of interaction independent of their elders. This settlement pattern in turn has given them even greater access to market opportunities (*Ibid*: 277). I mention briefly the Shuar traditional settlement pattern in Ecuador for this is precisely the kinds of cultural and territorial changes generated within interethnic contact zones that I will address in the following chapters for the Kofán case. But before addressing these changes, let me go back to the Kofán territorial conception of the territory before colonization.

All the ethnographic accounts presented suggest that the essence of *pa'tssi ingi ande* seems to be related with diverse forms of amicable contact. However, Taita Moisés answers to the same question about *pa'tssi ingi ande* indicate that such sociability was not only about friendly situations but shamanic experiences of assault, which I stress that must be seen as a form of bonding link between families as well:

“Before we used to live in calm. There was enough food and enough land. You could walk for days or go a palanca (rowing without motor) along the Guamuez River for days and only see some merchandise traders before reaching Puerto Asís. Sure, there were little problems between Taitas; you know how it could be when there is envy, so in spite people were ppimppintsse (peaceful) there used to be little problems between Taitas that were well advanced in the Yagé medicine. So they used to harm others and their families”.

In spite Taita Moisés comment subtly reduces shamanic confrontations into “little problems between Taitas”, it is well known for people spending enough time

working among indigenous peoples of the Amazon piedmont, that sorcery conflicts are mayor issues that affect entire communities, sometimes persisting for generations and involving not only the Taitas but also his wife, sons, and apprentices⁵⁹. Shamanic conflict I argue is in this sense another vital form of contact between individuals and families, which from my perspective should be regarded as another filament connecting the Kofán social fabric. Both shamanic conflict and cooperation can be seen in this perspective as two complementary forms of sociality, which constitute another dimension of the territory ontology.

What we have thus from the picture created by all these testimonies is a territory before the colonizing process weaved from a very subtle but wonderful form of A'I socialization through the establishment of impermanent but frequent interactions, which although differently, point to the fact that Kofán conceptions of territory were based on the combination of friendly or hostile relationships and family solitude.

Relationality as a place-making substance

After this initial fieldwork approach to the concept *pa'tssi ingi ande* I frequently noticed that asking about it was not merely circumscribed to talk about the physical space inhabited and known by the Kofán people. Certainly, sometimes Kofán answers about what is *pa'tssi ingi ande* were more geographical such as "well, that means the lands comprised between the Guamuez River and the Aguarico River", but every time I received this kind of answer my interlocutor went further and ended up developing the definition of the concept to the point that *pa'tssi ingi ande* could not be detached from images of contact and interaction. People told me very often the same kind of stories that eventually started to form in my view the idea that the Kofán territory rather than a geographically bounded-meaning category is a complex set of relationships that weave social fabrics linking landscapes, Kofán families and a host of diverse visible and invisible entities. The almost invariable recurrence of this conjuncture of relationships in people's answers when asked about territory, manifest itself an important process of objectification, whereby, as Weiner (2001:235) have noted for a different native context in Australia, the spatial dimension of indigenous' knowledge about themselves and others possess its own visible spatial form. As a consequence of all these stories of contact gathered during fieldwork I stopped trying to find a key meaning in A'I people's answers about what the territory is, and rather observe what types of relationships between different

⁵⁹ Taita Humberto Piaguaje, an old Siona shaman, confirmed this point, when he described to me how during the 1960s a shamanic war between Siona families ended up with almost all the Siona Taitas because of the sorcery attacks between them and their apprentices, leading eventually to the erosion of the Siona Yagé practice and to several transformations of their social and kinship relationships.

entities and elements are established by Kofán peoples when they address the notion of territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Following the path opened by diverse scholars about indigenous forms of territorialization in Amazonia, such as Echeverri's (2005) studies of the Miraña people settled in the middle and lower Caquetá River in Colombia; Calavia's (2005) work with the Yaminawa in the Brazilian state of Acre; Santos Granero (2005) spatial and territorial analysis of the Yanasha people in the Peruvian piedmont; or Rappaport's (2005) discussion of the Nasa people historical memory engraved in the landscape in south-western Colombia, to name just a few, I contend that for Kofán people, territorial spaces and their enclosed environments are defined as systems for structuring and interpreting reality as a complex relational fabric. In these material and immaterial network, elements interact through channels, dimensions and paths, and "The result is a vivid space rather than a conceptualized one, where what is important is not to draw a map of a static area but rather to perceive of a dynamic environment, and to be able to interact with the elements that comprise it, which in turn are endowed with subjectivity" (Surrallés and García Hierro, 2005:16). In this sense, for the Kofán as for many other Amerindian peoples, cosmological conceptions of territories are not only about physical inhabited lands, but rather, as complex spaces which certainly include its productive functions, but also kinship relations, networks of interactions with physical and intangible beings, sacred sites, modification of the environment and resources like water, forests, and belowground minerals with diverse meanings and symbolisms (Van Der Hammen, 1991; Fabian 1992, Gow, 1995; Descola, 1996, 2005; Echeverri, 2005). Amazonian studies have placed these relational understandings of people's spatial engagements in diverse situations of interethnic colonial and postcolonial contact and exchange in which migration, spatial concentration, demographic growth, competition and conflicts over land and resources, emerge in parallel with new multiple and all-encompassing social, ethnic and territorial identities (Alexiades, 2009:22). Such dynamism and resilience of identities and territories suggest that "Rather than fixed, clearly demarcated or bounded entities, indigenous territories were often, and in some cases still are, loose, unbounded, fluid spaces defined through notions of social- as opposed to geographical distance" (*Ibid*: 22). Such perspective in Amazonian anthropology dovetails and further provides ethnographic material to enhance other fields of enquiry, particularly contemporary geography and landscape studies interested in the observation of the space as networks of material and social relationships (see Carter 1989; Barnes and Duncan 1992; Ingold, 1993; Bender 1993; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Basso 1996; Mitchell 1996; Tress and Tress 2001; Cosgrove 2003). The notion of Cultural landscapes for instance, in the same way as *territorio indígena*, is appropriate here for it derives from the idea that

the land exist in the mind of a people and that their imagery and knowledge are tangible, visible articulations of numerous discourses and practices (see Schein, 1997). And thus, fundamentally revealing of the dynamics of power and imposition, but also, of underlying forms of confrontation, ambiguous strategies of resistance and the myriad ways in which peoples guide, deceive, and play with power instead of confronting it directly. This vision can be extrapolated to the Amazon piedmont and the Kofán people, for as I shall attempt to show throughout this thesis, to understand contemporary territorial perceptions requires to observe the space as dynamic intercultural contact zones. Which, as Barbara Bender (1993) contends for landscape, are "(...) never inert; people engage with it, rework it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group or nation" (3). Such relational vision dismiss ideas of immobile cultural and territorial boundaries, putting forward how territory, as this work set out to show, is a concept of "high tension" (*Ibid*: 3) precisely because of the dynamism and mutability of such relations between diverse actors with confronted territorial projects and agendas (see Watts, 1991; Massey, 1994, 1999; Harvey, 1973, 1992). In Putumayo, the central area of research in this thesis, Bender's tension would be particularly tangible since diverse forces have been historically plundering indigenous homelands causing a long-standing atmosphere of distress and confrontation. However, this relational view contemplates not only the evident conflict around territorial disputes but also the micropolitics of these encounters as imbricated spaces of cultural contact and reinvention.

Discarding the initial search of territory as a bounded concept led me to ground this thesis on the essential principle in Amazonian anthropology that Amerindians construct their notions of the self, 'nature' and space in relation to others. This is a basic premise today since the nature-culture distinction has become untenable in a variety of contexts (Descola and Palsson 1996). As a social construct, 'nature' is now more likely to be described as culturally and historically specific, with some scholars arguing that in many non-Western societies, nature is not a category that ordinarily can be opposed to culture or society (Croll and Parkin, 1992; Descola 1994; Noske 1997; Greenberg and Park, 1994; Escobar, 1999; Leff, 2004). Furthermore, there are also discussions of societies with no notion of nature or even animality as a distinct category of beings (e.g. Ingold, 1994; Hepburn and Anderson, 1995; Rival 1996, Howell, 1996). In conjunction, arguments drawing on alternative visions of this relation for Amerindians suggest that nature and culture must be seen as co-created.

Two authors, inspired by Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, have provided important building blocks for this widely accepted argument. The concepts of Philippe Descola's 'socialized nature' and 'schemes of practice' (1986, 1992, 1994, 2005),

developed after years of working with Achuar peoples living on the Amazonian frontier between Ecuador and Peru. Descola provide an extensive analysis of Achuar Ethnoecology arguing that “Nature is not present simply in the knowledge Achuar produce of it; the Achuar do not consider themselves separate from ‘nature’ or from their practical engagement of the world (1994:93). Accordingly, he pays attention to the complex processes of symbolic and material interaction, construction, and exchange between indigenous people and inanimate and animated entities, human and non-human agents, and ecological contexts, in which “(...) day after day, one has to tame, seduce, and coerce a host of leafy, furry or feathery beings, that only differ from humans by the variety of their appearances and by their lack of articulated language (2005:23). Otherness is therefore a pivotal element of Amazonian indigenous sociability, cosmology, and territoriality, which in the same vein as Descola, has also being explored in Viveiros de Castro’s perspectivism (1998). This concept is part of a larger conceptual structure defined by Viveiros de Castro as ‘cosmological deixis’ (1998: 476). He argues that the ‘people’ category, comprises not only human beings like neighboring indigenous populations, mestizos and whites but it can be extended to animals and even plants, sacred places or rivers. It is the respective point of view, the perspective, that defines the ‘we’ position, and therefore who pertains to the ‘people’ category. The fundamental premise shared by Viveiros de Castro and Descola approaches, synthetized by Fausto (2007), is that, “in Amerindian ontologies, intentionality and reflexive consciousness are not exclusive attributes of humanity but potentially available to all beings of the cosmos. In other words, animals, plants, gods, and spirits are also potentially persons and can occupy a subject position in their dealings with humans” (497). Both authors meticulously troubled Western ontologies of ‘society’ and ‘nature’ opening a reach field of enquiry about Amazonian indigenous cosmology and sociality, inspiring well known anthropologists such as Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Carlos Fausto, and Aparecida Vilaca in Brazil, and Bruce Albert and Anne-Christine Taylor in France. The works of these authors changed many of the ruling premises about Indians’ relationships with nature, and for the interests of this thesis, with the territory.

In spite the profound differences between them, their works, among many others, fostered the transformation of the concept of *territorio indígena* from the initial idea of a required area for the effective economic and demographic reproduction, into a concept that refers to the “fundamental and multidimensional space for the creation and recreation of the social, economic, and symbolic values and practices of the communities” (Alvarez et al. 1998: 20), and therefore as the vital essence of indigenous identities and cultures (Jackson, 1995; Botero and Echeverri, 2002; Chirif and García, 2007). Going back to Echeverri’s argument (2005), for Amazonian indigenous peoples the notion of *territorio* refers thus to the complex and rich tissue

of intermingled society - nature relations. But once again, to say that Amazonian indigenous peoples consider their territories as relational social fabrics, at the current state of Amazonian anthropology, is almost a worn truism.

This chapter identified this axiom within Kofán territorial cosmology certainly not to show the end of traditional social fabrics that used to structure Kofán relations with the space but rather with the intention to observe the process of “indigenization of modernity” paraphrasing Marshal Sahlins (1999), through which such fabric has been constantly reformulated in current conditions of intercultural contact. My interest therefore in presenting the previous material about *pa'tssi ingi ande* was thus certainly not to explore Kofán territorial mythology in extent. It has been rather to provide some examples of the basic A'I relationships of competition, negotiation and complicity that the Kofán people entertain with human and non-human affines in order to propose in the following pages, how such social relationality of the past prevails in Kofán more recent dealings with new sources of benefit and contact in Putumayo. For diverse forms of relationships, I argue, in spite the drastic cultural and ecological changes of this region, still constitute Kofán negotiated construction of territory, obeying thus to long-standing social and cosmological indigenous structures. From this relational perspective I hope this work contribute to understanding better the emergence of colonial and postcolonial contact zones between Kofán individuals and Others not merely as a simple collision between cultures in positions of domination and resistance, but rather as essential part of Kofán openness to different peoples. With this aim in mind, I want to start in what follows to observe, using *pa'tssi ingi ande* as a basic principle of territories as relationships, why and how Kofán peoples have weaved diverse forms of sociability with the very actors causing the disruption and change of indigenous cultures in what might be seen as paradoxical or contradictory relationships.

The first question thus is about the kind of socioeconomic events and territorial dynamics that took place in Putumayo from the 1960s onwards, and which changed-sometimes even erased- Kofán relationships with Other, such as cocoyas, vajos, cucos, or invisible families, that were formerly the nodal points of the Kofán territorial fabric. The second is about how and why the Kofán from their own relational territorial perspective have been able to reconstitute *pa'tssi ingi ande* in ways that were naturally meaningful to them in a context of land invasion by oil companies, mestizo-poor colonist escaping from the Andean rural poverty, the ubiquitous and diverse armed actors, or the State expansion project.

Chapter 7

Oil, roads and commodities: Incorporating Others into Pa'tssi Ingi Ande

The previous chapter was devoted to explore how for the Kofán as in many other Amerindian societies of the Amazon, humans and animals stand as substitutes for one another and hold equivalent status within a complex network of relationships that constitute the animated world (Descola 1998:37; see also Overing 1990; Viveiros de Castro 1996; Carneiro da Cunha 1998). Other beings in animal shape such as cocoyas, vajos, cucos, or invisible families were normally understood by the Kofán as the natural counterpart of a social system from which they structured reality as a social tissue. However, this perception of the world, and hence, what they regard as the Kofán territory is very different today since most of such territorial mythology, I argue, has been replaced by other novel forms of world making. The shift in how Kofán construct their social reality today does not necessary include other wilderness' beings as before, but certainly, the premise of relationality and alterity incorporation is still at the heart of this process.

In this regard I would like to pose two questions: what kind of socioeconomic events and territorial dynamics took place in Putumayo that were powerful enough to transform the previous conception of *pa'tssi ingi ande* as a system of social relationships with mythic Others? And secondly, how have the Kofán processed these changes in order to reformulate former ideas of *pa'tssi ingi ande* in ways that were intrinsically meaningful to them in a context of extractivism and colonization?

Based on several authors arguing that the Kofán remained marginal to the violent rubber boom in Lowland Putumayo in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Robinson 1976, 1979; Yumbo 1995; Moya 2000; Little 2001: 49; Yashar 2005: 111), it might be plausible to think that more that rubber, has been rather the oil and its entire associated infrastructure what have been responsible after the mid-20th century of the complete transformation of the indigenous realities in the middle Putumayo. In this regard, an immense and still growing body of literature has investigated how oil extractivism in Western Amazonia has been the main cause of social, economic, and environmental changes within indigenous lands and how peoples' rights are consequently sacrificed at the expense of extractive development (see for instance Kimberling, 1991, 2005; Gedicks, 2001; Little, 2001; Lerner and Meldrum, 2002; Sawyer, 2004; Oilwatch International, 2006; Finer, et.al. 2008; Orta-Martínez and Finer, 2010; Smith, 2012; Wasserstrom, 2013). Although the literature

for the Guamuez and San Miguel region is certainly more reduced in this regard⁶⁰, there is no doubt that the arrival of oil companies to the Kofán, Inga, and Siona territories implied the same pattern of impositions and abuses, social conflicts, deforestation and pollution as in the rest of Western Amazonia. And for the Kofán case in particular, I argue, oil caused the erosion of the complex network of social relationships between them and a set of Other beings that formerly constituted *pa'tssi ingi ande*. However, I also argue that these processes of social dislocation were not only a source of conflict and opposition, but also the driver of a new set of modern relationships, mediated by the circulation of money and commodities, which in turn induced deep changes and cultural reformulations in how Kofán conceived former social relations between them and with their territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

This chapter is divided in three parts. The first section attempts to briefly reconstruct the historical process of contact between the Kofán people, mainly from Santa Rosa del Guamuez, and the Texas Petroleum Company from the 1960s to the 1980s. It is mostly about the drastic environmental and cultural impacts of the company's operations on the Kofán previous lifestyle. The second part is about the expectations of certain A'I Kofán families towards the national oil company 'Ecopetrol'⁶¹. Here, I explore the process through which resource extraction -as a one sided imposition during the Texas Petroleum Company- changed when this foreign multinational was superseded by Ecopetrol, and became 'naturally' implicated in the relationships between polity, economy and nature for this indigenous society. Finally, I explore how the Kofán culturally reprocessed the oil extractivism presence within their territories. In this last section I argue that oil extractivism in this region cannot be reduced into images of local resistance or complete connivance. I propose that we must address as well the complex contact zone between the Company and the Kofán in which ambiguous and paradoxical relationships were developed between the two. However, I shall explore also the cultural creativity of indigenous peoples in the making of new interpretive spaces that allow them to construct new cosmological structures and cultural frames while moving forward in the modernization of the Colombia nation-state. Thus, it is my intention to show the Kofán territorial and cosmological adaptations through which they were able to incorporate and rearticulate the pragmatics of a changing regional political economy. Finally, I argue that rather than a one sided imposition, this process of 'naturalization' of the oil extractivism became constitutive of the 'contact

⁶⁰ For a general historical overview of oil in this region see the works of Gomez, 1999; Fundación Zio A'I, 2002; Viña, 2004; Pérez; 2008; Salinas, 2011; Cepek, 2012; Asociación Minga, 2013)

⁶¹ Ecopetrol, formerly known as Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos S.A. is the largest and primary petroleum company in Colombia (see <http://www.ecopetrol.com.co>)

zone' between A'I Kofán families and the oil companies in Putumayo. This chapter is about the negative impacts of two oil companies but also address the earlier Kofán attempts to incorporate Others, in this case oil agents and their promises of collective welfare, into the Kofán sphere of social relations or *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Thus, I believe that neocolonial oil extractivism and its concessionary political economy must be read as forms of enclosure and dispossession (Gedicks, 2001; Sawyer, 2004); however, it is also important to pay attention to the cultural dynamics of indigenous agency that formed interdependent relations with such exploitative agents, as part of their own openness to the Other, and particularly, to white people. The point certainly is not to neglect or diminish the cultural and environmental destruction caused by the neoliberal appetite for diverse non-renewable resource that has plundered the Amazon region to date, but rather to unravel the complexities behind the power, economic and cosmological dynamics that are entailed in such enmeshed relations.

Texas Petroleum Company

Oil exploration in Kofán lands began in 1921 following the granting of a 2.5-million hectare concession to a subsidiary of Standard Oil on the Ecuadorian side of the border (Martz, 1987:46-47). During the following two decades, these activities expanded into Colombia and were linked to the first agricultural colonization of the Putumayo Department, when the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Co.⁶² completed the first oil exploration projects in 1937. The Texas Petroleum Company (Texaco-Gulf) took control of the regional operations in 1941 (Alvarez, 2010) and between 1948 and 1949 drilled four non-productive wells within indigenous territories in this region. In the late 1950s, a road built between Mocoa (the capital of the Department of Putumayo) and the town of Puerto Asís was finally completed facilitating the arrival of poor farmers coming essentially from Nariño (Bonilla, 1968) looking for new productive lands but also to be hired in the emergent oil industry of the region.

Migration flows were initially distributed along the path traced by the new road and settled firstly in the highlands of Putumayo, by way of Mocoa and Puerto Caicedo, then Puerto Asís (Domínguez, 2005) and finally the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality (Ramirez, 2011). Massive waves of colonists ended up invading the Kofán, Inga, and Siona peoples' territories on middle Putumayo. In 1963, after years of unsuccessful exploration, Texas Petroleum Company found important oil reserves at Orito, in the heart of the Siona people's territory. The company rapidly extended its activities to surrounding Kofán people's lands, attracting another wave of

⁶² Later revealed to be Royal Dutch Shell (Cepek, 2012:8)

colonists, which in turn had severe consequences for the indigenous sovereignty upon the territory and its resources (Franco, 2001; Fundación Zio A'I, 2002; Salinas, 2011). Aurelio, an important Kofán indigenous leader and former governor of the Santa Rosa Kofán resguardo remembers that first encounter with the oil company:

"I remember perfectly well those people. The oil workers came here, opening paths and cutting the trees. We did not know who these people were. We looked at them and the strange artifacts they had, but we had never seen anything like that. Because we were young we use to run after them all the time, asking what is that for and why they were opening roads. Behind the roads came bigger machines, drilling the ground and they told us: "We are looking for oil and these drills are called sísmica"⁶³". We did not know what oil was. We thought they were after the clear water we had. Before the roads however, they came here on helicopters, bringing down machines and people from the sky. They built heliports and huge towers; I remember the first oil wells in Gavilanes, close to Sucumbíos and what now is Taita Querubin's reserve; that was, I believe around 1971. I remember the old Taitas, sitting around, drinking strong Yagé and questioning what was going to happen in the next hundred years. They were concerned with the next generation's capacity to cope with all this, something that they actually could not understand in those days. They sang and tried to clean with the remedio (Yagé) since in their visions they knew that the oil and the settlers were getting closer and closer, but we did not know how dangerous all this would be. We did not see what was going to happen in spite of our grandfather's warnings. Then, they rested and slept. Today, we who were young at the time are enduring everything they warned would happen in the future".

This was 1972, and the situation was equally dramatic in Kofán territories both in Colombia and Ecuador. Diverse studies, for instance Oilwatch (2006), suggest how the first and most enduring aspect of oil colonialism in the Ecuadorian and Colombian amazon piedmont affecting indigenous peoples was the construction of roads. When oil exploration started, several seismic lines were opened, and the forest was cut down following linear patterns to build straight roads with a length of hundreds of km. long. After each kilometre, the Company cleared forest areas for the helicopters to bring down explosive materials with which strategic areas with potential oil reserves were exploded. From Lago Agrio in Ecuador to the Guamuez

⁶³ The "sísmica" or "exploración sísmica" refers to the hydrocarbon exploration tool that allows engineers to know approximately the subsurface formation, the composition of the layers of rock, the way in which they are located, their depth and dimensions. These are studies that run on a specific physical space and simulate the subsurface structure, allow the creation of maps showing these structures. With the seismic results geologists can identify if there are oil reservoirs in the area (Agencia Nacional de Hidrocarburos de Colombia ANH. Cadena productiva de los hidrocarburos. <http://www.anh.gov.co/> 2013

valley in Colombia a network of intrusive roads were traced over Indian lands. Then started the installation of pipelines along many of such roads, transporting thousands of oil barrels per day (*Ibid.*) for indigenous peoples of these regions. These processes caused at the beginning great distress for many indigenous peoples, which as Doña Martina, an important leader of the Kofán reserve of Santa Rosa remembers:

“Here is where I was born, in Santa Rosa del Guamuez, but this place has not always been called this. In Kofán language is apishacukanke, which in Spanish means Peña Colorada (“red rock”). When I was five or six years old, Santa Rosa was very different, it was just a few scattered houses in a long and enormous land. The only whites were the ones leaving in San Antonio, just a few families living in that little town bordering today with what is the resguardo⁶⁴. So my parents sent me there to study how to read and write. In San Antonio there were only a few houses, but Segundo Arciniegas, a peasant, I don’t know where was he from, was in charge of everything. Parties everywhere. In December, for Christmas Segundo invited everybody around, including the few Kofán families living nearby. During that time we did not feel any problems with the colonist, we had plenty of land and game. But then, when I was around twelve years, the oil company arrived. And very quickly more and more settlers appeared, clearing the forest like ants. Quickly all this was covered with roads. I remember that noisy machine...how do you call it? Bulldozer, that’s right. The oil company bulldozers came here opening the road for all its workers, and my parents were very worried. I was not because I was too young to understand, how would I know? I was only a child, so I just laughed when I saw that strange people. But my parents were afraid at the beginning, always avoiding them. During that time there was no road to La Hormiga or San Miguel, only a very small path. But the new road opened by the company changed all that. They first drilled the land and put those machines in the oil well and then cleared the forest to open the way that would connect the resguardo with the other road that goes to La Hormiga. What I don’t understand is why the elders, the strong Taitas did not rise against those people; they actually sold very cheap large pieces of land to them; they thought maybe they could barter things with them. My godfather sold land to the company as well, in spite being a great and strong leader. They did not know what was going to happen after I guess. And then came all that sickness. ‘Destruction’ I think is the word no?

⁶⁴The resguardo is a colonial institution that has been regarded as a means of protecting the indigenous inhabitants insofar as it recognizes their ownership of a portion of land large enough to ensure their reproduction in their traditional habitat.

My friend Martina expresses her sad incomprehension of the reasons behind the silence and even complicity of Kofán elders with the intrusion and abuses of the oil company when she was a child. But the reasons for such apparent inaction during these first contacts with oil companies are rather clear to many nowadays. When I asked one of the elders who witnessed that period he told me how the oil company said to the governor of the resguardo and the rest of the traditional authorities (Taitas) that the Kofán could either sell the land where the company was going to drill to Texas Petroleum or alternatively Texas Petroleum would take the land by force with the aid of the Colombian army. From that moment onwards, violence and intimidations were introduced as key elements of the relationship between the foreign oil company, the Colombian state, and Kofán families. But, in addition to threats, the company strategically manipulated and seduced Kofán families with low-paid jobs and small purchases of land, generating internal conflicts and therefore limiting their organizational capacity for response. As Aurelio remembers, this process occurred at such a rapid pace that the Kofán traditional authorities were completely unable to fully understand the long-term implications and impacts of oil extraction in their territory:

“Within 1972 and 1973 they started the construction of the road between Orito and Puerto Asís to complete the already opened way from Mocoa. That road was traced over the Siona and Kofán lands, connecting El Yarumo with La Hormiga and San Miguel. They did it so fast that we failed to say anything. As part of those new constructions they also built another road between San Antonio and the main road, this one meant a deep problem for us because San Antonio is right here, so we were worried that the road would bring even more cucama people (mestizo colonist). My father was the governor (Reserve’s political authority) of Santa Rosa at the time so he called for a meeting. My father told the Kofán people they had to open their eyes and stop the machines from entering our territory because they had already cleared a large area of forest. He and a few people from the resguardo started to plan among themselves how to stop them, but while this was happening, the contractors from the oil company called a secret meeting with our political leaders and paid them money so they could continue with the road.

Furthermore, in an open meeting with the rest of the community, our leaders promised everybody that the company would hire very soon all the Indians if they cooperated. People were excited because they wanted to have all the nice things that the oil workers had. Those same people (Company employees) told my deceased father that they would build a road connecting our territory to Orito and thence to Puerto Asís, and that we should cooperate with them

because this project would benefit us as Colombians. So everybody ended up accepting the road that allowed the company to bring all the machinery here. Before the road was built, the company not only brought their things in helicopters, they also used the river. During that time this region was isolated, we did not have any of the current roads that connect Puerto Asís with Orito and La Hormiga. That is why the company brought their things through the Guamuez River. They built a warehouse in front of the Santa Rosa school and all the company employees came on motorboats or helicopters to construct the oil wells. But then, with the permission of our cabildo, they started hiring people of our resguardo to fell down the trees and build the road. Even my dad was hired to cut and put wood logs under the machines so they can be rolled towards the oil well. Many of us were actually proud of working around all those machines, wearing the uniforms of white people.

At the beginning we accepted because the community did not know that they were not only seeking oil but also our lands. We thought that sometime later they would leave. When the company finally drilled that oil well in the middle of the Santa Rosa Resguardo, my uncle, who was the governor at that time, got paid a very small amount of money for one hectare. They said they did not need more than that, just one hectare to dig the hole (well) and to build the warehouse for the machinery. 'Perfect', we said. 'One hectare is nothing!' Meanwhile, my dad was furious because the cabildo and some families could not understand that the problems would come after we said yes to that damn road. 'You will remember me when we lose all this that now belongs to us' is what he used to say in community meetings. But we were happy with the money and the company's promises. We laugh watching the construction of the towers. Everybody talking that the company would bring this and that, we were going to be able to exchange goods with everybody, that's what we thought. After some time however, the elders realized the size of the problem. They called us and said: 'We have been drinking Yagé, and the pinta (vision) is no good. What they are doing is like sucking the blood of an animal or a person. With time, if they keep taking out that crude, all the plantains will die and no animals would live here. We will die of hunger. The land is going to get tired and we will have no water to drink. And even worse, we, the Taitas that drink Yagé are not going to last because all that diseases will be released from the underground through all those holes that people are digging. We are going to have to breathe that other bad air coming from under the earth and we will not be able to resist'. They knew what was happening under the ground just by drinking Yagé and watching inside it. They also warned us that some day, Chiga Quitsa (our Father) would punish all these, and a lot of people would be

killed because of the oil and the people that would come behind those machines. But what the Taitas could not see with the remedio was what type of people would be. Now we know... the colonists, the narcos and the army”.

The testimonies presented above illustrate the deceitful and coercive mechanisms intrinsic to the history of extractive development in the Amazon region; consider Aurelio’s comment “They said they did not need more than that, just one hectare to dig the hole (well) and to build the warehouse for the machinery. ‘Perfect’, we said. ‘One hectare is nothing!’” As Myrna Santiago points out for indigenous people in Northern Veracruz, Mexico, in Putumayo, “encounters between oilmen and indigenous families ran the gamut from seemingly benign interactions to deceitful transactions and outright violence” (2012:62). Hence, it was not unusual for Kofán families and leaders to find out they had sold their plots when they thought they had only lent or rent them to the Company. Since many were illiterate, they simply made a mark or made a thumbprint on documents they could not read. When realized they had been deceived and complained, the Company ignored them and military violence ensued.

Suddenly, the territory was invaded by alien people operating strange machines and building new infrastructure, both things intimidating at the beginning indeed, but sometime later, I believe, some Kofán families saw that all these changes may have potential benefits if there was a possible beneficial relationship with the newcomers. “People were excited because they wanted to have all the nice things that the oil workers had (...) for the company would soon hire all the Indians if they cooperated” said Aurelio. But the promise was never fulfilled for the company only required the initial cheap work force to open paths, clear forest, or help move the machinery or make roads⁶⁵. Thus, instead of the anticipated benefits in terms of obtaining white goods, the Kofán experienced how the Colombian state in partnership with multinational agencies were there only to plunder their territories without the establishment of any reciprocal form of relationship as they were expecting to.

Underlying the nation’s dream of tropical development, there is the classical political notion that the social and economic problems at home can be conveniently dealt with through the conquest of new territories. To justify this conquest, an official myth is created which demonstrates the existence of a vast, bountiful, productive, empty territory -the Amazon Basin-which awaits the enterprising

⁶⁵ In 1967, the company completed the construction of the road leading from Santa Ana (20 miles north of Puerto Asis) to the Orito-Pungo oil field, with an extension of 46 kilometers. According to information published by the company, 250,000 tree logs were used to stabilize and flatten the uneven piedmont soil, and provided a structural foundation for the road (Texaco 1991).

individuals to settle it and harvest its riches (Safford, 1991:27; Nygren, 2006: 508; Wylie, 2010:44). Since the post-independence period (1819 onwards), the creole intellectual and political elites of the Colombian Republic that inherited the power, including explorers, scientists, politicians and entrepreneurs, shaped this idea of the Amazon as 'deserted' and populated by a few 'wild' inhabitants (See Serje, 2005a; 2005b for a complete analysis of this process in Colombia), evincing what Whitehead's point about the ideological character of the colonial construction of key images of 'America', in particular, the emphasis given to the pristine and marvellous, for which discovery and monstrosity were ideological counterparts (1997:78). Such images would persevere within the national imaginaries about its lowlands in order to provide the ideological justifications for the necessity of saving indigenous souls or their culture (Cowlshaw, 2003:103); to justify the plundering of their resources, either cultural or natural; for bringing 'progress' to their lives or liberating them from their miserable situation through developmental and extractivist policies; and to justify the forced or voluntary incorporation into the citizenship category.

This construction of alterity in which strategic ideas of the downtrodden Other serve as a justification for embarking on actions towards "progress", in this case by rendering Indians either as wild savages or potential citizens, have been common devices through which to prop civilization in isolated regions. In Putumayo, we see an example of such process with the company's introduction of ambiguous images of the Indian Other to justify the colonization of their lands, as potential new citizens, equals in the eyes of the nation, or savage beings without voice. This is why we see on the one hand how the Company's employees, as Aurelio remembers "told my deceased father that they would build a road connecting our territory to Orito and thence to Puerto Asís, and that we should cooperate with them because this project would benefit us as Colombians; a friendly form of persuasion with promises of incorporation and equality. And, on the other hand, permanent threats such as what Grandfather Pablito accounts about the response he obtained when he protested for the cut down of forests in an area that the Kofán never allowed the company to trespass: *"You must shut up indio bruto (dumb Indian) for this lands, and you, belong to the government, so it is better that you stop with your noise because you know in which side the army is, and they are not afraid of your bow and arrow"*.

Seeing these concomitant messages of violence and integration it is not difficult to notice the connection between the oil extractivism of the late 1960s-1970s in Putumayo and the intellectual-political discourse that forged Amazonian Latin America's multicultural nations, which as Santos- Granero points out, "reveals a pervasive rhetoric of alterity whose content varies according to the particular objectives the authors had in mind. In all cases, however, the aim is the same,

namely the imposition of boundaries of differentiation as justification for state integration, expressed in the commodification and symbolic consumption of the Amazonian Other” (*Ibid*: 545). Hence the company’s employees display of ideas of integration/annihilation in front of the Kofán, as a mechanism intrinsic of the construction of modernity in Putumayo, at a time when Amazonia’s status in the national imagination was of a fearfully backward region destined only to be dragged (kicking and screaming, indios and all) into the time-space of the modern world and in which the key was integration in the nation-state (Raffles, 2002:70).

This process, of course, has had a profound impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples living in Putumayo, especially during the Texas Petroleum operation for the environmental controls during that time were insufficient, and at most superficial measures were taken for retaining and minimalizing spillage of oil and contaminating substances and leakages from pits leading to deterioration of entire lowland piedmont ecosystems and people’s wellbeing. Accordingly, during the decade following the discovery of “Orito Oil Well 1” in 1963, the oil infrastructure increased throughout the region overlapping biologically rich areas of the piedmont and the home to a great diversity of indigenous ethnic groups. Seventy-one oil wells were drilled together with numerous roads, pumping stations and the Trans-Andean pipeline, which after 307 kilometres reaches the port of Tumaco on the Pacific coast (Álvarez, 2010). The new infrastructure of the late 1960s decade transformed the middle Putumayo into one of the major centres of oil activity in Western Amazon causing in turn massive ecological and social disruption for the ethnic groups inhabiting the region. Explorations for crude oil within the Valley of Guamuez and San Miguel in particular, involved hundreds of miles of trail clearing and many scattered seismic detonations, with all the impacts these entailed.

“With the oil people here” recounts Martina: “all the animals decided to go, and it got worse with the settlers who arrived after, because they killed the remaining ones. But it was the oil company and the holes they dug in the ground that caused us the first damage, don’t you see that the chuquias (wet lands) sucked all that oil. That oil was spilling and surrounding us, damaging all, the creeks and streams. That was finally the moment when the community was furious and complained. Since everything was covered in those liquids and black oil, we asked them to clean the creek where we always bathed. So the company, again, paid some Kofán Indians to go and clean the water by themselves. But the oil was there still. They worked hard but at the end, because that was a lot of oil, the blackness kept escaping”.

Martina's story describes how Kofán spoke out about their expectations and the conditions of their environment but also indicates the beginning of an understanding that each exploratory well that was drilled in this region of the Putumayo produced thousands of cubic meters of waste containing a mixture of drilling muds (used as lubricants and sealants), petroleum, natural gas, and formation water from deep below the earth's surface (containing hydrocarbons, heavy metals and high concentrations of salt) (See Kimerling, 1991). At that time, and until the 1980's, when certain environmental norms were introduced, Texas Petroleum and other companies dumped all environmental waste into open, unlined pits called waste pits or separation ponds, from which they were either directly discharged into the environment or allowed leach out as the pits degraded or overflowed from rainwater (Avellaneda, 1998). Consequently, the Kofán territory was not only dramatically affected but also the people's health in the areas close to oil wells. Crude oils are a mixture of diverse hydrocarbons, sulfur compounds, and a range of metals and salts in smaller quantities, which, together with other toxic pollutants such as drilling fluids and chemicals incorrectly disposed (Green and Trett, 1989; Reis, 1992) caused skin rashes and respiratory tract infections, and gastrointestinal problems, haemorrhages and spontaneous abortions (Oilwatch, 2006). Suddenly, the Kofán landscape was transformed into a chemical landscape where a variety of hazardous substances, and volatile organic compounds were released.

After 1975, the oil production started to decrease in productivity in the Putumayo Department, leading Texas Petroleum Company to abandon the region in 1979. Avoiding any environmental accountability or responsibility with the Colombian state or the local populations affected, the company reverted the oil fields to the national Petroleum Company 'Ecopetrol' in a deplorable state (Avellaneda, 1998; Marín and Pulido, 2002; Ramirez M, 2013). Following Texas Petroleum Company's strategic withdrawal, Ecopetrol inherited a company representing 27% of total national production in the 1970s to produce only 3% in the 1980s (Devia, 2004; Ramirez M, 2013). As Alfonso Avellaneda (1998) has described in one of the very few rigorous analysis of the Texas-Ecopetrol transition, this was not only a problem of productivity; Ecopetrol also inherited the enormous environmental debt produced by one and a half decades of environmentally unregulated oil extraction. During the first months of 1981 the Colombian company reassumed the administration of the Putumayo fields now renamed as the Southern District and Ecopetrol instilled the first environmental measures. However, the Kofán quality of life was irreversibly affected.

Ecopetrol and the Kofán expectations

During the 1990s, the Colombian government decided to close many oil wells in Putumayo given the constant guerrilla attacks to the oil infrastructure and the frequent kidnapping of the company's personnel. With the increased militarization of this region deployed by the Uribe's administration during the 2000s that I will discuss in more detail in chapter 14, oil companies resumed activities in the middle Putumayo. During those days, I was drinking Yagé with a group of Taitas deeply worried about this reactivation of the oil extraction within their territories. The next morning after the Yagé ceremony I was very interested in what they had spoken about this problem during the night, so I asked a Taita friend of mine about that. After evading, it seemed to me, my questions for some time, he eventually explained that many of them were working through diverse chants, spells, and the power of Yagé to confuse and stop the company's exploration team to find any oil within. A couple of hours after his shamanic explanation about some of the sorcery attacks they were conjuring against the oil company's staff I changed the subject and asked the same Taita about how his oldest son was. Smiling proudly, he told me that he had recently been accepted to study petroleum engineering in Bogota so in just four years he would be an important person within Ecopetrol.

As my friend Aurelio's anecdote illustrates, the struggle of Kofán shamans against oil extractivism in their territories, parallel with their interest to be part of that same industry, suggest that in spite of the local awareness on the detrimental environmental and cultural effects of oil activity, eventually, they created complex and ambiguous dependency with the oil activity, now in charge of Ecopetrol. I was able to discuss how such dependency arose through multiple conversations with individuals and groups from the Kofán Santa Rosa Resguardo:

"The oil has been around since I was just a toddler" told me Don Cristobal "That people brought with them many changes. Things we could not see that will be here, not even when we drank Yagé. So we were confused. Nonetheless, the people accepted their promises for they convinced us that having oil was like having gold in our pockets. People were avujatssi (happy/excited) for they promised good education and good roads so it was supposed for us to have a better life without days of walking through chuquias (wetlands) under the rain. Even more, we were going to be able to have boots like them. Other people expected more of this. Maybe living in houses made of good materials. That is why they say yes to all of these things we were expecting from them. We were not that dumb though. We knew after what happened with the other oilmen (the Texas Petroleum Company) that having oil here was not free of problems, but what can I tell you? families have their own necessities and sometimes as

we say, when you have no other option, you have to go the forests only with one shot for your shotgun in order to kill the meal. Thus, some of us knew there was a risk others just played the fool. Furthermore we were mainly focused on the land problem caused by colonist, that is why we founded the Asociación de Cabildos indígenas del Valle del Guamuéz ASCAINVAGUAP (Association of Indigenous Governments of the Guamuéz) trying to stop that problem. Meanwhile the oil people, silently, were convincing governors and families of the different Kofán settlements to allow the drillings for they would receive all the benefits of being part of this”.

During discussions with Kofán friends in which sincere testimonies such as the previous one came out, they mentioned that if they really wanted, currently, with all the legal instruments they are already familiar with, they could start a process for the definitive closure of the oil well located in the middle of the Santa Rosa Resguardo. However, this has not been done since the company’s presence provides a steady stream of, albeit marginal incomes, strategically distributed jobs (oil well-guards or uniform cleaners), as well as the occasional bribes of local indigenous political authorities; and these meagre benefits seems to be, employing Don Cristobal’s metaphor, the last ‘one shot for your shotgun in order to kill the meal’ in such conditions of extreme poverty and land limitations were no other economic sources are available.

The Kofán people of Santa Rosa del Guamuez that I interviewed tend to be reluctant to talk about this situation, for I contend that in spite the general awareness of the oil well’s minimum paybacks for the community, vehemently expressed by Kofán leaders commonly in front the government’s agents and NGO’s in diverse political spaces, they represent ultimately the continuity of some sort of a benefit-rotation system. In confidence, several friends have repeatedly told me that such system has been working for decades since the relatives of whoever is appointed indigenous governor at the time could enjoy some benefits, even if they are miserable and tend to generate internal conflicts. This is thus a tacit, inequitable, and very conflictive system, which has remained active, eroding the power of many traditional authorities and families against the oil extraction for considering it a direct threat to its territorial sovereignty. The continuity of oil exploration furthermore, affects also the Kofán Taitas health since they consider the alteration of underground landscapes’ dynamics - so important within Kofán shamanism as we shall see in the last chapter of this thesis- as an important source of social alteration and disease. “*In future times*” said Taita Miguel “*the Taitas that drink Yagé are not going to last because all that diseases will be released from the underground through all those holes*

that people are digging. We are going to have to breathe that other bad air coming from under the earth and we will not be able to resist”.

But in spite of some Taitas' call during the 1970s and early 1980s to stop the company, many Kofán families were modestly integrated into the local circulation of commodities fostered by the scant money coming either from the few jobs offered by the company or the selling of pieces land to open roads for the companies purposes. It should be pointed out that while this connivance with oil extractivism emerged doubtlessly motivated by economic changes and the need to cope with poverty and land scarcity, it would be a mistake to assume however, that such conditions lead automatically to a blinds acceptance of the very forces of oppression. Let me explain therefore other vital aspect of Kofán forms of sociality so important to understand why indigenous peoples have been both struggling and accepting simultaneously the oil company operations in their lands.

Animal-oil wells, blood trees, and the incorporation of Others into pa'tssi ingi ande

At this point I have argued that Kofán tolerance of the oil intrusion within their lands is the historical product of the Company's combined use of deceit and violence, of parallel discourses of marginalization and citizenship, and the spread of images of equality but also domination that eventually led to the incorporation of oil activities into the Kofán day-to-day community sphere. I have mentioned as well, that the Kofán acceptance of the oil company's presence was also largely motivated by economic interests on behalf of the Kofán communities in which Ecopetrol set up its wells. However, it seems to me that there is something missing to explain such arguably 'easy' indigenous engagement of Ecopetrol's operations only by virtue of a recently formed Kofán interest to join the market economy and the potential violence exerted by the company. The rapid transition of the Kofán way of life into new more modern lifestyles, governed by incipient market relations cannot be entirely seen as the consequence of the benefit-rotation system created within resguardos during these days. This indigenous connivance with oil 'makes sense', I suggest, only through a better understanding of the cosmological scheme of the Kofán as they articulate to the pragmatics of changing political economy. This requires us to see the Kofán cultural ways and forms of interethnic contact in relation to the expectations of building equitable relations with the company. For it is precisely in these cultural and socioeconomic dynamics, that contact zones are formed, and where we can see how peoples who were previously separated come into contact with one other and establish ongoing relations in conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (Pratt, 1992: 6). But furthermore, it is in these middle grounds where the negotiation of new cultural

forms occurs since all parties, despite the colonial situation, possess some mutual need or desire to cooperate (White, 1991).

Accordingly, I suggest, that Kofán expectations emerged not from a plain indigenous naiveté or blind greed, but from the fact that it is a common feature of Amazonian indigenous societies to place enormous importance on reciprocity and gift exchanges as fundamental elements of their social systems (Gow, 1991; Viveiros de Castro, 1996; Fausto, 1999; Perreault, 2003). As Rubenstein (2004:138) indicates “Virtually every study of Amazonian cosmologies suggests that people understand their relationship to the biotic environment not in terms of sustainable food production, but rather in terms of the “sustainable” production of (fully socialized) “persons,” through relations with spirits that cycle between positive and negative reciprocity”. My point is that the interactions between Ecopetrol and the Kofán were mediated by the Kofán cultural framework and therefore by their conscious attempt to incorporate the Other into their sphere of social relations, for they represented at that particular historical moment in Putumayo, the entity that largely controlled the limited circulating economic resources. Not so differently as the dangerous *vajos* (game masters) that ruled the forest transactions, the company was therefore an inevitable affine in this new social network of relationships. This adjustment of the Kofán cosmology to the new structure of the social fabric (oil employees, engineers, infrastructure, roads, heavy machinery, helicopters) in an atmosphere of promises of a better social and economic situation materialized in circulating ideas of having better tools, enhanced farming systems, clothes, houses, and so on, permeated not only the quotidian people’s desires, but furthermore, it penetrated their cultural core. With this I mean that the spread of such capitalist desires was not circumscribed to the rational daily calculations of the Kofán regarding Ecopetrol potential benefits, but it went beyond, and people’s ended up incorporating the oil company’s presence into *pa’tssi ingi ande* not only as a source of potential economic benefits but as the driver of new territorial-cosmological elements. A good example of such cultural incorporation of alterity is Cecilio’s account. He told me how when he was a Yagé apprentice, decided to work for Ecopetrol. His visions during ceremonies changed after this decision:

“That was more than twenty years ago. I needed the money for I have a commitment with a godson, so I had to pay for some of his necessities and help his parents. The company hired me as a guide for the sísmica explorations. I expended a lot of time with the company’s employees. Drinking beer and aguardiente (alcohol cane liquor). But I continued learning. Drinking remedio (Yagé) I had these pintas. They were beautiful. Dressed with the best of the uniforms and I had also a gold machete. Sometimes seeing this was good. Other

times, however, I saw the oil wells, but the drilling spears were different, like a ccuccu'cco (sting); other times I saw them with the form of a toroshongo (devil catfish). It was as if those machines were alive. I got sick when I saw that I was dyo'joye (Panic feeling)".

Cecilio's account illustrates the incorporation of cultural others into the *pa'tssi ingi ande* relational system during their process of coping with the new socioeconomic conditions prompted by the company. In turning to such images, as Taussig (1984: 88) asserts, people were reflecting on their symbolic potential to fulfil hopes for release from suffering, and hence the emergence of beautiful images of golden machetes and elegant uniforms; but at the same time, such process exemplify the types of cultural dilemmas and contradictions faced by ordinary members of small-scale societies as they are incorporated into the capitalist economy, and hence that physical illness and mental distress appear together with all the promising benefits within these new visions. Miguel's testimony goes in the same direction:

"It was a temporary job. I was hired to work with the sísmica. I was happy after finishing my work with them because I got the money to get my own chainsaw, a beautiful new Yamaha. The next weekend I went with compadre Gonzalo to cut some wood. However, in the first trunk I cut I saw all that anja'mpa (blood) spilling out of the wood. I look for compadre Gonzalo and he said that we had to leave because he was having ango'ngoeñe (muscle involuntary movement that precede dangerous situations) so he adverted that something bad was about to happen within the community. Not so much after that blood thing there was a strong fight within the community, I don't remember quite well but the reason was something about the money that the company was about to give us to buy some things, but people was fighting each other on how to used. You know, there is a lot of envies when money appears".

Miguel's account, I suggest, is also very suggestive of the transformation caused by the circulation of new material goods and money within communities. And how these circumstances prompted not only open conflicts among peoples but also a rather more complex cultural process through which all the emergent capitalist desires and its associated conflicts are integrated and assimilated into patterns that were preestablished in the group's culture, in this case manifested in blood premonitions. Fernando's story about his time working for the company supports this point:

"Sure, it was a great opportunity. I had only to take care of the oil wells during the night. The payment was not so good but I had not enough land and the coca

was not the main business as it became later. So I accepted to work for the company. I became a good friend of the supervisor for during those days I used to drink a lot. He invited me to drink beer and get drunk very often. One night my mother was mad with me, iyu'uye ña injamambi and in'janga (reprehending me for being stupid and whimsical). I did not pay any attention, but a couple of nights later I went to sleep. In my dreams I saw my supervisor. He was ochhai ri'ttiye ña (hitting me with a stick to kill me). The next day was payment day. I received the money and went to drink again. I was happy with money to spend so I could go to the town and invite friends to drink with me (...) In my next shift I was sited on a chair. It was around midnight and I felt that strong smell. It was like the pungent odor of cemetery soil. For several nights I smelled that thing, so horrible. I wanted to leave the job because I was scared but I had debts. Then I got sick. During the night I was feverish and saw how my body was decomposing, filled with nin'ji (worms under the skin). Finally they buried me but you know where? ...Under the oil well!"

Cecilio, Miguel and Fernando's accounts are quite illustrative of a particular moment of cultural change indicating how the Kofán started to process and incorporate that ambiguous otherness into their own cultural system with all the expectations but also anxieties and fears these new relationships comprised. My point is that without denying the conflict and tension these processes entailed, such stories are examples also of another dimension of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. This is its shape shifting capacity not to be simply destroyed by new colonization forces, but also to assimilate them and produce new creative conceptions that certainly involves pain, but also a very interesting and complicated fit between the Kofán cultural interpretations and the foreign impositions. Such capacity responded in changing and distressing colonial conditions, indicating how the Kofán peoples attuned their previous social world, where they formerly lived in permanent negotiation, dispute, and alliance with beneficial or potentially harmful Others, with a new set of oil agents, presenting the same type of benefit/danger ambiguity.

As mentioned before, this eagerness for the incorporation of alterity is not an uncommon theme in Amazonian anthropology, and it has been pointed out since the early works of Lévi-Strauss (1943) and in later ethnographies such as those of Hugh-Jones (1992) or Viveiros de Castro (1993) through the analysis of native Amazonian "consumerism" and "ideological voracity," that is, the Amerindian fascination with both foreign goods and foreign ideas. In this sense, Santos Granero, (2009) following Overing (1977, 1983–1984), argued in his analysis of indigenous cultural hybridity and mimetic actions that "from a native point of view, cultural change is not only the consequence of external pressures or coercive socioeconomic

structures but also the result of a conscious indigenous attempt to incorporate the Other into their sphere of social relations (2009: 479). Peter Gow has also addressed the process of otherness incorporation in Amazonia arguing that certain forms of Amerindian self-perception, cultural practices, and kinship in Peru have been shaped by the circumstances of contact with the Other, circumstances that emerged in the present as a shared past (1993, 1994, 2007). In arguing this point furthermore, I follow the path opened by Overing (1983–1984) and Santos-Granero (2009) since I contend that in such relational perspectives of the self, the Other and the territory -which I have argued is the essential substance of the Kofán *pa'tssi ingi ande* notion- the incorporation of alterity into the social and economic functioning of the society represents 'safety' as long as there is a "proper mixing" with that Other. Such relations are thus categorized as trustful and necessary insofar there is "fulfilled reciprocity" in contrast to unfulfilled reciprocity where dangerous forces meet one another dangerously (Overing, 1983-1984:333). The arrival of the oil companies in Putumayo, from this perspective, probably meant for several Kofán families new forms of relationships and exchange, initially considered by the Kofán as mutually beneficial, this is, as reciprocal relations. Here I would like to reiterate my friend Martina's comment: "the company would bring this and that, we were going to be able to exchange goods with everybody, that's what we thought", which suggests how the Kofán social system associated the oilmen-alterity and reciprocity promises with a renewed social well-being.

Cepek (2008) has provided evidence of this Kofán cultural premise in Ecuador in his analysis of the importance Kofán people attributes to the A'ingae concept "Opa". He asserts, "In their statements, opa acts as an adjective to refer to a 'satisfying' existence, a 'happy' community, and a 'good' person" (*Ibid*: 335). With methodical carefulness, Cepek then proceeds to dissect the concept, and concludes that Kofán people identify Opa with the paradigmatic Kofán conception of a socially desirable state (341); and then concludes: "In ideal circumstances, an opatssi community is a place of ease, plenty, and generalized reciprocity" (*Ibid*: 341). So what is the relation between reciprocity and alterity here? Cepek affirms in this regard that:

"Cofán people equate an opatssi life with residence in a community of cultural familiars. Most Cofán believe that all other peoples, whether indigenous, cucama (mestizo), singo (Afro-Ecuadorian), or gringo (Euro-American), are prone to selfishness, anger, and violence – qualities that are opposed to the basic characteristics of an opa a'i. Nevertheless, Cofán people have intermarried and reproduced with ethnic others for centuries. As with non-humans, Cofán consider other peoples to be potential, if not actual, a'i. If an outsider can live in a Cofán community without disrupting its basic forms

of sociality, Cofán people grant the individual a'i identity. If a person returns to their disruptive ways, however, Cofán individuals exclude them as a'ive dambi'choa (one who has not become a'i) (*Ibid*: 341).

This A'I system of alterity incorporation and reciprocity works for the Kofán in Ecuador, following Cepek, because of the their cultural capacity to produce social relations with Others as part of an equalizing process, which removes their awareness of potentially violent difference (*Ibid*: 341) allowing in turn social incorporation. The reason of such process, as mentioned in previous descriptions of A'I territorial mythology, is linked to Amerindian notions conceiving wild, different Others as significant sources of life and as indispensable for the production and reproduction of people, society, and self-identity (Santos Granero, 2009:47).

The fact thus, that it was impossible for me to find in Colombia, unlike in Cepek's work with Kofán in Ecuador, any reference about this notion of an opatssi⁶⁶ type of community is significant for it suggest a problematic unbalance of the "proper mixing" using Overing's (1983-1984) terms, in the cultural process of otherness incorporation. While the Colombian Kofán reformulated the constitution of *pa'tssi ingi ande* by adding new relationships with the company, I believe, they never calculated the much more harmful than beneficial problems of such new incorporation. During the 1980s, Ecopetrol's activities in Colombian Kofán territories promised all kinds of goods and benefits, which I consider that initially meant for the Kofán the creation of an opatssi community as a place of ease, plenty, and generalized reciprocity. Eventually, the Kofán as many other lowland South American Indians, noticed that such "structure of reciprocity" (*Ibid*: 333) was flowing in a singular direction so as to benefit the company.

The critical situation that several A'i families found themselves surrounded by in oil affected settlements was (and is) a constant, but I would say silent, reminder of the question of whether they were or not, in fact, guilty of bringing all this on themselves, and of course a reminder of the colossal devastation to people, and their former environmental relations. However, while realizing this situation as the unfulfilled opa life such new relationships were supposed to provide, different Kofán sectors of its population decided organize the struggle against the oil extraction through political and shamanic methods aimed to disarm this dangerous

⁶⁶ There are limits to how far the concept of Opa and oppatsi life can be understood currently. This is so since Cepek's evidence of the paradigmatic importance of this idea is confined to Zabalo community in Ecuador. Zabalo has a very particular history due to the iconic role of Randy Borman. "Born in Amazonian Ecuador to a North American missionary couple, Borman grew up in a Cofán community, attended outside schools, returned to Cofán society, and used his familiarity with science, conservation, and global politics to become an important Cofán leader" (Cepek,2008:334). The rest of the Kofán communities in Ecuador and Colombia without the direct leadership and missionary background of Borman, have thus very likely a different conception of the Opa concept.

relationship already incorporated into the modern *pa'tssi ingi ande*. But there were other families with a different opinion regarding the presence of the Company since they had already formed strong dependencies on its scanty incomes either directly through the scant jobs offered, or by the small sums of money paid to the *Cabildo* (Indian council). But in spite their divergent positions, what I have heard from different people that endured the 1980s oil boom before the FARC guerrilla ordered to close all oil wells in this region, is that their lives were punctuated by situations of *afaccoye* (arguing) and *iyiccoye* (fighting). Consequently the social fabric that constituted *pa'tssi ingi ande* was eroded and entered into a state of crisis for now there was a lot of disruptions and antagonisms between families that still considered the company an allied and the ones that rejected its operations. In this sense, I have called a problem of 'balance' referring to the unfulfilled reciprocity system that was expected from the Kofán perspective, to reformulate *pa'tssi ingi ande* with the incorporation oil people as affines. Such unbalance, I argue, is largely responsible of the many contradictions and paradoxes embedded in the Kofán-Ecopetrol relationships, as the Taita's anecdote about his indigenous petroleum engineer son is evidence of.

Here I touch again the problem involved in understanding indigenous territories as differential geographies (see chapter 1) for the concomitant indigenous participation with and abomination of the oil industry inside their territories alert us of a rather more complex and ambiguous form of territorialization today that rejects dichotomic images of indigenous territories as outside, and I would say, opposed to the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of the nation and state forms of territorialization. Accordingly I shall assert that the oil example as the rest of contact zones explored in what follows, can only be understood as the product of historically specific processes of transformation that formed complex middle grounds between Kofán families and Others with the territory and its resources as the linchpin of these relationships.

I must clarify, nevertheless, that the Kofán relationship with oil extractivism analysed in this chapter correspond to a specific historical period (1980s to 1990s). Today, Kofán relationships with the regional oil industry are not anymore a problem of community-state relations but now involve different scales of political struggle and negotiation that go beyond the scope of this thesis, and which unfortunately are not part of any anthropological research agenda in Colombia. But howsoever scant the information about this relationship, nevertheless, it is possible to agree that indigenous peoples and this includes other neighbouring groups such as the Siona and Inga, have internalized, negotiated, and rejected in parallel the presence of oil extraction within their lands. Such concomitant and seemingly contradictory

positions, intrinsic to contact zones in colonial and postcolonial settings, evince the complexities of indigenous relations with powerful agents that go beyond either “resistance” or “compliance” dichotomies or community-state divisions as two well-defined entities and closed categories in opposition to each other (Cooper, 2005; Das and Poole, 2004; Nugent, 2001). As Geddicks (2001: vii) asserts, “This is not a simplistic tale in which exploiters and exploited are easily identifiable in a medieval morality play”. The entire Kofán oil mythology is an example of this colonial interstice. Here, sharp divisions between colonized and colonizer or western capitalism and aboriginal economies dissolve, and we see the emergence of oil wells adopting dangerous animal shapes concomitant to images of enchanting gold machetes; the new money incomes that led to shared social ‘avujatssi’ (happy-excited) feelings, while several communities were in tense and even violent situations; the rapid growth in the consumption of tools, chainsaws, clothes, while the people was seeing blood coming out of trees.

Territory in this sense, must be imagined, as Massey points out for places, “as open, porous, hybrid (...) where specificity -local uniqueness, a sense of place- derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—now to be disrupted by globalization—but by the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there” (Massey, 1999: 21–22). Hence that indigenous subordination brought about by colonization or other forms of economic, social, racial, linguistic, and/or cultural dominance, although very real, and extremely painful, as I shall attempt to respectfully explore in following chapters, is also a complex and non dichotomic game of relations between the powerful and the powerless. In the next section thus, I would like to continue developing this argument by analysing one of the main effects of the oil intrusion, this is the oil-driven wave of colonists that rapidly arrived to the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality between 1970s and 1980s. The colonization of the region transformed the indigenous lands into a new locus of cultural interactions or, to use Massey’s term, “a sphere of juxtaposition” (*Ibid.*) a process responsible for changing again the Kofán conception of *pa’tssi ingi ande* into a completely different system of social relationships.

Chapter 8

Territorial hybridity: Cultural dialectics and conflicts between Kofán and Cucama People

Before the early 1900's, most economic and agricultural activities in Colombia were concentrated in the Andean region and the Caribbean lowlands, after which colonization steadily expanded into the humid lowlands (Palacio, 2001). Between 1830 and 1930, over 2.5 million hectares of so-called baldíos ("empty lands") were progressively handed over to selected individuals by the state (Legrand, 1988). But it was after the 1950s that a massive, uncontrolled colonization settled on the state's baldíos located mainly in the forested lowlands of the Amazon, Orinoco and middle Magdalena regions (*Ibid.*). As described by Brücher (1974), from 1968 onwards, a great number of peasant families left their homes in the Andean highlands to settle in the Amazon piedmont. Most came from provinces such as Nariño, Huila and Cauca with high rates of poverty, extremely concentrated landholdings and progressive violence between left wing rebels and the Colombian government (Reyes, 2008). Taking advantage of the easy access provided by new oil roads and pipeline routes to previously remote forest, colonists arrived to the middle Putumayo leading to increased logging, overhunting, and deforestation due to urbanization and cattle ranching. Consequently, indigenous territories were colonized in a very uncontrolled and rapid pace after the oil operations pledged to transform the region into a new enclave of regional development.

Although certainly conflictive and often violent, this process prompted a new intercultural contact zone between Kofán families and the arriving colonists or cucama; the Kofán term for mestizo and white people. In this chapter I examine the effects of this contact zone for the Kofán constructions of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. I shall attempt to do so through the ethnographic observation of the different kinds of relationships established between A'i families and the cucama, as agents that brought with them new conceptions of nature, political regimes, and market and illicit economies. Once again, I would like to show how in Amazonia, as a dynamic space of intercultural encounters (Harris, 1998; Little, 2001; Nugent and Harris, 2004), instead of simplified differential indigenous geographies and binary white/Indian relations, processes of interethnic contact and cultural hybridization have shaped and modified indigenous social, cosmological and economic conceptions of the territory. As Paul Little points out,

"The spatial and temporal superimposition of cosmographies is a common outcome of frontier situations and produces situations of direct conflict, as

would be expected from the direct overlap of territorialities, but it is not limited to them. Simultaneous situations of mutual influence, unilateral accommodation, and interpenetration are also engendered in this process, resulting in the continual transformation of cosmographies and territories” (2001:7).

Following Little’s idea of superimposition of spatial and temporal of cosmographies, in the next pages I shall attempt to examine to what extent the Kofán territory might be better seen as the product of the encounter with cucama people. Within this historical and cultural interface, actors’ perceptions and ideologies about their territory are not always clearly bounded and well defined. Through their cultural and historical dialectics diverse -and very often contradictory- sets of everyday practices and discourses emerge and shift through time, creating new shared spatial perceptions according to complex changes in the organization and distribution of power (Gow, 1993, 1994; Little, 2001; Rubenstein, 2002, 2004).

In order to examine some of the most relevant parts of this encounter during the late 1960s-1980s, I first present a general overview of the environmental transformations generated by cucama peoples within Kofán lands. I discuss the impacts of such changes not only for Kofán hunting, gathering and farming activities but also for their cosmological and shamanic practices. After this critical analysis of the negative effects on the Kofán life brought by colonists, I present a brief description of the conditions experienced by the cucama during those days. Since this chapter is about the encounter of two different actors, the Kofán and cucama, this short section is intended to provide a glimpse on the difficult socioeconomic conditions faced not only by indigenous peoples but also its counterpart, in order to understand better how the cucamas’ behaviour in Putumayo was not simply ‘predatory’ or ‘irrational’ but sharply governed by immediate economic constraints, land scarcity, and political violence. After exploring this first stage of conflictive contact, I proceed to analyse the subsequent introduction of new territorial conceptions among Kofán families derived from this encounter with the colonists, particularly the commodification of land and the introduction of the notion of private property. From the new circulation of goods and money coming out of these new forms of engaging the land, I pay attention to the Kofán transformation from being a subsistence-level indigenous society, enjoying economic self-sufficiency, to be actively integrated and dependent of the regional market economy, and the cultural implications of such process. Finally, I examine how the Kofán cultural dialectics with the cucama and their active integration into the emergent market economy provided a fertile ground for cultural reinvention in which new forms of relationships with colonists, such as *compadrazgo*, partnerships forged around

logging and agriculture, and colonists-indigenous mingas came to be important social institutions for the Kofán, in ways that drastically rearranged the previous relational constitution of *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Colonization and landscape changes in Kofán territories

Throughout the 1970s, colonists, as a new set of social actors, provoked radical cultural and socio-environmental changes in the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel Municipality. Settlements such as San Antonio, Churuyaco, Sucio, Caribe, Caiman, Temblón, San Miguel and La Hormiga were rapidly founded or expanded in the core of Kofán territory. The increasing colonist population heavily impacted A'I peoples' social and spatial stability given the ability of cucama people to rapidly appropriate lands, together with the intensity of deforestation and overhunting. The impact in Putumayo, as in other western Amazonian regions (Morán, 1989; Cleary 2001; Brondizio et. al. 2002; Walker et. al. 2004), was largely due the fact that the agricultural techniques brought by poor peasants mostly from the Cordillera Andina (Andean mountain range) were not generally suitable for the tropical ecological conditions of the piedmont lowlands. Colonist started with subsistence annual crop agriculture and cattle herding. In order to have pastures for the animals cucamas progressively deforested large extensions of the forest. Furthermore, some families adopted introduced technologies such as herbicides and chemical fertilizers at low intensity. Given the numerous families arriving, they were able to convert large tracts of rainforest into low-yielding cattle pastures (Schiesari et. al. 2013). Don Antonio, a cucama old man known as '*machetico*' ("little machete"), inhabiting the region since the 1960s, told me that:

"Before the soil was damaged with the coca, these lands were pure wilderness ready to make farms because here there was no people bothering you with political issues or big landowners showing you titles that you were not able to understand for we could not read. My cousins and I came here after walking for days. We were young and poor and saw in Putumayo a great opportunity because you can plant manioc on the banks of the rivers; there was enough trees to cut and build your house, or go to San Miguel to work for the people that already had chainsaws and get some money after days of sawing wood. There were not too many families around, just some Indians, so there was plenty of land for everybody to work hard and have their own farms".

Segundo, another colonist, described his arrival to this region with his wife and a cousin from another Andean region:

“The land we had opened for some plantains was just giving the first chiros (type of plantain). In these lands there was nobody, not even god. But we continued working that is what we came here for! We cut down together. She had a machete and my cousin and I worked with the axe, so while I was felling down big trees she was cleaning the land of bushes and undergrowth. By sheer force we did the first steps because around here there was no collaboration at the beginning for there were not even dogs. At the beginning it was hard. There was no help and some of the Indians were mad at us because we were here building a proper farm in these lands, but they were furious about it, can you believe it? They were claiming more land than they could handle I assure you of that ”.

From the colonist’s point of view, unworked forested land has little value. Cutting forests down for agriculture increases the land value while indicating the new colonist ownership (Dominguez, 1975; Molano, 1989; Little, 2001). Accordingly, colonists start clearing small plots to plant staple crops and pastures. After the first plot is in active production the clearing process begins again to expand the amount of productive land (Smith, 1995; Moran, 1993; Myers, 1988). At the micro-regional scale, however, deforestation is extensive and rapid, since thousands of individual colonists are simultaneously clearing small portions of the land. In his land change study of the San Miguel, Putumayo, and Aguarico river basins, Viña (2004) explains how during the 1970s thousands of settlers left the cities and moved into the Amazon region, particularly the Department of Putumayo, escaping the problems of high rates of unemployment in Colombia's main urban centres. The population growth rate of Putumayo Department was estimated at 5.2% per year for the 1970s (*Ibid*: 118). These families using slash-and-burn cultivation practices, with little aid or regulation from the central government in Bogota, causing drastic land degradation processes not only through intensive use (e.g. clearing and chemical inputs) but in addition, as a consequence of the fragmentation and subdivisions of plots for multiple users and family descendants (Lu, et al. 2010: 3).

As a result, the Kofán “seminomadic and itinerant practices” documented by Richard Evans Schultes, and Hector Mondragón before 1960s (1992:114), were dramatically affected. From this moment onwards, I assert, the notion of *pa’tssi ingi ande* changed, for as I have suggested earlier (see chapter 6), the Kofán territorial behaviour used to rely on what I called a subtle equilibrium between solitude and periodical human contact. The Kofán strong sensitivity towards this balanced social behaviour, which in other words means to be able to live in moderate family isolation with periods of contact between relatives, friends, and Taitas’ apprentices was suddenly restricted since their territory had become a mosaic of cattle pastures,

oil wells, intersecting roads, and land portions ruled by the legal system of private property so far unknown for indigenous peoples of this region.

Pa'tssi Ingi Ande and the decrease in game

Cucama people's overhunting of large mammals had profound effects on the species diversity and populations sizes of this region. Game animals with important nutritional and cultural significance for the Kofán, Siona and Inga peoples such as dantas (*Tapirus terrestris*), paujiles (*Crax sp.*), cerrillos (*Tayassu tajacu*), zainos (*Pecari tajacu*) and woolly monkeys (*Lagothrix lagothricha*) were intensely targeted by the arriving colonist leading to a dramatic decline in meat-protein availability (Plan de Vida: Pueblo Kofán, 2005; Zio A'I, 2008). Consequently, indigenous nutritional and demographic problems emerged immediately after the land intrusions.

Government documents (Sarmiento and Ortega 1973, in Salinas 2011:366) from the 1970s indicate that most of the indigenous health issues were related with the invasion of "the greatest wave of strangers to the region, composed of the oil company workers and the rural landless who, taking advantage of the roads opened by the company, came to colonize"(See Salinas, 2011:366). The government documents underscore consequences such as the "(...) alarming low number of children between infancy and four years of age, the opposite of a normal demographic pyramid" (*Ibid*: 366), and the drastic reduction of traditional food sources. Furthermore, the researchers noted a disparity in the male-female relation among the Kofán population, "particularly those between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, apparently the result of colonists marrying the women or hiring them as domestic servants."(*Ibid*: 366). The report concluded that disease, emotional distress, and deterioration of the traditional diet had severely affected the Kofán birth rate.

The decrease in game not only contributed to nutritional stress but also led to a vital loss of diverse cultural relationships that used to be crucial to the Kofán social fabric of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Oral narratives suggest that the loss of game had considerable impacts on the Kofán Yagé complex and therefore their territorial engagement. As Taita Cristobal recounted:

"There are no more animals around here,"(...) "The animals fled because the oil tainted the land and soured the water with those chemicals; but the big problem was the Cucama people killing everything without mercy and cutting the big trees to sell wood, so the poor animals could not live here anymore; they

went down, below of Puerto Leguízamo perhaps. I remember how my grandfather before the cucama invasion, could drink Yagé in the night and then, the next day go out to hunt, but he used to come back not only with the dinner but also with news: This is going to happen or that is going to happen he was able to 'tapiar' (foresight future events and situations). But how could he know what was going to happen? Well, because he was a good Taita and could sense a fénsiañe (bad premonition) in what animals do, and if they were afraid or calm, or things like that, and then he could say if someone was going to be sick or some problem would come later, just by being in the forest hunting”.

As in other Amerindian ontologies, Kofán intentionality and reflexive consciousness are not exclusive attributes of humanity but potentially available to all beings. In other words, plants, gods, spirits, and in this case animals, are also potentially persons and can occupy a subject position in their dealings with humans (Fausto, 2007:497). In this sense, Kofán “socialized nature” (Descola, 1986) include constant dealings with animals, not only through hunting them, but also interacting and negotiating with them. Accordingly Kofán shamans and hunters established relationships with Others such as invisible people or the vajos, both in animal shapes, which might provide beneficial powers and knowledge. Intimate social relations, including alliances, negotiations and more importantly kinship with these “others” dwelling in forest in different animal shapes, allowed the A’I people to enter in a different dimension of the territory. Take for instance the case of Taita Angelito’s kinship with forest animals outlined in chapter 6, and the chagras they produced together. Just as Vilaça (2002) has noted among the Wari’, a Txapakura-speaking people living in Western Amazonia, “the process of producing kinship (...) cannot be related exclusively to the domestic or intra-tribal domain, since kinship emerges through a constant dialogue with non-human entities” (347) including animals. Animals in this perspective are not simply animals but people they regard either as allies or enemies; following Taita Cristobal’s account, expert shamans were able to interact with them and with their help, to see future events, threats and possibilities:

“Many invisible families disappeared during the days of the cucama invasion. They went to live in the cordillera, converted into bears and tigers, and even monkeys. But deep in the monte (wilderness) some families remain alive, living in the upper parts where the mountains start growing. They could not live here anymore because they will have ended up in the kitchens and plates of all those cucama families. Some other invisible families in the form of animals decided to go and live in Ecuador. That is why some of the very elders, the old powerful Taitas, were sad because they never accepted a wife like us, you know, made of

flesh and bone, but an invisible one; Those ones that can be an animal, in the same way as the powerful Taitas, who were able as well, with the Yagé knowledge, to transform their bodies into an animal”.

Taita Cristobal's comment describes how the loss of animal game affected the traditional forms of kinship with invisible families, for these were forced to move into isolated areas in the upper part of the piedmont, causing in turn great “sadness” as Cristobal notes. This sadness, I believe, suggests deep social distress, and is also related to the erosion of the A'I shamanic readings of the nature. Kofán Taitas were experts in animals' behaviour. This skill was an intrinsic part of their socio-cosmological skill, for the interpretations of animal conducts and activities during hunting, as I was told by Taita Cristobal, used to feed many of their Pintas (visions) in the Yagé ritual by associating particular animal actions with the future wellbeing of their families and community:

“Sure, if you are serious with the Yagé, and drink in the proper way you could be able to see all those animals around; they are healthy with enough food and trees to sleep; that is the same with the place where you live and the people as well, your family for instance. This is why watching animals and hunting them and being full with good food, all that, you can see in your pinta (vision) and then you know that everybody will be alright. But then you don't see anything, no animals just silence or death and you know problems are coming, so you feel bini toya'caen zuccoye (blind and confused-disordered) about it”

Following this Taita's comment, alterations in the realm of hunting seem to be indicative of possible negative alterations in the community-family sphere. This translation of the 'hunting grammar' into the social analysis and prediction is made possible by Yagé shamanism. Not surprisingly, Kofán shamanic readings of hunting extrapolated the ecological disturbance created by oil and colonist activities in the landscape into the Kofán sociability. This meant an increase of social stress and discomfort not only because of the sudden absence of meat to eat, but because the disappearance of wildlife implied the loss of a specific shamanic space in which Taitas performed practices of divination concerning the social life of communities. I believe therefore, that this landscape transformation provoked an epistemological crisis of sorts, since the Taitas lost a vital source of knowledge to cope with social situations within their day-to-day lives now even more affected given its quick incorporation into a world of new social and economic relationships.

Cucamas' territorial cosmographies

Most of the families arriving to Putumayo between the 1960s and 1970s received the support of the Asociación Campesina de Puerto Asís, Putumayo⁶⁷. Guided by the deeply entrenched idea that 'Indian land is empty land', a popular saying in Colombian rural areas, the peasant organization grouped and guided poor and desperate peasants coming down the western slopes of the Andes, to legally and illegally invade indigenous lands. Concomitantly they openly promulgated the myth of indigenous idleness and savagery to justify oppressive practices and the invasion of indigenous territories belonging to different Putumayo ethnic groups. In several of the organization's letters and reports documented in Salinas' (2011) historical research on the Kofán land loss in Colombia, it is possible to identify how peasants portrayed the Kofán as indolent and mendacious, and totally unfitted for the rigorous discipline of transforming the forest into productive lands. For instance, one of the organization's members wrote in 1976 in a letter directed to the Colombian agency in charge of the land distribution in Colombia, that they should simply "let us be and send the Indians to their places where they can enjoy their laziness, the only patrimony that their god has given them" (*Ibid*: 370); later in an openly more defiant letter, its representatives openly told INCORA's ⁶⁸ officials about its upcoming plans to invade Siona indigenous lands to the east, so as "not to catch you off guard as we did with the Kofán natives of the Guamuez Valley" (*Ibid*: 370).

For the Colombian government's agencies concerned with rural development and land distribution, however, the image of the colonist during the 1970s-1980s was very ambiguous. On the one hand colonists were the emblematic icons of development in regions where the state had no presence. The *colono* embodied the modern ideology of development inherently linked with the expansion of the agriculture frontier in Amazonian regions (Molano, 1989). Hence, the image of colonists as hard-working families eager to penetrate isolated regions and tame the wild nature was widely accepted, encouraged and sometimes funded by state programs (Caillavet, and Pachón, 1996; Ramirez, 2001). On the other hand, scholars, emergent environmentalist, and some individuals within the same agencies encouraging colonization, accused colonists of importing the worst aspects of the

⁶⁷ The *Asociación Campesina de Puerto Asís* was an informal organization created by peasants during the 1970s to support arriving poor colonists to settle in the middle Putumayo.

⁶⁸ In the aftermath of La Violencia's period, national leaders in Colombia faced the threat of insurgency with the formation of peasant "independent republics" and new communist guerrilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) in the mid-1960s. Embedded in these groups' platforms were demands for land reform. Concerned about these demands, the government passed the Social Agrarian Reform Act of 1961 (Law 135), which also established the land reform agency INCORA as a semi- autonomous governmental agency to direct the process of land redistribution (Albertus and Kaplan, 2013:203)

Andean socio-economic regimes such as the “*latifundio–minifundio*” syndrome,⁶⁹ to the lowlands, thus generating widespread ecological degradation (see Brücher, 1970; Gomez, 1999; Beltrán, 2003). Voicing a widespread contempt towards colonists among certain sectors of the intelligentsia at the time, the influential geographer Ernesto Guhl writes: “The colonos lack that which is essential and indispensable for the success of a colonization: individual initiative and fighting spirit” (Guhl, 1968, cited in Townsend, 1977: 1).⁷⁰ As with the myth of the “savage Indian” crafted by the dominant elites- and the colonist themselves-, the image of the typical “colono” (colonist) was that of the ignorant highland peasant abruptly faced with the tropical rainforest and willing to irrationally wipe out every inch of nature.

In the Amazon piedmont, the consequences of the aggressive process of colonization are certainly appalling. Most of the rainforest of the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality were transformed into barren lands and cattle pastures. The point nonetheless, is that these processes cannot be separated from a larger context of injustice and lack of opportunities for colonists, who, as Griffin (1969) points out, have always been living in permanent asymmetrical relations with the sources of wealth and power (77-79). Consequently, in a region with no marketing opportunities given the lack of roads and infrastructure, together with scant possibilities for bank credits, or institutional funding, and a general absence of the state apparatus, colonists leaned toward activities such as intense logging and extensive agriculture leading rapidly to deforestation and soil degradation. Engaging in such activities thus, was not simply an irrational or predatory decision, as diverse state agents and academics argued, but a conduct governed by immediate economic constraints.

Land, money and new territorial perceptions

Between the mid-1970s-1980s, the number of cucama families living inside Kofán territories increased. Supported now by Asociación Campesina de Puerto Asís, colonists sometimes physically threatened Kofán families, leading to violent episodes. At the same time, however, some Kofán families simultaneously were

⁶⁹ This dualistic tenure system is characterized by relatively few large commercial portions of land known as *latifundios*, which normally are over 500 hectares, owned by rich landowners, and usually do not provide any regional developmental or socially inclusive benefit. In fact, *latifundios* are identified as a form of modern feudalism regime. On the other hand, numerous small properties known as *minifundios*, which are under 5 hectares are scattered and disconnected from the regional markets or centers of trade. *Minifundios* are mainly subsistence-oriented smallholdings and are generally farmed by poor indigenous and peasant households with no capacity of increased production (Foster, 1989; González, 1998)

⁷⁰ For a deeper analysis of the contrast between the governmental popular rhetoric about colonist, and the *colonos* views of the land, resources and productive practices in several tropical rainforest of Colombia during the 1970s see Townsend, 1977. For a broad examination of the contrasting colonist and indigenous impacts on Amazonian forests, see Lu et al., 2010.

entering into peaceful trading relations with them, particularly through land sale agreements. Selling small plots became the main way to access the recently formed regional market economy, and such involvement in turn changed Kofán view of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Selling land became the new and effective mechanism for families to cope with the scarcity of game and productive lands, and for participating in the emergent regional market economy of 'white goods'. Cash, even if in small amounts, entered the Kofán economy as it never had before. This does not imply that money was previously unknown to Kofán. Since at least the mid-19th century, they had depended on missionaries and quinine traders for tools and other goods, and were often paid with their labour.⁷¹ However, this early incorporation of piedmont peoples into market relations was probably over after the quinine boom finished in Putumayo in the 1890s. Hence that the possibility of transforming the land into a commodity in the 1970s, together with the emerging trade of basic goods, reactivated a system of interethnic exchange that was relatively inactive for almost a century, spurring in turn a hitherto unseen capitalist perception of the territory as a commodity. In this regard, Maria told me that

"My dad had some land the cabildo granted him when he married my mom. It was on the banks of the Guamuez River, good land for yuca (Manihot esculenta). During that time there were not to many families here and that is why when the cucama family of Ramon came, with their sick kids and desperate, we said yes. They could plant some food and live with their family. They offered my dad not too much money but it was enough to make some improvements to the house. My mother bought some fabrics to make us beautiful dresses; my father bought a new shotgun and some ammunition. I think it was no more than a year after the family of Ramon was settled that two brothers of them came here and ask my father if they could stay here as well. Now he knew that this was going to mean a problem with the cucama in the future, but he wanted to avoid any violence so he authorized those peoples to stay. Of course, he said they had to pay him for the land, and they did, again, a very small sum".

Ramón remembers:

"I sold several hectares of land to the family of Carlos Rodriguez, a cucama from Puerres. He lived there for some years, and we used to talk and drink together. Sometimes he helped me with my chagra (household swidden garden). For instance, when I had an accident cutting cane and hurt my toe.

⁷¹ For the importance of western goods in indigenous societies see Hugh-Jones, 1992; Gow, 1993, 1994; and for quinine indian-white trade relations see Brücher, 1970 Zárate, 2001; 2008

But some years after, more and more Rodriguez family came here. They brought cattle and pigs and those animals used to damage my own garden, even the Yagé plants. My wife and I decided to leave and avoid problems”.

Echoing the accounts of Maria and Ramón above, Mariano, a Kofán from Santa Rosa del Guamuez, told me that during the first contact years between and Kofán from Santa Rosa, most of the indigenous families perceived these others as the only possible means to access kuri'findi (money). Mariano's family had no regular commerce with white people and, if they did it was mostly bartering things such as cassava, natural poisons, handcrafts, canoes, and forest products in order to get salt, gunshots and ammunition, fishhooks and pots. After the oil boom however, and with the constant presence of cucama living within their lands, this rudimentary economic system of bartering was progressively replaced with small sums of cash coming from land selling and circulating through small transactions:

“From time to time there were some merchandise traders around here, or they were travelling along the length of the river close to where my dad had his house. But we did not have money. So we used to exchange things for what they bring us. Having kuri'findi was not so important for us since we could exchange things with them, and then, they could sell those things in Puerto Asís. Sometimes we travelled to Puerto Asís because there were more people there, including Indians such as the Siona. When we travelled to the town we had hammocks, baskets, food and other things to sell so we can get back with a shotgun or something. But normally we exchanged things with those merchants in here. Some families sold pieces of land and spend the money in Puerto Asís buying things, not too many, just pots, machetes, clothes and matches.

(...) But then, people like my dad started to have problems because the cucama invaded his coyecchu (plantain's chagra) after he sold them just a small piece of land to buy a machete and some ammunition he needed. Others were more respectful and offered my dad to pay for small pieces of land when they found themselves requiring more land to expand their crops, for those families were getting bigger. They were not rich, they only offered a little money; even more, sometimes they offered money and we accepted but then they never paid us. But what else could we do?”

The obvious problem of the land commodification process was that this situation created a cycle of social disconnection and spatial division since indigenous families who sold their land had to find new land in distant places, or settle with relatives in already reduced territories, often leading to conflict. This process, although

moderate in the 1970s, became increasingly intense after the introduction of coca cultivation and trade in the 1980s, causing another great wave of colonization, deforestation, and territorial loss (Ramirez, 2001). Accordingly, many Kofán families ended up living in extreme proximity with other families, which as I will explain in more detail in chapter 12, caused not only domestic problems but also shamanic confrontations, intensified by the emergent presence of FARC guerrilla in these communities.

By underscoring the effects of private property I certainly do not intend to say that before colonization, the Kofán people did not distinguish a defined A'I territory, or the specific portions of land owned by each family. Kofán peoples, like neighbouring groups, had territorial boundaries marking their individual and collectively owned lands, thus individuals and families possessed further rights to harvest, hunt and plant chagras in specific areas (Zio A'I, 2008). However, the Kofán semi-itinerant and mobile settlement pattern, combined with the relatively small population and extensive land disposition prior to the settler's arrival, probably made spatial boundaries and property demarcations rather porous and mobile. Furthermore, before the invasion of the cucama to the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel region, their social organization was egalitarian (in terms of access to land and resource control). They lived in dispersed households, had no corporate descent groups or institutionalized leadership beyond the limited powers of the Taitas among neighboring families (Chaves, 1946; Friede, 1952; Borman, 1999, 2009). Their mobility was defined by relationships with other families and immaterial entities, which were in constant negotiation. Dispersal as an outcome of common domestic problems or family growth and demographic concentration, as for the rest of western Amazonian peoples, frequently precipitated the split of the large family groups, leading to resettlement and disbanding (see chapter 5).

On the basis of the practices described above and drawing from interviews with several Kofán elders, I suspect that the Kofán people had doubtlessly a conception of territorial ownership. They certainly had notions of private property and the space reflected this, being ethnically specific and physically bounded in some specific areas where geographical marks such as rivers and hills indicated the end of their territories and the beginning of the Siona lands for instance⁷². But these kind of clear marks are not that evident in people's testimonies and narratives upon the territorial borders of the lower-flat lands, and thus, the lower part of the Kofán

⁷² The Iyu Ande (snake land) area in what is today Orito municipality is an example of areas with clear ethnic and geographical boundaries. This territory was distributed and managed by the Kofán and the Siona for centuries as I have been told in several interviews during the land claiming process I am involved in at the moment. The Guamuez River marked the division between the two group's properties however. The area belongs today to the Kofán for the Siona decided to move lower lands during the 1970s looking for areas that were free from the presence of oil workers and colonists.

piedmont territory seems to be more relatively unbounded. I say relatively, for the boundaries of such territory were defined depending on the extension and activity of a network of social relationships; that is *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Accordingly, the borders of such network I argue, were expressed by where and how dynamic were the Kofán relationships either with other Kofán families but also with invisible Kofán people, game masters, other indigenous peoples (Siona mainly) but also Inga, and even white people that arrived before the oil companies. The location and extension of such nodal points within the networks of relationships defined the extension of what the Kofán regarded as *pa'tssi ingi ande*, and hence, as the Kofán owned territory.

My point however, is that the arrival of the oil company and the process of colonization by *cucama* prompted crucial changes in such vision of territorial property for it was inevitable for the Kofán peoples to incorporate a new set of boundaries and constrictions that fragmented the entire Kofán territory into subdivided owned portions. This certainly does not mean that the idea of *pa'tssi ingi ande* no longer meant that the space is constructed based on social relationships, it rather means that from the contact zone between *cucama* and A'I people formed since 1970s, new socio economical features, such as physical demarcation and monetary value, and new forms of collective property introduced by the state -as we shall see later-commonly regulate today part of those socio-spatial relationships. In Putumayo, in the same way as Rubenstein (2001) describes for the Ecuadorian Amazon piedmont in Ecuador, colonos believed that, in offering the indigenous peoples clothing and tools in return for giving up land, they were 'buying' land. Indians, however, believed that they were establishing a trading partnership in return for doing something they would in any case do a few years later -move to another location. A'I people in this sense, adopted the commodification of the land as a mechanism to satisfy immediate necessities without considering the possibility that sometime later, land scarcity would become their mayor problem for surviving collectively (see Pérez, 2008; Plan de Salvaguarda- Pueblo Cofán, 2010). Their territories were gradually surrounded with barbed wire, delimiting areas from which they became progressively excluded. The Guamuez Valley and San Miguel region was consequently transformed into agricultural plots, forested patches, and pockets of indigenous peoples living in a space characterized by new restrictions of use and mobility.

Greed or cultural incorporation?

Although as we have seen above, A'I people adopted the commodification of the land as a mechanism to satisfy immediate necessities, I believe that this understanding

should go beyond ideas of surviving or greedy Indians amidst adverse conditions and tempting offerings. As Stephen Hugh-Jones frames it: “One cannot help feeling that there is something deceptively straightforward about the oft-repeated story of forest Indians, seduced by worthless trinkets, pressured to accept unwanted and unnecessary goods, turned into indiscriminating consumers forced to sell their labour and produce on a ruthless market, who begin by losing their heads, and end up by losing their autonomy and culture as well” (Hugh-Jones, 1992:51). My point therefore is that the Kofán capitalist easy incorporation of land selling and marketing practices in general, must be seen under the light of their own cosmological conception of alterity both as potentially harmful but also as beneficial.

In anthropology, many ethnographers have addressed indigenous integration into capitalistic market relations as a central discussion for understanding sociocultural transformations. Sharp’s (1952) detailed ethnography of the Yir Yoront people in Australia for instance is interesting for it explores how towards the end of the 19th century, metal tools and other European artefacts began to filter into the Yoront territory. The flow increased with the gradual expansion of the white frontier. The short-handled steel axe was the most accepted and highly valued by aboriginals. Sharp demonstrates how the incorporation of this tool transformed the Yoront social relationships by altering authority roles, productive systems while changing the group’s former cosmography now permeated with symbolisms about white people and European goods. Colombian anthropologist Juan A. Echeverri (1997b) explores the same process of mythological appropriation of the technology of the metal tools—expressed metonymically in the figure of the iron axe. The iron axe was introduced to the lower Putumayo region in the 17th century by Luso-Brazilian traders; the axe is a fundamental technology for the social reproduction of these groups, which depend on gathering, fishing, hunting, and, mainly, slash-and-burn agriculture for their survival. The acquisition of the metal axes continued up to the 20th century through the trade of Indian slaves for metal tools. Some Indian groups gained influence and power through this trade. Nowadays the axe is a powerful symbol for indigenous people of this region such as the Andoque, who call themselves “the People of the Axe.” Stephen Hugh-Jones’ (1992) has provided a detailed analysis as well of the changes in indigenous consumption patterns in Amazonia -from metal tools, fishhooks, and blowguns a few decades ago, to motorboats and cocaine today- and how such changes have been internalized as part of their culture, which problematize the idea of Indians simply subsumed and deceived by imposed capitalist forms of commerce. In the same vein, Fisher (2000) describes how the Xikrin-Kayapo Indians of northern Brazil developed strong commercial relations with loggers, gold miners, and conservation organizations to get the most out of them. Fisher asks why Xikrin are obsessed with manufactured

trade goods. Observing that they do not distinguish between necessities and luxuries, he argues that “the intrinsic attractiveness or the innate superiority of Western manufactured products can explain neither the relatively restricted list of desired goods nor the quantities of goods considered satisfactory by the Xikrin” (2000:2). Fisher alerts anthropologists not to be blinded by the objective quality of these goods such as machetes and axes, even when they are demonstrably superior to their locally produced equivalents, for to be so would imply an acceptance of the West’s own claims about itself and human nature (Rubenstein, 2004:143). Instead, Fisher suggests that anthropologists should focus on “how such goods are acquired and incorporated into the lives and societies of indigenous peoples operating within different regimes of value and social structure” (2000:2). Michael Taussig’s (1987) work on the indigenous forced involvement in the rubber boom in Putumayo within the late 19th and early 20th centuries, brought about the concept of “space of death” to describe the complex social and symbolical dynamics created by the rubber tapping economy and the violent practices employed by colonist and government agents to incorporate indigenous peoples in it. Large indigenous populations of the northwest Amazonia were enticed by trade goods and forced with brutality, intimidation and violence to collect rubber, which created a system of native debt peonage with devastating social and demographic effects. However, as Taussig points out, this was not only about forced incorporation but a situation of symbolic exchange and cultural mutual permeation: “The creation of this space of death is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic and where the culture of terror flourishes. We may think of the space of death as a threshold, yet it is a wide space whose breadth offers positions of advance as well as of extinction” (1984:467). Walker (2012) has also examined the Amazonian Urarina peoples’ engagements with the system of debt peonage in light of the conceptual and ontological premises of the traditional subsistence economy. Walker suggests that explanations for Urarina’s deliberately and permanent engagement with traders on what may appear to be unequal terms, should be interpreted in light of their own theories of agency and subjectivity, a point made also by Graham (1995), and Henrich (1997) in Amazonia but also by Epstein (1962) in India, Bohannan (1959) in Africa, to Conklin (1997).

In spite the geographical several differences, all this literature ultimately expose how societies on the threshold of capitalist development necessarily interpret in precapitalist terms and practices their inclusion into market economies. This is certainly not to say that indigenous peoples does not present the same kind of rational decisions based on the objective value of goods, guided by utilitarian and functional premises expected from any culture dealing with capitalism. However, such decisions for indigenous peoples in Amazonia, are often mediated according to

their own preestablished cultural matrix, the symbolisms embedded in exchange transactions and their particular constructions of the Other based on their own cosmological structures and historical experiences.

In this sense, the Kofán engagement of the new socioeconomic practices such as selling their lands cannot be detached from their own Amazonian meanings and forms of interpretation of the modern experience of commodification of reality. While they sold pieces of land, I think they were perfectly aware of the dangers such transactions involved for their territorial autonomy. Although risky, this was, nevertheless, the natural way to adjust the eroded network of relationships that used to constitute *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Accordingly, in the same dangerous way they used to incorporate, deal, negotiate, and very often confront alterity such as with the *vajos*, *cocoyas* and invisible families before oil and colonization (see chapter 6), Kofán individuals, in modern conditions of contact, engaged new forms alterity following the same cultural pattern. Consider again Maria's testimony about her fathers' business with *cucama* when they arrived to his place asking for lands: "He knew that this was going to mean a problem with the *cucama* in the future, but he wanted to avoid any violence so he authorized those peoples to stay. Of course, he said they had to pay him for the land, and they did; or Ramón's comment on his initial friendly land business with the *cucama* family and the problems after such family started to grow. Both Kofán families sold, as many others, because there was enough land to share. But furthermore, because in entering into peaceful trading relations with *cucama* –something that had happened, of course in much lesser frequency, since the moderate colonization process after the Colombian war with Peru in 1932 - they thought that the territory constitution could include not only Indians but *mestizos* as well for pragmatic purposes. And they were right, for the incorporation of *cucama* people was certainly dangerous and deeply conflictive (as it is today) but also created new useful and functional forms of hybrid territorial engagement and social alliances that allowed the Kofán to thrive in a changing world. A territory now governed by the forces of private property, capitalism and resources' extractivism, and furthermore, in a region where real economic opportunities for both Indians and *cucamas*, given the isolated conditions and marketing difficulties, were severely limited. I will turn now to explore some examples of these useful and functional forms of hybrid territorial engagement which ultimately were culturally incorporated by the A'I people as intrinsic part of *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Piedmont hybrid territorialities

As Mariano's above story illustrates, before the massive colonization of the 1970s, Kofán had little contact with cucama people, and thus almost never intermarried with them. However, as Indian-colonist land transactions increased and therefore close cohabitation amidst land constraints, new forms of interethnic association appeared such as marriage, co-fatherhood, business partnerships and perhaps more significantly, shamanic relations between cucama people and Kofán families. Kofán in the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel were in much the same position as Killick (2008) has described for the Ashéninka people on the Ucayali River in Eastern Peru. That is, "they are integrated and knowledgeable participants in a wider capitalist economy. The nature of the capitalist system, however, does not mean that its ideology is all pervasive nor that it is necessarily connected to complete transformations of a society"(307). Accordingly, both cucama and Kofán people became, in spite of the conflicts that colonization generated, mutually defining parts of a hybrid and wider social system aimed to process, adopt and survive capitalist economy through practices.

Intercultural Compadrazgo

One of the most interesting cucama-Kofán social bonds formed out of their territorial cohabitation is compadrazgo (godparenthood). This term, as has been described by Mintz and Wolf (1950:341), designates the particular complex of relationships set up between individuals primarily, though not always, through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism. This relation establishes ideally a lifelong commitment of the *padrinos* (godfather and godmother) with the protection of the child. Kofán adopted this practice from the missionaries, but it became a fundamental part of their cultural pattern of building relationships with others. As Cepek (2008b) writes, "Cofán borrowed godparent and 'accompaniment parenthood' (Uzendoski 2005: 79) practices with relish. Ideally, a community takes the shape of a kindred writ large. Anyone who is not united to others by antia (kin) ties becomes a ritual relative, often three and four times over" (342). Hence, although the compadrazgo relationship was originally circumscribed to a person inside the limits of the immediate biological family of the child, through the process of intercultural contact it was extended to comprise functional alliances between families with different ethnic and social backgrounds.

As a form of cohabitation, compadrazgo in the Putumayo has a twofold meaning. It offers, on the one hand, a pragmatic way to deal with limited environmental conditions and work force by extending and sharing productive and family responsibilities (van Den Berghe, 1966; Gudeman, 1972). In addition, I suggest, it is an effective way to transform dangerous others into 'ritual relatives' using Cepek's

term. According to this argument, compadrazgo is as a practical social institution, which as Killick (2008, 2010) contends is a central mechanism in local rural economies. He asserts that “rather than being between the godparent and child the most important relationship tends to be between the parent and godparent” (2008:322). The importance of this relationship in isolated regions such as Ucayali or Putumayo is associated with the permanent demand of shared workforce to deal with the productive difficulties inherent to isolated rainforest conditions (*Ibid*: 322). Taita Miguel described this functional aspect of compadrazgo very well:

“Alirio Cruz is my compadre. Alirio married my sister and we used to work together in a sawmill in San Miguel. Then Federico, my eldest son was born. Since Federico was born, Alirio was very attentive with him so we named him padrino (godfather) of Federico. He used to buy shoes and clothes for Federico with the money he received from selling wood in La Hormiga. When Federico was very sick from that disease that attacked his lungs it was only Alirio who gave us the money to pay for his treatment in Ecuador. Furthermore, during that time I could not work in my chagra because of the inzia iyo (poisonous green snake) bite, and he used to help me cleaning the undergrowth and bringing plantains and yucca (manioc) to eat here. He is a good man with me, my sister and his ahijado (godson). This is why when he comes here I prepare special Yagé to cure him. I also prepare good medicines so he can cui'ye ccopa'choeñe (drink purgative medicines) and thus be strong enough to resist la bejuqueada (ingesting Yagé). I do that because since the time Federico was born he asked me to teach him about Yagé medicine, and after all he had done how could I say no to him?”

Taita Miguel's relationship with his compadre is common in regions which, like the Putumayo, are characterized by political and economic exclusion, harsh environmental conditions, and land constraints. Accordingly, compadrazgo implies the formation of solidarity ties between families, comprising reciprocity, as an important component, especially regarding labour exchange in family agriculture or logging. Since the second half of the 20th century, interactions between Kofán and their cucama neighbours shifted, with some exceptions, from those dominated by fear, avoidance, and hostility to regular contacts, trade, and intermarriage. Such transition led to even more intimacy, and compadrazgo became a serious and lifelong commitment between indigenous and cucama families, which from the Kofán perception were largely considered as dangerous.

The compadrazgo institution, I suggest, has served as an effective mechanism through which to incorporate otherness into *pa'tssi ingi ande* while reducing the

intrinsic danger that such process intrinsically entails. As mentioned before (see chapter 6-7), for Kofán individuals, the incorporation of alterity into the social and economic functioning of the society represents 'safety' as long as there is a 'proper' mixing with such Other. Such relations are thus categorized as trustful and necessary insofar there is "fulfilled reciprocity in contrast to unfulfilled reciprocity where dangerous forces meet one another dangerously" (Overing, 1983-1984:333). Hence the ritual functionality of the *compadrazgo* institution, for it allowed Kofán to create and maintain ties of friendship and alliance especially expressed in spaces of shared labour and family celebrations, in spite of generalized sentiments of ethnic identity that emphasize differences and conflict between the them. Here lies thus a fundamental difference between Asháninka *compadrazgo* as described by Killick and the Kofán in Putumayo. In Ucayali, this interethnic institution involves an intrinsic hierarchical separation between Indians and mestizos underscoring the wider self-perception of the later as being at the "the vanguard of Peruvian civilization" (Killick, 2008: 323). *Compadrazgo* is thus grounded on an unequal relation between indigenous peoples providing force of labour and mestizo people controlling most of the productive process and economic profits in Peru. The economics of the relationship are undoubtedly exploitative in nature and so the relationships involved should not be overly romanticized. In contrast, the Kofán *compadrazgo* does not present such disparity. Economic and social relations between A'I individuals and *cucama* *compadres* inhabiting the same places tend to be based on more equal conditions and expectations from each other. Despite the differences between the two systems, Killicks' argument is successful in presenting precisely how, particularly in the Ucayali case, the *compadrazgo* institution is used to counter the worst excesses of deceit and exploitation, a process that can be also seen in the Kofán case and their incorporation of *cucamas* into the reformulated structure of *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Agricultural partnerships

In Putumayo almost all of the food produced is for household consumption and a small part is for selling in local markets (Lair and Sánchez, 2004). Small amounts of manioc, plantains and fruits are sold in small urban centres for marginal profit, given their low value and high transport costs. In this context indigenous people do not have access to traditional forms of finance because of their poverty and lack of collateral for loan guarantees. Furthermore, even when sources of finance are available, the people often lack the training and experience in law, economics, accounting, and administration necessary to tap these sources successfully and manage their own development agendas (see Davis and Partridge, 1994). Without credit institutions, bank loans, or investment capital in general, many indigenous

families have been establishing diverse forms of productive partnerships with cucama peoples for whom in some cases it is easier to access loans given that they, in contrast to indigenous peoples in this region, hold bank accounts and therefore the possibility of asking for small credits. But more commonly, because peasants are more prone to save money to be reinvested in agricultural initiatives; furthermore, cucama peoples have relatives working in small towns such as La Hormiga or La Dorada, which owns farm products shops, and thus, they can ask for the necessary inputs for agriculture and pay later. Taita Cristobal has been relying on this system both to obtain economic benefits but also to be able to have enough food for him and his wife:

“My cousin Marta is married to Ramiro. He is a Cucama who came to Putumayo from Huila. They do not live within the resguardo but we have an agreement. I lend them land and they bring seeds to plant. We harvest together, and then we split the profits. But I have done the same not only with relatives like Marta, but also with other landless cucama because now I know them. That way is better because now that my sons are living out of the resguardo I can't work the chagra alone, I need help, so they come and stay here and help me to produce food”.

My friend Cristobal, as many other Kofán, plant rice or corn seeds for instance, financed by mestizo partners and sharing profits. Such relations are not exclusively economic. Friendship and solidarity between families is an essential part of the social configuration of the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel region, involving ideas of love and morality as well as material and pragmatic concerns in spite the permanent tension intrinsic to this relation since the 1970s cucama people's aggressive colonization of indigenous lands. In these new ambiguous relationships with peasants Kofán have found the possibility to overcome many difficulties intrinsic to the new changing socio cultural conditions and amid increasing land and economic pressures. Interethnic cooperation formed an intertwined indigenous-peasant territorial use, certainly the most effective option for indigenous and mestizo individuals to deal with poverty and labour force requirements.

In Kofán Resguardos such as Santa Rosa del Guamuez, one of the most affected settlements given its proximity to mestizo's towns as La Hormiga and San Antonio, this form of partnership occurred often since indigenous person's right to usufruct the land of their Resguardo can be coupled with cucama's continued access to capital, goods and the necessary equipment. As I shall explain in more detail later, this model of agricultural partnerships started in the 1970s in order to produce diverse staple crops, was employed again during the 1980s and 1990s but now, the

main objective of such agreements was to produce coca. Thus, as we shall see in chapter 10, many cucama subsequently sought this type of productive alliance in order to use Kofán territories to produce coca leaves that are eventually transformed in cocaine in other neighbouring regions. At the beginning, the cucama provided coca seeds and the contacts with coca buyers as part of these partnerships, and the Kofán contributed mainly with the necessary land and labour. Later, some Kofán were able not only to produce but also to establish such contacts directly without the cucama mediation.

Logging partnerships

Another example of this indigenous and non-indigenous conviviality and economic collaboration occurred during the late 1970s and 1980s. During this time, many indigenous peoples from the Guamuez Valley went to the San Miguel area, close to Puerto Colón, because of the rise in the commercial exploitation of Amazonian cedar and the consequent surge in demand for labour. Inside these sawmills, indigenous from all around the piedmont, afro-Colombians from the pacific coast, and mestizos from the Andean region, lived together for long periods. In these places, several indigenous individuals were able not only to find a job as logger and work for white patrones (bosses), but they created strategic alliances with them as business partners as well. Such partnerships are crucial for indigenous people lacking bureaucratic know-how and capital to participate in commercial timber extraction. The possibility of working for or with cucama people in the extractivist economy attracted migrants from all around the country, which eventually settled in this area for extended periods. The San Miguel region economy was consequently transformed into a mixed system that combined productive knowledge and practices from each of the diverse groups arriving. Timber, rice, corn and coca were the bases of the local economy in which indigenous and non-indigenous participated as employees most of the time but in some cases as equal partners, selling their products in Puerto Asís, Mocoa and Puerto Leguízamo.

The frequency of interethnic partnerships to extract hardwoods during the 1980s in rural areas such as San Miguel were particularly relevant in the Kofán process of reformulating *pa'tssi ingi ande*, revealing how powerlessness can generate new forms of resource management that synthesize diverse and formerly opposed constructions of nature. The effects of this process are not only limited therefore to the evident deforestation of this border region given the intensity of the hardwoods' bonanza during these years. But furthermore, what remains now from this contact moment, is a system of collaboration in which the boundaries between cucama and indigenous territorial conceptions are certainly unclear.

Intercultural Mingas

These processes of cultural, territorial, and economic hybridization can also be seen in the widespread colonists' adoption and internalization of the indigenous community-wide labour or minga. Mingas are rotating reciprocal labour exchanges that have historically occurred between indigenous families joined by marriage, ritual kinship or compadrazgo (Uzendoski, 2004: 340). Whitten describes the minga as 'goal-oriented collective action' (1985: 95) and a typical minga in the past may have involved building a house or clearing a forested area for cultivation and the beneficiary would reward those who participated with substantial amounts of food and drink. Mingas thus served to reaffirm and strengthen social ties, or to weaken them when assistance was withheld (see Erazo, 2010:124).

In spite of the colonial origin of the minga, as a mechanism instituted by Spanish authorities to organize and control already existent practices of collective labour among Amerindians, it was incorporated in the aftermath of the colonial period as a fundamental part of the indigenous identity, kinship and economic system. Mingas are organized today by the cabildo for community works, or by families for diverse agricultural tasks. In Kofán communities, these gatherings are at the same time social encounters, thus, characterized by its abundance of manioc or chontaduro (*Bactris gasipaes*) beer and alcohol, gossip and laughter, fighting and flirting.

Following processes of colonization and close cohabitation, mingas ceased to be exclusive spaces of indigenous interaction and started to involve cucama families. They have become spheres of cultural permeation between the indigenous and peasant worldviews, regarding political, agricultural, cosmological, family and community issues (Korovkin, 1997; Erazo, 2010). Within the last years I have had the opportunity to attend to innumerable mingas in which indigenous and non-indigenous have worked in tasks such as opening or cleaning roads; improving the cabildo's infrastructure; helping one or another neighbour with his chagra; mowing the soccer field; or building a U'fa tsau (house of Yagé). During these activities cucama and Kofán people always treated others as equals in spite the cultural differences, sharing alcohol and making fun of each other. The problems of the resguardo were discussed in open conversations and cucamas' opinions were taken into consideration by indigenous peoples without evident disregard. Mingas, as I experienced them, were spaces of contact in which interethnic ties are reinforced and remain the basis upon which more amicable relationships such as compadrazgos and agricultural partnerships could be built in the future between families. With this, I am not implying that mingas are simply the happy ending of a

long story of colonialism and intercultural conflict, but rather, that they represent an ongoing shift in the nature of relationships between, on the one hand, enmity, distrust, and violence, and, on the other, affinity, friendship, and exchange. These are precisely the kind of ambiguous social dynamics behind the shape-shifting character of the Kofán territory for its definition can reflect paradoxically a strong indigenous reluctance to see cucama people as intrinsic part of such relational ontology of the territory -as it happens in land claims' discourses and political arenas- while in the day to day, mingas, as the rest of the examples of partnerships presented here, allows us to see how relations of alterity are essential in the process of Kofán territory -making.

Cucama and Kofán territorial hybridity and the reformulation of pa'tssi ingi ande

As we have seen through the above testimonies, the Kofán territorial history is fraught with episodes of contact, conflict and alliance with different Others; a situation that seems to illustrate the kind of political dynamics surrounding material and discursive struggles over the environment in the so-called 'third world'. This is naturally a central issue in political ecology debates focused on the politics of difference rooted in the ecological and cultural conditions of local peoples, and their emancipation strategies for decolonization of knowledge, reinvention of territories and reappropriation of nature (Leff, 1994, 2012; Greenberg and Park, 1994; Bryant, 1998; Escobar, 1999; Bailey and Bryant, 2005).

Accordingly, the certainly conflictive but also very ambiguous relationships between cucama and Kofán in the form of partnerships and confrontations, are part of this critical debate, for they might be seen as products of a politicized environment in which conflict and alliance over access to land and environmental resources are linked to trans-local and global wider systems of political and economic control. For instance, large part of the rural poverty problem in the Colombian Andean area that caused peasants to leave their farms and invade indigenous territories in Putumayo is related to profligate and ruinous land buying and settlement practices. Such historical situation has resulted in a monopoly-owned development pattern in the Andes that has not been altered in the last century - except to replace rich families ownership of many large tracts of land by corporate ownership or drug lords (Gómez and Duque, 1998; Fernandez, et.al. 2009). On the other hand, oil extractivism as the other crucial variable affecting the Kofán territorial sovereignty is obviously characterized also by its oligopolistic and worldwide dimensions. Local cultural and territorial dynamics are thus inevitably related to larger economic and political systems and, as the Putumayo illustrates, the product of very often externally imposed and locally negotiated epistemologies, under conditions of

coercion and injustice (Porto-Gonçalves, 2001; Escobar, 2008; Blaser, 2009; Leff, 2013).

It is difficult however to use political ecology scopes to observe the Putumayo situation for in most of these works there is a tendency to underscore the differences (cultural, social or economic) between confronted actors, constructing scenarios of opposed factions. Of course this is inevitable when observing power relations between international mining companies and small-scale indigenous societies for instance. But then you have places such as the Guamuez and San Miguel region in which political-ecological relations and conflicts occur between actors arguably at the same level. And furthermore, where social institutions such as intercultural mingas and compadrazgos, or agricultural, logging, and coca production-partnerships are common practices between such factions living in a long-standing social and territorial conflict. The wide acceptance of these social institutions among Indians and mestizos makes difficult, therefore, to clearly delineate a final structure of the conflict for there are not simple sharp cultural divisions between actors but shared forms of social and territorial engagement. Thus, what I found in this contact zone between Kofán and the cucama people might be better understood through what Mbembe's (1992:4) calls an "illicit cohabitation". This sort of postcolonial relationship indicates the author, is contrary to mainstream classifications based either/or on collaboration or resistance. He argues that illicit cohabitation is charged with familiarity and domesticity whose principal motif is to maintain and propagate the interests of the different political actors implicated in this relationship. As such, this situation demands an alternative understanding since "In the face of such obvious ambiguities (...) it seems that imposing a universal dialectic of power and resistance on diverse and complex situations may narrow rather than open the scope for interpretation" (Blom Hansen and Stepputat, 2001: 33).

Here lies my point about contact zones to analyse polarities from a different perspective, and the reason why I suggest that not only political ecology but cultural hybridization as well, is a good point of departure to understand changing relations of interethnic friendship and enmity in the Amazon piedmont. In this sense, the contact zone between cucama and Kofán people illustrate how cultures are porous; they are open to intermixture with other different cultures, and they are subject to historical change precisely on account of these influences (Sahlins, 1985; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Stewart, 1999). In this case, the concept of cultural 'hybridity' serves to undermine imposed and fixed oppositions between the external culture of capitalist land commodification and the allegedly indigenous mechanical and unreasonable acceptance of a foreign and destructive economic and cultural

systems. This is, in other terms, to recognize the porosity of the line between 'cucama' and 'Indian' instead of defining two impermeable, closed, and immobile socio-cultural categories. As Said expresses it: all cultures are involved in one another; none is simple and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic" (1993: xxv). Nonetheless, as different commentators, from a range of disciplines have taken hybridity in different directions, with varied analytical objectives, it is by now itself a term which is far from unambiguous (Hannerz, 2000: 18).

Hybridity has become one of the most recurrent concepts in postcolonial cultural criticism and social anthropology.⁷³ It is meant to foreclose the diverse forms of purity encompassed within essentialist theories. As such, instead of explaining these contacts as mere impositions of a major culture onto a minor culture, hybridity emphasizes their mutual intermingling (Friedman, 1997; Bakhtin, 1981, Bhabha, 1994). From this perspective it is easier to see how the Kofán adoption of certain cucama productive and cultural practices eventually became intrinsic part of their day-to-day, functioning as a hybridized social group in particular domestic spaces, in spite of the underlying territorial problems. This is certainly not to talk about the dissolution of the social and economic differences between colonists and Indians, but to say that the encounter of the two of them opened a new space of territorial engagement that created or combined distinct forms of alliance to overcome the adverse conditions of isolation and market limitations of the region. Hybridization in this regard, cannot be seen thus as two or more discrete cultural structures colliding and naturally producing some sort of a "third language"- borrowing Roland Barthes terms- that is neither the one nor the other. When cultural hybridization is addressed from this popular perspective (as it is done with mestizaje in academic and political fields as well, see de la Cadena, 2005), it is impossible not to sense that "Words have the taste of a profession," (Bakhtin, 1981:293) and thus that the term hybridity reveals a subtle taste from biological studies.

In fact, I believe that the Kofán accepted these new forms of hybrid territorialities not just because of the practical benefits of such alliances - that ended up with hybrid forms of cultural coexistence- but also because they wanted, as an indigenous collective, to gain certain levels of control within an imposed structure of domination. As Hiddleston (2009) points out, "Hybridity is the effect of the drive towards the cultural assimilation of the colonized, but at the same time it subverts

⁷³ This is not a new topic in anthropology, together with hybridity, collage, *mélange*, hotchpotch, montage, synergy, bricolage, creolization, mestizaje, mongrelization, syncretism, transculturation, third cultures; some of these terms are used perhaps only in passing as summary metaphors, others with claims to more analytical status, and others again with more regional or thematic strongholds (Hannerz, 2000:13).

the authority and self-presence of the imposed culture. It is not an alternative identity, but an effect of that can in turn be deployed as a ruse against the authority from which it is in part derived”(120). My argument is that in spite of the devastating effects for Kofán’s territorial sovereignty, environment, and cultural survival, which I certainly do not want to ignore, examples such as the voluntary Kofán commodification of the land and their eagerness to participate in the emergent market economy by forming logging and agricultural partnerships, was a process with a certain grade of indigenous agency that permitted the Kofán to confront the imposition of new territorialities while negotiating and seizing them.

But it should be noted that when talking about hybridization between indigenous and non-indigenous societies, it is crucial to recognize further that cultural values, fundamental to the Kofán themselves, informed this ongoing dynamic. Thus, although interethnic processes of hybridization may in part have their origins in Western hegemonic forces causing the territorial conditions of land encroachment so essential for the hybridization effect, the Kofán intertwined patterns of friendship and conflict with ambiguous Others certainly existed before the arrival of colonists.

With the above in mind, we can now revisit the idea of *pa’tssi ingi ande*. While external forces, be they missionaries, colonial epidemics, or contemporary oil exploitation and the aggressive process of colonization have all played a key role in triggering indigenous conflicts, it is also clear that these agents and events have been actively incorporated into an interethnic sphere in culturally specific ways. From this perspective, I would suggest that changing relations of alterity are an intrinsic aspect of indigenous social worlds, and therefore, people such as the Kofán, rather than being the simple victims of external forces of capitalism and western culture, have been able to incorporate these processes of contact into their own form of sociality and territorial engagement. Hence, in a relation punctuated by conflict and violence, Kofán families accepted mestizo men and women as husbands and wives, forming eventually interethnic kin. Furthermore, they shared parcels of land and worked together to produce the necessary staples for both indigenous and non-indigenous families. Without medical services provided by the state, colonist found in Kofán medicine the solution to physical and spiritual illnesses, to the point that certain colonist themselves requested to be trained in Yagé shamanism in order to become Taitas. The Kofán adopted cucama productive technologies such as herbicides and a new set of western tools in exchange for their medical and shamanic knowledge, therefore advising colonists on how to be lucky or overcome an enemy. They formed alliances such as *compadrazgo*, an institution that goes beyond a functional agreement between two families, standing rather as a ritual bond capable of unifying two distinct social poles with lifelong responsibilities for

one to another. All these examples of conviviality amidst conditions of confrontation, might be seen as the practical response to changing socioeconomic conditions in Putumayo, but could have never worked as they did if the Kofán did not have a preestablished cultural pattern of alterity engagement in which others are seen both as simultaneously harmful and beneficial.

Approaching hybridity from this perspective avoids the creation of generic paradigms that undermine how the special indigenous cultural features constrain, lead, and shape intermingling processes. This point certainly does not presuppose purity in the conception of indigenous culture as opposed to an external and more 'mixed culture'. Both are unbounded, unstable and heterogeneous historical products. In this way, "today's hybridization will simply give way to tomorrow's hybridization, the form of which will be dictated by historico-political events and contingencies" (Stewart, 1999: 41). Thus, as power relations in the Amazon region become increasingly interethnic and diverse (Greene 2004), hybridization cannot be reduced or associated with assimilation or acculturation paradigms. This is, in other words, to observe that cultural hybridity implies the maintenance of enduring spaces for racial-cultural difference alongside spaces of sameness and homogeneity (Wade 2005:252). As Santos Granero points out "what appear to be expressions of acculturative processes" such as the Kofán adoption of several cultural features, "are the result of a long-standing indigenous openness to the other—particularly the white and mestizo others—and the native conviction that the Self is possible only through the incorporation of the Other (2009: 479). This point is pivotal in Amazonian anthropology, where self-representation changes, identity-making practices and bodily transformations, either intended or unintended, can cause or be caused by diverse forms of interethnic contact and cultural hybridity such as the exchange of bodily substances following activities such as sexual intercourse, food exchanges, commensality and sleeping together, participating in homicide, wearing Western-style clothes, ornaments, and forms of body treatment, or living in close proximity (see Taussig, 1993; Gow, 1991 ; 2000 ; Lagrou 2000 ; Conklin, 2001 ; Fausto 2002 ; 2007; Rival 1998 ; 1999 ; Santos Granero, 2009b ; Vilaça 2005 , 2007; Oakdale, 2008). From all this literature we can see how anthropologists have overturned assumptions about phenomena previously understood solely in terms of acculturation or assimilation, demonstrating instead the agency of indigenous peoples in engaging positively with white Others (see Course, 2013: 773).

In this sense, there are certainly many aspects of Kofán life which revolve around an attempt to engage positively with alterity; to create the Self through the incorporation of the Other; and to constantly reformulate the idea of *pa'tssi ingi ande* in the course of alterity encounters in order to endure and subvert unbalanced

power relations. It is thus in all these dialectics with Others where I suggest the kaleidoscopic nature of Kofán collective and individual identities are grounded. Given the dynamism of intercultural encounters, the territory as reflection of such changeable identities becomes also a shape-shifting construction. From here is easy to see the complexity of Indian-white relationships and deconstruct basic stereotypes about indigenous social entities as culturally bounded and impermeable unities, or the opposite, as always culturally vulnerable groups walking the inevitable way to cultural extinction due the their blind acceptance of alien western cultures.

I propose therefore, that the encounter between Kofán families and the cucama people is a watershed moment in many ways, particularly in terms of the kinds of politics and economics of space that were so central in the rise of modernity in this isolated region of Colombia. As I shall explore in more detail in the next chapter, from this encounter, the Kofán started not only to incorporate those new Others but also to confront them. The physical violence and sorcery attacks employed in the past to stop colonial forces and missionaries were coupled with new political mechanisms, legal discourses, and modern techniques of negotiation. Accordingly Kofán learned the foundations of the state language, which allowed them to live through, talk about and act upon a new social order characterized by domination. This process fostered in turn, the initial construction of an Indian ethnic identity as a political force, changing previous forms of self-representation, and therefore, transforming *pa'tssi ingi ande* into a different network of relationships now involving not only cucama spatial conceptions but state self-serving mechanisms of territorial organization and control.

Chapter 9

Land Claims, State Languages and Modern Indigenous Territorialities

During my experience working with indigenous peoples in Putumayo, I was able to see frequently the efforts made by Kofán indigenous politicians to create discursive elaborations of 'differential geographies' (Castree, 2004) in public political speeches. That is, to construct the concept of territory as a differentiated indigenous cultural and spatial realm. From this perspective, the *territorio indígena* is presented as a space that is incompatible and intrinsically opposed to oil, warfare, mining, and cocaine-related activities. In order to defend cultural projects and territorial claims in political arenas, the notion of differential geographies, understandably, puts forward dichotomous images of indigenous territories as outside, and I would say, opposed to some of the most pervasive violent and economic dynamics of Colombia and the state forms of territorialization. Accordingly, the concept of territory is elaborated with particular emphasis on such cosmological aspects as the ritual relations with intangible entities and the environment, sacred landscapes, shamanic knowledge and ancestrality, history and resistance; all the kind of common elements that constitute today the ethnic-political discourse of several Amazonian indigenous groups (Ramos 1994a, 1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Slater 1996; Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Graham, 2005; Hennessy 2008; Bolaños 2010). When indigenous peoples make claims on the basis of ethnic difference or ancestral rights, they are also establishing a particular form of political dialogue with the state. This particular dialogue is consistent with the premise that ethnic difference must be situated within the framework of the overarching administrative and legal apparatus of the state (Rappaport and Dover, 1996:24). Therefore, it is precisely by using legal tools conceived within this apparatus, such as the adoption of colonial institutions such as Resguardos and Indian Reserves, that indigenous populations construct and legitimize the differential political conception of the *territorio indígena*. Hence, as Lazarus-Black and Hirsch (1994) indicate, indigenous movements' actions have contested the law through the means of the law by negotiating and relocating itself within the national Constitution and legal frameworks.

This chapter explores ethnographically the origins of this political dialogue between Kofán people and the state; I am particularly interested in unravelling the specific events that might have shaped such notion of differential geographies. I will attempt to show that oil extractivist activities together with the colonist's land intrusion processes described in previous chapters, impelled certain Kofán individuals to open a new channel of communication and alliance with the

Colombian state in order to obtain legal protection from these threats. One consequence of this dialogue was the formation of a new contact zone between indigenous peoples and the state. From this process, the Kofán adopted specific and contradictory state languages, and more importantly, they were able to incorporate as essential part of their *pa'tssi ingi ande* conception, the Resguardo and Indian Reserve categories. Ultimately, I argue, Kofán, as many other indigenous groups in Amazonia, were able to reformulate previous self-representations and territorial conceptions, now linked to the strategic production of essentialized identities and differential geographies (Ramos 1994a, 1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Graham, 2005). Through this model of distinct people embedded in distinct places they seized their collective identity as a performance strategy in order to establish relations with the state (see Gros 1998), a process that changed the entire structure of the territory as a relational social fabric.

The chapter is divided in two parts. First, I provide an overview of the indigenous political struggles in south-western Colombia, specifically in the Cauca region, which as several Colombian scholars suggest, played a key role the formation of indigenous ethnopolitical identities in Colombia (Sevilla-Casas, 1976; Rappaport and Robert, 1996; Echeverri, 2005; Laurent, 2005; Rappaport, 2007; Troyan, 2008). I explore the influence of the events in the Cauca Andean region on the state indigenous policies, and on Kofán constructions of politico-territorial discourse, as well as their own particular relationship with the state. In the second part I focus on the effects of these dynamics on the Kofán conception of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. In short, I examine some of the most relevant shifts in Kofán ethnic, political, and cultural understandings of territory as the outcome of the encounter with the state legal languages and its forms of territorial integration.

Land struggles in southern Colombia and the formation of indigenous-state dialogues through the INCORA

During the 1970's and 1980's the indigenous communities of the Cauca region emerged as a major political force that successfully mobilized to achieve economic and political changes. During this time, indigenous groups, in conjunction with the nation-state, elaborated a new reciprocal relationship that stressed the ethnic character of the claims made by indigenous groups and at the same time gradually limiting the class element of these claims (Troyan, 2008:167).

Part of the remarkable capacity of the Cauca indigenous movement to strategically mobilize around discourses of cultural identity in order to achieve territorial goals was largely due to the unconditional support of certain agents of the Instituto

Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (INCORA). This institute was created during the early 1960's, when national leaders in Colombia faced the threat of insurgency with the formation of peasant "independent republics" and new communist guerrilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN). Embedded in these groups' platforms were demands for land reform. Concerned about these demands, and given the increasing popular support of insurgent groups in rural areas, the government passed the Social Agrarian Reform Act (Law 135), which also established the land reform agency INCORA as a semi- autonomous governmental agency to direct the process of land redistribution (Albertus and Kaplan, 2013:203) for small farmers.

Although INCORA focused on mestizo peasants at the outset, the dynamic work of indigenous leaders from Cauca encouraged Institute agents to include indigenous land claims in this region (Findji, 1978; Rappaport, 2007, García, 2009). The nascent indigenous movement was successful in opening a channel of political dialogue with the state, and more importantly, focused the attention of the Colombian government around land issues not only in the Cauca region in other marginal areas, such as the Amazon piedmont. During the first half of the 1970s, a few Kofán leaders expressed to the INCORA their inconformity with oil extraction and the subsequent intrusion of colonists in their territories. As a result INCORA sent a lawyer to supervise and report the situation between the Texas Petroleum Company (Texaco-Gulf), the colonists and the A'I people. In his subsequent report the INCORA delegate argued that the Kofán had clear knowledge of their lands and thus deserving of legal protection.⁷⁴

This was a time in which many leftists entered into government service, hoping-against all odds-to contribute to an effective agrarian reform (see Rappaport, 2005:123). The attention provided by the Institute's delegate to the Kofán claims stemmed thus from this new but very moderate leftist trend within INCORA, but it was further related to an emerging *indigenismo* ideology inside the Colombian state during the 1970s, concerned with the cultural disintegration of indigenous communities.⁷⁵ The arrival of this ideological tendency in Colombia influenced sectors of the Colombian government, such as INCORA, which hand in hand with the recent inquiry field of applied anthropology in Colombia contributed to newly

⁷⁴ INCORA and Roque Roldan Ortega, Memorandum to Carlos Sanchez Ramos, March 1, 1968.

⁷⁵ The term *indigenismo* in Colombia comes from a long tradition of scholars, mainly anthropologists and indigenous activists since the 1940s (Friede, 1944; García, 1945, 1952; Friedemann, 1975). Largely influenced by the expanding concern in Latin America, especially in Mexico, regarding the pervasive asymmetrical relations between indigenous peoples and national societies, the impacts of rapid sociocultural changes, and modernity-induced transformations of indigenous traditional lifestyles, indigenism became a political ideology intended to balance power relations but also to incorporate indigenous societies within the state-nation project (Correa, 2006:18).

formed spaces of communication between indigenous peoples and the state (Hernández de Alba, 1958; 1965). Institutional tendencies guided by indigenist ideas, discourses, categorizations, rules, strategies, and official actions were thus intended to instill indigenous peoples with a sense of national allegiance, while indigenous peoples carved out an institutional niche to further their own agendas and advance their demands for citizenship (De la Peña, 2005:719). In this sense, INCORA's *indigenistas* were against those state policies that privatized indigenous communal territories, promoting agricultural colonization as part of a process of national territorial consolidation. While in some regions of the country landlords, politicians and the Catholic Church were taking possession of large extensions of land, part of the INCORA personnel was struggling to stop rural inequalities and defending land reforms (see Bonilla, 1968; Ulloa, 2004; Laurent, 2005). Regarding INCORAS' first encounter with the Kofán, Taita Cristobal remembers:

"They helped us at the beginning. They came here and discussed about the cucama people and how they had affected the way we used to live. We were told that in the near future we would become mestizos if we were not careful enough to protect our lands. They saw how some Kofán families had already begun selling land pieces to settlers and that is why they were worried, telling us that we had to fight using the law to stop the cucama invasion. But at the beginning there was not too many of us eager to do so for we knew the government through the experience we had with the oil people, so that is why we were cautious. Furthermore, many of the things they said and the documents they presented us were strange to us, especially because not too many knew how to read".

Taita Cristobal's comment is interesting for it suggests the level of Kofán unfamiliarity with the state bureaucratic apparatus, with legal concepts related to cultural and territorial rights, and particularly, with the legal figure of *resguardo* as an external instrument to protect their lands. This is so, for in the isolated rainforests of the Amazonian and Pacific Coast regions, *resguardos* are of a much more recent origin in contrast with the Andean region where large part of the colonial economy and territorial management were based in this system (Friede, 1944; Herrera and Bonett, 2001). Accordingly, while the initial contact and circulation of political codes, devices, and legal knowledges between Kofán leaders and the state was occurring in Putumayo, the indigenous struggle in other Andean areas was quite advanced. The leaders of the indigenous movement, for instance, were already using old colonial titles, the new agrarian reform legislation, and several other laws to call for the responsibility of the government in returning to indigenous communities the communal lands that legitimately belonged to them

since pre-colonial times (Findji 1992: 118; Rappaport 1992; Kloosterman 1994). The ethnopolitical movement, in a completely different context from that of the Amazon piedmont and lowlands, had grown to the point that diverse indigenous communities were successful in recovering large territories formerly taken from them by powerful landowners. Notwithstanding the fact this 'recuperation movement' was initially targeted with high levels of violence, perpetrated by the military and local security forces in the pay of landowners, the struggle for land considerably strengthened indigenous communities and reconstituted cabildo authority (Van de Sandt, 2003).

The rise and failure of Indigenous Reserves to protect territorial rights

Whatever the differences between the political processes surrounding land claims in the Andean and Amazon lowlands' during the early 1970s, the Kofán persisted in calling attention to the problem of colonization, calling for the recognition of their ancestral lands. In 1973, after years of lobbying and bureaucratic wrangling, the Institute recognised Kofán territories under the legal figure of *Zonas de carácter especial para las comunidades indígenas de la región* ("Zones of special character for indigenous communities of the region) warning that in such zones: '(...) *la ocupación o subsecuente adjudicación de tierras a favor de personas diferentes a los aborígenes no será permitida*' ("the occupation or subsequent adjudication of land in favor of people different from the aborigines will not be permitted").⁷⁶ The recognition of the reserves was associated with the Plan Nacional Indigenista of 1967: A plan to set a policy regarding indigenous peoples with the purpose of seeking prompt and appropriate solutions to their situation of neglect and progressive abandonment of their "authentic" and "traditional life forms". The program concluded that indigenous cultural disintegration and social inequality was the consequence of the "subjugation exerted by white populations on them" creating situations of "regional colonialism".⁷⁷

During the 1970s, the zones of special character for indigenous communities were converted into 'Indigenous Reserves', which the Colombian government defined as distinct pieces of land separated for a number of purposes that range from environmental conservation, natural resources extraction, and in some cases, the protection of indigenous people⁷⁸. Between 1973 and 1976, Kofán obtained legal

⁷⁶ INCORA, Resolución no. 168, Octubre 28, 1968, Artículo 3.

⁷⁷ División de Asuntos Indígenas ('Division of Indian Affairs'), 'Plan Nacional Indigenista. 1967-1970'. CO.AGN.SR.60A.30.44.3.3. Folio 108, 1967

⁷⁸ Caja de Crédito Agrario, Industrial, Minero (Colombia), Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria, Colombia. División Operativa de Asuntos Indígenas, and Instituto de Desarrollo de los Recursos Naturales Renovables. "Política del Gobierno Nacional para la defensa de los derechos indígenas y la conservación ecológica de la cuenca amazónica". República de Colombia, 1989.

recognition for 30.000 hectares of the 70.000 originally agreed with INCORA to be recognized as Indigenous Reserve. This reduced area was distributed in five Reserves: Afilador Campo-Campo Alegre; Santa Rosa del Guamuez, Bocanas de Luzón; Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos and Yarinal san Marcelino. As some elders of Santa Rosa del Guamuez remember, INCORA's measures to safeguard the Kofán territory from the violent land encroachment were not completely effective, and, as Mariano recounts, not only because of the insufficient number of hectares titled:

"We accepted the idea of turning the territory into reserve for we had no other way to fight back the Peasant Organization from Puerto Asís. They were helping the cucama peoples to colonize our lands and if we resisted they were violent. They had also papers to defend themselves and those papers were coming from the government. But then INCORA's people came here and said that no matter how many papers they [colonists] had we also had our own ancestral rights and the reserves would be the shield to protect those rights. So we trusted them and then, even with the reserve's titles, the cucama continued arriving. Nothing changed".

Nothing changed indeed: following the Institute's initial move, there was no further action for four years and several colonist families took control over large portions of the A'I lands during those same years. Furthermore, the legal documents produced in the central offices of INCORA in Bogotá meant little in a place and time where the reach of the central government institutions was very limited in its peripheries. The isolation of the Guamuez and San Miguel regions from the closest seats of state power in the Andean cities of Pasto and Popayan impeded any effective monitoring or control of the situation. The limited power exerted by regional government was continuously disputed by local authorities that frequently ignored, if not outright supported, the invasion of Indian lands. The discrepancy and conflict between national-level and regional and local levels of government, widespread in rural Latin America (for a comprehensive analyses of this point see Joseph and Nugent, 1994 and Blom Hansen and Stepputat, 2001), greatly facilitated the erosion of indigenous cultural and territorial rights. The Institute frequently complained about the state's failure to protect Kofán rights, declaring that this problem was largely due to the lack of decision and support from the part of the mayor of Puerto Asís and the previous intendant of Putumayo, who did not hide their disagreement with the creation of the reserves (Salinas 2011:370).

However, the protection that the Reserva figure offered was limited since its inhabitants are not granted full ownership rights but instead a lesser right of simple usufruct (leasehold). As asserted for Amazonia groups as the Siona, Secoya and

Kichwa (see Surrallés and García, 2005; Gedicks, 2001; García, 2005; Anaya, 2005) the same history was repeated with the Kofán. This is that in spite the recognition of indigenous land rights in the form of reserves, they could not legally impede or obstruct the works of exploration, resource extraction or dispossession the national government or private enterprise was interested in develop inside reserves. And finally, the reserves' measure was ineffective because INCORAS agent's responsibility was not limited to indigenous land rights' protection but the general adjudication of rural lands, hence that many conflicts emerged within the Institute when indigenists INCORA's employees were confronted by colleagues more prone to support the colonists' cause. In fact, there was an evident division within the Institute's ideology for there were the devoted indigenists struggling to defend the 'traditional Indian lifestyle' and their territories, in stark opposition to a strong number of INCORA's (and other state agencies and policy makers) devoted to develop the area through aggressive cattle breeding programs within Indian lands, as we shall see in the next chapter. Hence the futility of the measure in the Kofán case that permitted for more than a decade the continued invasion of the Kofán already recognized legal lands.

This problem nonetheless, was derived not only from the weak capacity of INCORA and other agencies to deal with the complex social situation in isolated areas such as the Andean piedmont, but further, with the national perception of the rise of indigenous land struggles as a security threat (Ramirez, 1997; Laurent, 2005). In 1979, for instance, President Julio Cesar Turbay proposed a reorganization of government policies and the creation of an Estatuto Indígena ("indigenous statute") that sought the disintegration of indigenous community organizations, the conversion of cabildos (natives' councils) into Juntas de Acción Comunal ("Communal Action Boards"), and the end of collective land ownership. The Estatuto Indígena impelled an unprecedented unified reaction of the indigenous movement in Colombia, leading to the Primer Encuentro Nacional Indígena (First National Indigenous Encounter) in Lomas de Ilarco, Tolima, in 1980.

During the Primer Encuentro Nacional Indígena, several indigenous Colombian organizations participated, as did indigenous representatives from Ecuador and Venezuela. After this event, in 1982, more than 2,000 indigenous peoples from around Colombia gathered again to form the Organización Nacional indígena de Colombia -ONIC-. This foundational moment, I argue, was definitive in the political construction of the political concept of indigenous territory, for this was the first time that there was a unified conceptual construction of indigenous territories as differential geographies. Accordingly, ONIC defined a list of clear objectives such as "to defend indigenous autonomy and territories; to recover stolen lands; to establish

collective ownership of resguardo aimed to control natural resources; to promote community economic organizations; to defend indigenous history culture, and traditions; to establish control over bicultural education; to recover and promote indigenous medicines and health services that are sensitive to the social and cultural characteristics of the communities; and to apply Law 89 that was established to protect and maintain indigenous communities (Roldán, 1993; Chaves, 2001 Caviedes, 2002; Laurent, 2005; García, 2009.). Furthermore, they demanded the implementation of Law 31 of 1967, which ratified the International Labor Organization Convention (ILO) No. 169⁷⁹ that deals specifically with the rights of indigenous peoples. By invoking international instruments such as this, indigenous peoples were progressively adopting, incorporating, and enhancing the idea that “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard” (Article 25, UNDRIP, 2008, emphasis added)⁸⁰. Ultimately, as several anthropologists contend, all these demands were unified under a discourse centred on territorial claims (Gros, 1991; Padilla, 1996; Rappaport and Dover, 1996) with great achievements, as I shall describe in what follows, for some Amazonian peoples while others, such as the Kofán, remained in appalling conditions.

New political struggles for the revival of the Resguardo model

The resguardo institution dates back to the Spanish colonial era and was first introduced in the Andean region in the mid-16th century (Friede, 1944; González, 1970; Tavuzzi, 1998). In an effort to concentrate dispersed indigenous populations, the Spaniards granted land portions to indigenous peoples, which were allowed to communally use and manage the land and natural resources in exchange for payment of tribute to the Spanish Crown (Trojan, 2008:169)⁸¹. The communal and inalienable resguardo lands were administered by annually elected councils or cabildos (councils), which had gradually replaced hereditary chiefs or caciques in the first half of the 19th century after the nation’s independence in 1819 (Van de Sandt, 2003). In postcolonial times, the resguardo system was intended primarily to

⁷⁹ The International Labor Organization’s Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries is the only international treaty solely concerned with indigenous peoples. It is significant to the extent it creates treaty obligations among ratifying states in line with current trends in thinking prompted by indigenous peoples’ demands. The Convention is further meaningful as part of a larger body of developments that can be understood as giving rise to a new customary international law with the same normative thrust. As understood in the Convention, indigenous land and resource—or territorial—rights are of a collective character, and they include a combination of possessory, use, and management rights (Anaya, 2004:9)

⁸⁰United Nations: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. Accessed on January 05-2014

⁸¹ For a more extensive analysis of the colonial history of Resguardos see Findji and Rojas, 1985; Jimeno and Triana 1985; Ramírez 2002; Laurent, 2005.

guarantee indigenous people's rights to use lands while protecting them from outside encroachment. It was also intended to provide local communities with a certain level of autonomy with regard to the management of their internal affairs (Arango 1992: 224; Rappaport and Dover 1996). Following the independence of Colombia and the birth of the Republic in the 19th century however, this communal landholding model became increasingly regarded by the elites as obstructive to national development and integration.

While the institution was never officially abolished, resguardos were increasingly undermined by successive government policies aimed at the privatization of communal lands and by the dissolution of the cabildos (Van de Sandt, 2003:130). A century later, in the 1960s, the lack of political support from the Colombian state to the Resguardo figure led indigenous populations to witness how their lands had largely fallen into the hands of colonists and landowners exploiting the indigenous population as cheap farm labourers. It was precisely during this decade however, when indigenous peoples of the Cauca region, organized and started what would later develop into an indigenous political movement. The Cauca struggle was centred on recovering indigenous territories, many of them protected by the Resguardo colonial titles, and therefore completely legitimate within the state legal land tenure system. As mentioned above the system of communal owned lands was targeted by the Colombian government at the end of the 1970s decade with its policy to eliminate indigenous reserves and colonial resguardos. However, given the strong pressures exerted by anthropologists,⁸² some missionaries and more importantly, national and regional indigenous organizations, the 1979- Estatuto Indígena ideology was questioned and then dismissed during Virgilio Barco's administration at the end of the 1980s. The government decided that the resguardo was the most suitable land tenure model to respond effectively to indigenous territorial demands voiced by diverse indigenous organizations led by ONIC. As part of the Law 30 of 1988, the government changed the indigenous land titling policy, and all remaining reserves were gradually converted into resguardos (Van de Sandt, 2003:131) while immense indigenous territories in the Colombian Amazon were titled under this category as well.

This new perspective on indigenous territorial rights was certainly associated with the incipient Colombian alliance between environmental advocacy and native-rights movements during the late 1980s and throughout 1990s, which, as Ulloa contends, fostered a new era of eco-governmentality in which global regulations that relate to new discussions of biodiversity and sustainable development were presented as

⁸² See Caviedes, 2002 for the role of Colombian anthropologist in land claiming processes and their relationships and alliances with the indigenous national movement of the 1980s.

necessary in order to defend the planet and its natural resources (2003). “Within this new eco-governmentality”, Ulloa argues, “Colombia and indigenous peoples, in general, have taken a prominent position because their territories and “natural resources” are some of the hot spots of biodiversity that are focal points of this discourse” (*Ibid*: 3). Accordingly, this entanglement between national and international conservationists and indigenous activism created a certain way of thinking about ‘the environment’ in Colombia. The strategy succeeded by strengthening the view among the national public sphere about indigenous peoples as “ecologically noble savages” (Redford 1991) who protect the environment and give hope in the face of the crisis of development. Consequently, during the 1980s, in the Amazonian region alone the government established more than 200 indigenous resguardos covering a total land surface of over 18 million hectares. In contrast, the remaining 67 colonial resguardos in the Andean region at that time amounted to ‘only’ 400,000 hectares (Arango, 1992; Roldán 1993: 57-58; Jimeno 1996; Echeverri, 2005:234). In 1988, under the government of President Virgilio Barco, the “Predio Putumayo Resguardo” was created with an area of 5.818.702 hectares, for the benefit of Huitoto, Bora, Andoque, and other peoples located in the Amazonas Department (Pineda, 2002).

Differences between the territorial achievements of the national indigenous movement and the Kofán

While the national and Amazonian indigenous movements were celebrating its territorial achievements in 1988, the new INCORA’s administration abandoned its indigenist perspective in Putumayo and became aligned with the dominant national developmental and assimilationist paradigm. That year INCORA’s manager drastically reduced the Kofán Santa Rosa Reserve, adjudicating a massive portion of land to the National telecommunications Company (Empresa Nacional de Telecomunicaciones) for the construction of a tower (Salinas, 2011:371). The manager’s reasoning, as Salinas points out, was: “(...) that the subtraction of a Kofán lot from the reserve was necessary for the greater good, due to the great importance to the region, affected by grave security problems, where communications with the rest of the country are very deficient” (*Ibid*: 371). Once again, as with the oil wells located in the heart of their homeland and the colonization land encroachment supported by certain sectors of the government, the Kofán were deceived and downtrodden in the name of the “greater good” and developmental discourse.

In 1991 the Constitutional Assembly formulated the new National Constitution, which had profoundly positive impacts on Colombia's indigenous peoples. This was the first piece of legislation that overtly recognized the territoriality sovereignty of

indigenous populations, legally establishing the Resguardo's communal and inalienable character, conceding it the status of semi-autonomous administrative-territorial entities (Jackson and Warren, 2005; Rappaport, 1996). Only six years after the promulgation of the new National Constitution, Colombia's indigenous population estimated at 700,000 (1.75% of the national population) had been granted with about a quarter of the country's territory – 27.8m hectares distributed in 460 resguardos (Arango and Sánchez 1998: 307) many of them located in Amazonian lowlands. However, once again, unlike indigenous inhabitants of southern Amazonian areas in Colombia, the Kofán, as the rest of the people from the Andean-amazon piedmont were not benefited by these progressive reforms. After a painstaking struggle to recover the original 70.000 hectares the government promised in the 1970s they were only granted during the 1990s with a total of 26.811 hectares under the resguardo category (Plan de Salvaguarda Pueblo Kofán, 2010).

Although it requires much more research, it is very likely that the conditions of economic stagnation during the second half of the 1990s, after a period of economic growth,⁸³ influenced the government's decision to neglect territorial demand in the oil-rich Putumayo, including Kofán territories located precisely in the heart of the oil industry. Thus, in spite the constant threat for the oil infrastructure posed by EPL and FARC guerrillas⁸⁴, the government was resolved not to hand over such economically valuable lands, neither to rebels nor to indigenous peoples. As a result, the Kofán ended up with less land than before the new constitution with its recognition of indigenous rights. As Surrallés and García note, "having taking on commitments inherent to the titling of indigenous land within the neo-liberal framework governing most of the continent's current policies, states increasingly neglect their role. However, this neglect does not stretch to its self-imposed right to a range of natural resources, particularly those found in the subsoil, which are precisely those of greatest economic interest" (2005:19). This point is illustrated throughout Putumayo, where most of the oil blocks have been juxtaposed to indigenous lands

State-Kofán relationships: the construction of territorio as political instrument

⁸³ See Bergquist, 2001 for a complete description of the political atmosphere of the 1990s in Colombia and the state economic fears caused by the increased guerrillas territorial control; see also Dunning and Wirpsa, 2004, for the state attitude towards oil and the political economy, in a context of conflict in Colombia during this decade. Although the indigenous land problem is not directly addressed in neither of these analyses they are helpful in providing a comprehensive and critical description of the government's attitude towards geopolitically and economically important regions. Accordingly, they are useful to understand the contrasting and ambiguous attitude of the Colombian government towards Indian territorial demands located in oil rich territories such as the piedmont in comparison to the remote Amazon.

⁸⁴ For a comprehensive description and analysis of the guerrillas attacks on oil infrastructure during this period see ACNUR-Fundación Seguridad y Democracia: http://www.acnur.org/t3/uploads/media/COI_1194.pdf?view=1 Accessed May 20, 2014

Despite its relative regional political weakness, the historic role of INCORA in the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel municipality is crucial to understand two processes intrinsically linked with Kofán constructions of the meaning of territory today.

First, INCORA introduced the Kofán to the language and practices of the state on territorial matters. In this early intertwining of the state and the Kofán spatial territorial perceptions around the establishment of Indian Reserves, elements such as the institutionalization of law and legal discourse, demographic measures, official paperwork and cartography were adopted and naturalized as Kofán discursive and practical instruments to defend but also re-read their territories. Secondly, from this process the Kofán adopted and naturalized the idea of indigenous community as something intrinsic to *pa'tssi ingi ande*, located outside, but in relation with, state territoriality. Through their dialogical relationship with INCORA, the Kofán incorporated the notion of indigenous community into their traditional forms of territorialization.

During the last three decades, Amazonian anthropology has focused on State-indigenous relations analysing critical topics such as how peoples articulate their identities, stake claims to local resources, and fight for their rights in regional, national, and international arenas. Within this field of enquiry, several authors have explored indigenous political strategies and discourses to evince the processes behind the production of essentialized identities (Ramos 1994a, 1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Slater 1996; Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Graham, 2005; Hennessy 2008; Bolaños 2010) and the contemporary capacities of indigenous groups to strategically invoke such identities within shifting political and economic landscapes (Warren 1998; Yashar, 1999, 2005; Brysk 2000; Warren and Jackson 2002). Intrinsic to the process of building essentialized self-representations is the underscoring of tribal, clan, ethnic, or another subcategory of indigenous forms of social organization with strong emphasis on its natural connection with a spatially bounded territory. This model of 'distinct people' embedded in 'distinct places' is fundamental to resistance efforts and in negotiations with national and international actors (Brysk 2000; Castree 2004; Niezen 2006; Escobar 2008; Westra 2008). In this way, they seize their collective identity as a performance strategy in order to establish relations with the state (Gros 1998). In the same fashion, the Kofán adoption of the indigenous reserve's model, as their main political device to defend their territories, was grounded in this strategic construction of essentialized self-representations. This was the only option as we shall see, that they could fulfill the state symbolic politics that propel native activists, as Conklin (1997) asserts, "to present themselves and their causes in terms of essentialisms that fit into the

narrow imaginative space allowed for Indians in Western popular imaginations” (728).

Aurelio, one of the most important Kofán interlocutors with INCORA, remembers the very tense moment of Kofán-cucama relationships that opened the way for the state to mediate such process while introducing its own territorial project:

“At the beginning we did not know how to fight them [colonists]. Many of us stood up and tried to stop them, even the elders such as grandfather Drijelio took his shotgun and shot one settler attempting to steal from him a piece of land that lied close to the mountain. He ended up in jail for fifteen days. Just for defending what was his land”(...) That is when we realized that it was impossible to stop them just with our force, so we fought differently after the government told us that this was already our property. INCORA said we owned the entire reserve, with its own special legal resolution. Each Kofán reserve had its title, and together formed our territory they told us. In just a matter of months we were struggling to defend from the colonist what we started calling the Reserve. But neither the oil company nor the colonists respected that agreement, so we had struggle through letters, meetings, lawsuits, and countless paperwork”.

Aurelio’s testimony tells of a structural change in the Kofán engagement with their territories that went from defence, comprising direct confrontation and violence against the cucama invaders, to the novel adoption and internalization of the state’s political mechanisms and legal languages; or in his words, “letters, meetings, lawsuits, and countless paperwork”. This process implied a mayor change in Kofán forms of occupation of, and struggle over, geographic space, now informed by hitherto unknown rights. Literacy, bilingualism, and knowledge about non-indigenous lifestyles were thus introduced as important skills for indigenous leaders (see examples of the same cultural-political process in Ramos 1988:231; Brown 1993:311–312; Oakdale 2004:65). Such changes and new circulating cultural elements were the direct result of the INCORA’s regular presence within the Kofán communities, which I believe, created another contact zone, or in other words, a system of material and symbolic interactions between indigenous populations and a centralized power.

This kind of systematic contact, negotiations, confrontation and agreement between the Kofán and others around territorial management and ownership had been absent since the Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries left the region, at which point territorial control had returned almost entirely to indigenous hands. My point is that

the concept of *territorio* as a political instrument -an idea introduced largely by INCORA indigenists- could not have emerged as a legitimate cause among the Kofán except through their appropriation of the systems of norms (laws) and state symbols (the official documents, stamps, maps, meetings and discursive skills) that constituted a new form of political and geographical knowledge (Nugent, 2001; Radcliffe, 2001). In this sense, I believe the Kofán learned another possible construction of the territory, for now, with the introduction of the state visions of the space, the relations of power that used to constitute *pa'tssi ingi ande* required new skills and techniques formerly unnecessary to resist or negotiate with former human and non-human beings. Without any possibility of expelling by themselves the oil industry and the ensuing waves of colonists, Kofán eventually accepted this new system of political codes and legal devices. The following quote by Taita Aurelio is illustrative of why this was the case:

“When INCORA was here we started to gather. Sometimes it was just some families but sometimes there was everybody. Taitas from diverse places, grandmothers, and young people with the capacity to read and write came to hear what the government had to say. They used to gather us and explain how they were going to measure the land and produce the maps and documents necessary to defend our territorio from the cucamas. Thus, for instance we discussed that from here, let's say, this nai'qui (creek), to this ontujunccu (waterfall) and thence this ccota'cco (hill) we are going to set the borders. Sometimes they already had the maps done and explained to us. We were attentive and willing to collaborate for this was the only resource we had to stop the colonists, for until that moment, we had been incapable to stop them ”

“(…) I was excited with this process. I wanted to learn and fight for my people. The Instituto [INCORA] told me that because I was a traditional healer I should be respected. But for that I had to continue living the Indian way, hunting and fishing as our forebears did. I was happy to see they were going to help us with that because they also said that we would end up living like cucamas if we stopped protecting the customs. We drank Yagé, a lot, and tried to see. And there was the problem with the cucama, their cattle damaging the Yagé plants, and many Kofán sick or dying because of the cucama. So this is why I decided to learn and protect, you know, my culture”.

In this way, the adoption of new cartographic devices combined with other codes of legitimation, emanating from the state and particularly from the INCORA's constructions of “indianess”, provided the framework for political negotiations

through which Kofán people redefined their alterity and territoriality. Accordingly what Kofán loosely define today as their territories in Colombia,⁸⁵ and the scant legal titles that legitimize those lands respond to the encounter with a legal framework that transformed and reinvented many of the original meanings of the indigenous territorial vision. This is why during discussions with Kofán individuals about why *pa'tssi ingi ande* belongs to them I found contrasting answers combining cosmological and legal elements. These narratives demonstrated, nonetheless, diverse levels of contact and appropriation of state language. This suggests, consequently, that the meanings assigned to the territory and acts of speech are influenced by the subjective determinations of the people who assign them, and these determinations, as Basso contends, will exhibit variation (1988:100). For instance, in the same conversation I had with Taita Cristobal and his son, Simon, I found contrasting explanations for the basis of Kofán territorial rights. Taita Cristobal, the shaman and storyteller, remarked how:

“All these territories belong to us before the cucamas, before INCORA and the entire government, before politicians and its programs and laws, before the reserves and resguardos were created. This belongs to us only for one reason: because before God walked alone with his mother throughout these lands, no one existed here. So he told his mother to go and prepare a lot of chicha (manioc beer). By God's command she began to prepare the chicha, while she was doing that God started to build an immense house with long seats, some tables and a stage. Then the mother came and told his son, Why are you building such a long house, this is too big and I am tired of preparing chicha. God answered his mother: tonight I'll call my people and drink all that chicha with them. Thus, when the stage was ready and all the rest of the house was finished, God announced to his mother: it's time to call them, and using a coconut with a powerful sound he climbed on the stage, but the sound failed and nobody came. Then God called them again but this time he shouted very loud: 'Everybody must come for I have prepared chicha that we must drink together'. After God's call, some characters came out of the forest, dressed with feather necklaces, tiger fangs, macaw feather headdresses, their faces painted and their bodies covered with varieties of fragrant plants and each one brought drums and flutes to celebrate. They entered the house and rested on the seats prepared by God while his mother gave them all the chicha she had prepared. But there were not enough seats so many of them were left out of the house. The ones that could not come inside are the invisible beings of the nature and now they live in the mountains. Thus now you understand who we are and why

⁸⁵ For a very general definition of what is consider the contemporary Kofán territorial boundaries see “Propuesta de Ordenamiento Territorial y Manejo Ambiental: Pueblo Kofán y Cabildos Indigenas del Valle del Guamuez y San Miguel-Putumayo”- Zio A'l 2008

this belongs to us? Because we are the ones God called and we are the Kofán, with a natural knowledge of pa'tssi ingi ande. God had called us to exist on this world and he wants us to take of all what is in here. That is why he left us the Yagé, which before giving us to drink, he himself drank and suffered, then fell to the ground and vomited, so now we drink and Yagé and vomit and suffer to learn”.

Then, Simon, a proficient Kofán political leader, intervened arguing that:

“We know this are our lands and we can prove it for I was very active during the time INCORA was here. I learned how to send letters to Bogota and talk to the people that came here to help us with the idea of the reserves. This is why I struggle know, because they put me in charge of continuing fighting for what belongs to us since that time. The reserves belong to us, but they only recognized a small part, and we should have the papers to prove it but now we don't. But in spite of that, I believe that we must follow the National law, we are Indians but also we are Colombians so the territory must be defended, organized, and its use must be well planned accordingly to the national laws and our own knowledge of the jungle, the animals and spirits. The reserves were good for they allowed us to take care of this using the culture that that we were taught by our forebears. Thus, if somebody wants to come here to get whatever they want, oil or gold or whatever, they must firstly negotiate with us. We have laws now, national and international laws that say that if they want something from the jungle they will inevitably have to sit down and talk with us first. This is the only thing we are asking for. Thus, I ask myself, why if they are the government, supposedly well-educated people, they are blind to those laws they have themselves invented? We have rights recognized by the Colombian law and we just want from them to respect that order”

The explanations given by Taita Cristobal and Simon regarding their territorial rights are quite illustrative of the contrast created after the INCORA' contact zone. We have the more traditional version in which territorial rights are founded on a 'divine power', which granted the Kofán this territory, but also with a great responsibility that require to suffer in order to own these lands. Then we have a more modern version, in which the Kofán possession was granted by another 'divine power', in this case the state, and the Kofán responsibility is less mythic but rather legal-administrative.

The emergence of these two versions, and hence, of changes in Kofán perceptions of their *territorio* certainly did not mean the loss of a previous 'mythic' and 'pristine'

native conception replaced by an alien and politicized new version. Rather, the concept of territory became even more complex, and certainly ambiguous in some situations. Hence, as Surrallés and García Hierro contend, “Today’s titled lands are the result of a long history of minor and not so minor conflicts, along with agreements, renunciations, resignations and adaptations, all combining to make the situation confusing, even to the inhabitants themselves” (2005:10).

Accordingly, for Kofán peoples the choice of accepting the reserves model brought a different construction of the territory now permeated with the new official indigenist rhetoric (juridical and administrative) intrinsic to the reserves model, but also with the socio-political imaginary (culturalist, communitarian and two decades later, ecological) brought by indigents to support the struggle. This is evident in how leaders currently use many of the legal terminology introduced in the 1970s as in the above statement made by the Kofán leader Simon, invoking a repertoire of legal arguments based on indigenous citizenship, allegiance to the state, national and international legal frameworks and land use planning as vital elements to demonstrate the Kofán territorial rights. From the 1970s onwards, the Kofán, like other Amerindian groups (cf. Lazarus-Black and Hirsch, 1994), contested the law through the means of the law by negotiating and relocating itself within the national politics. In this way, they learned how to seize their collective identity, their shamanic knowledge, and indigenous aesthetic as a performance strategy in order to establish relations with the state and guarantee their territorial sovereignty (Gros 1998).

This recognition of territorial autonomy came at a price though. Indigenous peoples such as the Kofán realized that in order to become citizens with ethnic rights they had to be recognized as ‘different’ (Ulloa, 2001, 2003; Laurent, 2005). Take again Taita Aurelio’s comment that “[INCORA] told me that because I was a traditional healer I should be respected. But for that I had to continue living the Indian way, hunting and fishing as our forebears did”. Thus, in order to fulfil state expectations, they had to claim cultural differences based on unique traditions, identities, law, language, collective territory and particular relations to their environment. In this sense, if indigenous peoples were (and are) to succeed with their political agendas they had to perform their indigenous difference to gain the authority to speak and be listened to (Jackson and Warren, 2005: 554). This is the “paradox of Indian identity”, whereby, as Gros (1998)⁸⁶ has indicated, indigenous peoples have to be different in order to be modern.

⁸⁶ Christian Gros “Ser diferente por (para) ser moderno, o la paradoja de la modernidad” (Manuscript-no numbered pages), 1998

The indigenous reserve as an imagined community

The second change prompted by INCORA's indigenist ideology is the introduction of the idea of community within the Kofán notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande* as something, located outside but in relation, to the state territoriality.

As Massey has noted "the state views itself as establishing a spatial matrix into which subjects are slotted and in which the national economy, polity and society are made" (Massey, et al.1999). Accordingly, INCORA's painstaking struggle to protect Kofán lands relied on this premise, materialized in the idea of the Indian reserve-community; one that would shield Kofán both legally and socially from the pervasive invasion of the colonist and its culture. This would ideally allow Indians to live again in what indigenist imagined as 'prior pristine state', but now under the territorial regulations and legal framework dictated by the Colombian state. In order to be eligible for this model and be recognized under ideas of nation and within the state, indigenous peoples must be able to demonstrate not only their culture difference and collective identity (Ulloa, 2003:5) but also to circumscribe such cultural distinction to a differentiated territory. Accordingly, the Kofán, as several other Amazonian peoples, deployed strategic representations of essentialized identities with strong emphasis on its intrinsic connection with a spatially bounded territory. This model of "distinct people" embedded in specific places was (and is) fundamental to resistance efforts and in negotiations with national and international actors (Brysk 2000; Castree 2004; Niezen 2006; Escobar 2008; Westra 2008); hence the process of practical and discursive reification of the idea of 'indigenous community' as a protective mechanism among the Kofán as the outcome of their encounter with the state.

There is a considerable amount of literature on how state-centred representations have worked to create and incorporate communities into a hierarchically organized yet homogenous nation-state through strategies that relate certain identities to certain spaces, time sequences, and so on (e.g. Coronil and Shurky, 1991; Rowe and Shelling 1991; Urban and Scherzer, 1992). Regarding this process, Mitchell (1988) points out that: "the 'local community' is stabilized as a territorial, administrative entity, an interface between state and population; in this sense, the labelling and institutionalization of a village-community works as a kind of enframing of segments of the population" (44). As part of the process of state formation and incorporation of peoples into the systems of power and regulation, the formation of communities becomes an effective device that simultaneously generates a feeling of freedom, belonging, and autonomy, but also of control and surveillance.

The contradictory but functional character of such territorial measures as the Indian reserve in Putumayo, illustrates Watts' argument on how constructed and imagined are "communities and its sister concepts of tradition and custom - stood in sharp contrast to the more abstract, instrumental, individuated and formal properties of state or society in the modern sense" (Watts, 2004:197). This point is also made by Balibar who contends that: "Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary: that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name, and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past)" (1991: 93). Born from the encounter between state and indigenous territorialities, the imagined community, is a political concept which defines governable spaces, and which allows contrast and differentiation in terms of identity and space. The story of the formation of Kofán communities is simultaneously the story of the incorporation of Kofán into the Colombian state, a process that Rubenstein (2001) has explored for the Shuar people in Ecuador. Rubenstein examines the formation of the Shuar Federation, an organization with a hierarchical structure, democratically elected leadership, and administrative jurisdiction over a bounded territory. He contends, that the Federation is an example of what Morton Fried called a "secondary tribe": a polity precipitated through contact with, and actions by, a state (1975: 99-105). It is chartered by the state, mimics the form of the state, and is at times an instrument of state policies (Rubenstein, 2001: 263-264). Rubenstein contends also that: "what is from the Shuar perspective inclusion in a larger entity is from the Ecuadorian perspective an extension into new geographic and social space. Tribe formation is not only a result, but also an extension, of state formation - a way of extending state influence and state forms of administration at the periphery" (*Ibid*: 264). This process of inclusion and extension works not only through mimesis but also through alterity -the separation of Shuar from non-Shuar, and thus the importance of the Shuar reserve which provide a territorial and institutional basis for Shuar identity.

In rural isolated areas of Latin America, such as the Shuar territory in Ecuador or the Kofán in Putumayo, as Daniel Nugent and Ana Maria Alonso have argued for similar regions in Mexico, "State formation thus refers neither to 'nation building' as a project of certain elites, nor to the origins of some apparatus of power called 'the state'. Rather, it encompasses processes through which the identities of subjects of the state are constructed via media of moral regulation, quotidian administration, and ritual, as well as through manifest, concrete, oppression" (1994: 210-211).

By underscoring the constructivist and certainly colonial process behind the naturalized notion of reserves as 'local communities' I do not mean to imply that the

Kofán families were not aware of being part of a larger A'I social and territorial communal-system before INCORA's reforms. My point is not to deny the fact that Kofán people have, as an intrinsic part of their culture, a collective feeling of cultural unity and therefore of communal life. This can be seen for instance in their conception of a unified Kofán mythical origin as descendants of Chiga-God, the father-creator; they were and are also connected because of a shared history of conquest, missions, and early colonization; a language, and the use of Yagé as a core element that ties the Kofán identity. Furthermore, the A'I people, being a very mobile and dispersed group, frequently walked within the forest or navigated along the rivers in order to visit families and friends creating a notion of shared territory, which in spite of being a few, very small and dispersed settlements spread along the Guamuez and San Miguel region, these places constituted the A'I social cartography. As mentioned before, Taitas used to visit other Taitas to drink Yagé, and hunting parties were organized from time to time strengthening bonds between relatives or friends. Families with a diseased person sought the Taitas curative skills, staying with them for a time and therefore establishing links between diverse locations and Kofán social cells. Finally, the Taitas' ability to travel across psychic and cartographic boundaries to overview material and mythical landscapes also provided the people with a notion of connection between them, a form of mytho historical communal territory.

My point therefore is that all these examples of relationships between people and the *territorio*, which largely define the sense of *pa'tssi ingi ande* for the Kofán, remained alive after INCORA's territorial actions. However, there was crucial change within that Kofán system of relationships, for their contact with the state introduced other new forms of territorial representation, new relationships with other political entities, and new forms of collective self-awareness. These changes can be summarized in the idea of a community as a social structure tied to specific locations. The Reserve as a form of community became the primordial space of opposition to hitherto unseen agents with other forms of territoriality, and more importantly as the base of the Kofán political subjectivity in the face of changing conditions.

It is important to note nevertheless, that in spite of the good intentions of INCORA's agents in Putumayo, and their effort to protect Kofán peoples inside Indian reserves, their policies were laden with the idealistic notion of community as a bounded unity and in opposition to the modern, rational society and state. This in turn called for positive images of tradition, enclosure, and reciprocity, but also of backwardness and fixity. This system, intended to safeguard Kofán culture in enclosed and clearly bounded spaces and further facilitate territorial control by the Colombian state, was

anathema to Kofán perceptions of territory, however. For as I have suggested before, Kofán territorial conceptions rather than precise and well-bounded areas are rather dynamic social fabrics between humans, non-humans, and landscapes. The Kofán idea of *pa'tssi ingi ande*, unlike the reserves introduced by INCORA, was relatively unbounded. I say relatively, for the boundaries of such territorial network were expressed by where and how dynamic were the Kofán relationships either with other Kofán families but also with wilderness beings, invisible families, other indigenous peoples (Siona mainly but also Inga), and even white people such as merchandise traders circulating around the region. The location and extension of such nodal points within the networks of relationships defined the extension of what the Kofán regarded as *pa'tssi ingi ande*, and hence, as the Kofán owned territory. With a tone that clearly evinced its discomfort with the failed reserves system Taita Cristobal told me that:

“Pa'tssi ingi ande is our land. It is what we know and we know how to walk through to find our food. No cucama beef or fish that feed with Purina. It is where we find animals to follow (...) I know I am in my territory when I can remember the stories of the elders about places where somebody was attacked by a tiger (jaguar) or where my father used to fish with seña'mba (Lonchocarpus urucu) (...) But the Kofán territory is different today. The invisible families don't live where they used to freely dwell. After the colonists they are hiding within those far away forest we don't know well. But these families are living there, so in spite being out of the reserves, away from here, of course that is our territory as well! (...) All these changed thus because of the reserves' story I told you. Because we knew what was ours before the government came here. Because we grew up here, and we were taught by our dead parents where to go and where not to go because it was dangerous for other Kofán Taitas or sometimes Siona Taitas, may think we were there to do bad things. So we knew to respect our own people lands but also others. With the reserves that was different. This is yours and this is not they said. That was on the maps they brought. Here is your territory enjoy it they said! But all that was no more than shit because we, the elders, did not need any map showing what belongs to us or not, we knew it. And it was shit also because at the end, everything they said that was going to be for us ended up in the Cucamas' people's hands.”

What I see in Taita Cristobal dissatisfaction with the reserves' system is the consequence of a territorial conception based on dynamism, mobility and relationality, transformed into a system based on territorial fragmentation and fixity. As Echeverri points out (2005), for Amazonian indigenous peoples the notion

of *territorio* is not merely the required area for the effective economic and demographic reproduction, it also refers to the complex and rich tissue of intermingled society - nature relations. The Kofán adoption of the reserves-community model as one constituted by a bounded Kofán territory is interesting for it suggests that their current discourses within political arenas derives not merely from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—now to be disrupted by the state, neoliberalism and globalization—but by the absolute particularity of the mixture of historical and political influences found together there. As such, Kofán forms of territorialization today are largely the product of long-standing state-society dialogues in which the introduction of spatial regulations were not only contested but also locally accepted as necessary. There is therefore a profound irony, in the fact that each discursive strategy used to assert Kofán legitimate ‘ancestral’ ownership of their lands today, must rest on the use of the ‘reserves argument’ as something innate to their culture when it was certainly the result of a process of political and cultural imposition and negotiation between them and the state. Even more ironic is the fact that they can only rely on those unsuccessful legal arguments, becoming its main defenders, in order to recover what legitimately belongs to them. In this regard, Juan L. another Kofán political leader concludes:

“We were screwed by the law, but it was the same law we accepted to help us to save our lands. So this was the same as with the oil here, we say yes first, and then we understand the deceit. But it was too late, and the only way we have now to struggle against this is to use the same law that screwed us in the first place, or to negotiate and accept the oil extraction within our lands in order to get something back”.

This testimony highlights “the problematic forms that agency takes on the colonial frontier. It is perhaps a tragic irony that for many indigenous peoples today the very grounds that enable them to promote their own interests or resist those who seek to exploit or dominate them simultaneously divide them and foster their dependence on others” (Rubenstein, 2011:285). Thus, in spite the confusion caused by this contradiction, the Kofán can only continue to rely on this bipolar legal system to defend their rights, and hence Juan’s conclusion about the reserves failure, that “We were screwed by the law (but) the only way we have now to struggle against this is to use the same law that screwed us in the first place”. Accordingly, as Salinas (2011) points out, “from their first encounters with the government in the mid-1960s, the Kofán have clearly expressed what is rightfully theirs and have demanded it. (However) while the Kofán have requested that the law be respected, all other local authorities and actors have colluded, consciously or not, to ignore the

Kofan's lawful requests. Indeed, it could be argued that the Kofán are among the very few local actors clamouring for the rule of law”(369).

During the 1990s the Institute noted that the reservation could not be demarcated using the boundaries agreed upon in the 1970s, because of the extended colonization and the pressure by local government to dismiss indigenous land claims. When the INCORA delegates visited the Kofán territory they realized that the A'I possessed only 300 of the original 3,750 hectares (Zio A'I, 2008). The remaining land was in the hands of the cucama people. At this point it was impossible to transform the territorial make-up of the region given the spread of colonists who were already settled, and further, because of the tense regional situation due to the intensification of guerrilla activity (see chapter 11). Thus, any attempt on the part of the state to take back the invaded land would have caused a mayor social conflict that the government was not keen to afford solely for the protection of a small group of barely-known indigenous peoples. The Kofán of Santa Rosa del Guamuez, however, would accept nothing less than the original boundaries, which they repeatedly made clear. These negotiations extended for a decade longer. By that time, the issues had escalated on both sides, again due to the government's disregard for the Kofán. By the end of 1997, INCORA submitted its last land-titling proposal for the Santa Rosa del Guamuez Reservation, reducing its lands from the original reserve by 80 percent. This final decision is full of legal inconsistencies, constitutional violations and abuses, and therefore is regarded as illegitimate by the Kofán. As such, the original reserve pact, born and agreed within the contact zone between the state and Kofán leaders and families during the 1970s is regarded by A'I people as the only legitimate document and it is well known not only among Kofán leaders but also for many of the colonist with whom they have already weaved diverse forms of sociability since those early days of the agreement. The colonist knowledge of such agreement does not necessarily mean they faithfully respect it, and thus, of course, current territorial relations with colonists are not free of tensions and conflicts. They have been in fact exacerbated today, mostly because of the cocaine economy, war and violence, as I shall explain in chapter 10.

The story of the Kofán reserves helps denaturalize images of indigenous communities and the state as two essential and bounded entities in opposition to each other (Nugent, 1994). In this model, the first is seen as essentially conservative, even timeless, and actively resisting imposed transformations – a very common view amongst NGO's and state agencies in Amazonia (see Introduction)-, and the state as essentially expanding, transforming and coercive. Thus, although this oppositional model might be possible for other society-state relations, the emergence of the notion of community legally framed by the concept of reserves as

the main mechanism to defend their ancestral occupation of lands, suggests how certain cultural and territorial notions are actually the outcome of a historically specific process of territorial coproduction with the state. Accordingly, A'I people have gone through diverse processes of cultural transformation within this contact zone, creating new notions of collective identity and new, to use Anderson's (1991) oft-used term, imagined communities. They have done this, in order to defend an idea born out of a dialogue between them and some state interlocutors with specific indigenist expectations of how the Kofán should live.

New indigenous territories: authentic or spurious?

As Watts (2000) contends in his analysis of the Ogoni people in Nigeria, relationally constituted local identities and places such as the Kofán cultural incorporation of the community model, might risk forgetting that they are constructions not essences, and thus that they should be seen as acts of strategic essentialism (92). It is fundamental to note nevertheless, that such strategic identity and territorial constructions, as Anderson argues, are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1991: 6) and by the processes that go into creating such communities (Lucero, 2006). This leads us to the point made by Speed (2002) about place-identities: "if we understand identity (...) as a constant process of construction and reconstruction, strategic versus authentic is simply not a relevant distinction. Both are part of the same process, one in which no identity is more or less legitimate than others" (222). Rather than a simple question of deciding who is a real Indian or a real indigenous territory, the issue lies on the practices and discourses which situate some subjects as more culturally authentic and more politically consequential than others (Jackson 1995; Warren and Jackson 2002).

In the case of the Kofán -INCORA contact zone, the key issue about the collective sense of political identity attached to specific territories is not one of authenticity. Rather, the point is to examine how people such as Taita Cristobal, the shaman, or his son Simon, the political leader, may abandon, maintain, and recreate their ethnic identity and territorial conception according to diverse changing historical scenarios and political contexts (Schryer, 1990; Jackson, 1995). Indigenous reserves, as embodiments of indigenist imaginaries about communal life and state-driven forms of incorporation to the nation, were eventually accepted and institutionalized by Kofán in order to survive the expanding capitalist economy of the oil industry and the concomitant agricultural colonization. Consequently, and crucially, the small A'I population were suddenly involved in producing themselves as a community of indigenous-Colombian citizens.

It is noteworthy to mention, however, that although the reserves system affected the previous mobile and itinerant relations between Kofán families by fixing them to specific territories, the most important driver of indigenous socio-spatial disruption was the parallel aggressive land encroachment caused by the arriving colonists. As such, I firmly believe that the reserves were for that specific moment, the only possible, immediate and effective protective measure for the already downtrodden Kofán people. Consequently, they entered into a process of creating a new model of ethnic territoriality, which as Chirif and García (2007:13) note in their review of indigenous land titling in Amazonia, required the Kofán to negotiate and reformulate their previous cultural constructions of the territory to fit within national legal structures that conceive the relationship between people and their habitat in terms of discrete spaces and property rights. Hence, in order to protect all these complex relationships with animals, invisible families, neighbouring ethnic groups, and even enemies, but also to secure their lands and maintain access to resources, the Kofán had to bargain cultural autonomy within such regimes, which in this case resulted in a different representation of the territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande*.

Unfortunately, the Kofán were deceived by the state, for INCORA's original promise of creating an exclusively Kofán system of reserves with enough land to safeguard A'i cultural and territorial practices were never fulfilled. In the end, Kofán were only granted considerably reduced and highly fragmented small portions of land. Meanwhile, Kofán families witnessed new waves of colonists invading the remaining free productive areas of their territory. This process, as I shall explain in the next chapter, was especially intense throughout the 1980s, when Putumayo came to be one of the most important coca- growing regions in Colombia. Without any state legal protection, indigenous territories in the Guamuez Valley and san Miguel municipalities were flooded with poor peasant families attracted with this emergent bonanza. Following its cultural pattern of openness to Others but now intertwined with a strong dependency on the market economy, many Kofán families engaged again another process of alterity incorporation of these arriving others. This time nevertheless, the illegal cocaine economy brought by colonists and its related violence became also integrated into their daily lives.

Chapter 10

Cocaine Geographies in the Putumayo

“Coca appeared here around 1977 or 1978. The “caucana” (Erythroxylum novogranatense) was the first plant to get here. Some colonist came from Peru to the Putumayo with seeds. We knew that this variety was the good one because other settlers had already been working with this same coca in other regions, so they told us it was the best. (...) We were thrilled with the idea of having the kind of things we had seen within the oil company-worker’s houses; they dressed well and had electric stuff like radios, so we wanted to be like them. It was my father again who insisted that if we wanted to have all those things, then, instead of planting coca we rather have to work hard. But the people here saw how cultivating coca was an easier and faster way to get all those things. We thought that if we knew how to produce the coca maybe we could change the economy, everybody around here is poor; so what else could we do? “

While walking through phosphorescent green bushes of coca in the midday sun, Taita Cristobal, an old friend of mine and recognized shaman among the Kofán, opened a long conversation with this comment above. He described how, with the help of his family, he has been cultivating coca plants in Putumayo for over 20 years. His story, similar to that of many other indigenous people in this region, allowed me to better understand how the illegal cocaine industry and its related violence became integrated into the daily lives of the Kofán in the Guamuez and San Miguel region of the Putumayo, one of Colombia’s largest cocaine enclaves. Drawing on anecdotes such as this from a variety of sources, but especially from Taita Cristobal, I start this chapter with a brief overview of the Colombian cocaine industry and how the drug economy became embedded in the local context of the middle Putumayo during the coca boom of the 1980s and 1990s. I then go on to review the environmental impacts brought by the coca and cocaine production, and particularly, of the cattle ranching activities associated to the coca economy. In addition, I examine how such practices not only affected the natural environment with profound implications for the Kofán health, but also for their cultural perception of the territory, especially for the Taitas shamanic practices.

After this, the chapter provides a broader understanding of the 1990s processes through which coca and cocaine production accelerated the Kofán incorporation into the context of nascent capitalism in this region. I am especially interested in this moment as a cultural and economic watershed for this indigenous group. This is so,

for as I shall attempt to show, the illicit production of coca and cocaine led to a huge rise in the consumption of western goods. Such situation fostered with incredible speed, the appearance of hitherto unseen feelings and perceptions upon race, class, and ethnicity among the Kofán, which drastically restructured their previous forms of sociability and territorial understandings. In this new context of fuelled consumerism, and thus, in relation with these emergent perceptions about themselves and others, I also examine the emergence of envy as a powerful social force with crucial effects for the constitution of *pa'tssi ingi ande* as a social fabric. I examine the widespread occurrence of envy, not as a novel sentiment but as an important element in long-standing indigenous cultural structures, and more over as a social force that is essentially linked to sorcery. Finally, I explore not only the envy-driven conflicts and violence among Kofán individuals but also, how with the cocaine economy Kofán-cucama relationships became more tense and violent than ever before. Because cocaine productive dynamics are imbued with violence and greed, I propose that many cultural regulations and codes of the Kofán relational structure that formed *pa'tssi ingi ande* were deeply affected and even destroyed after the rise of drug trade in this region, to the point that many people are still suffering the breakdown of the social fabric that formerly supported Kofán society.

Cocaine in Colombia: a brief introduction

By the 1970s, Colombian drug cartels had dramatically increased their ability to produce and transport processed cocaine, moving about one hundred tons of the drug to the United States each year, a sum that grew tenfold during the cocaine boom of the 1980s to an estimated capacity of one thousand tons of illicit drug distributed in the United States annually (Gootenberg, 2012:160). The very weak state presence was ideal for small drug traffickers to introduce lucrative coca (*Erythroxylum sp.*) crops to isolated rural regions. It took only one a decade for Colombia, a country with scant indigenous coca leaf traditions, to become the world's largest coca grower by the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s (UNODC, 2010).

Coca planting gained a powerful economic role among poor peasants in Colombia due to the 1980s agrarian crisis caused by diverse reasons, but mainly, misdistribution of productive land, lack of inputs for intensive cultivation, lack of non-agrarian livelihood opportunities and political violence. While the cultivation of subsistence crops used to buffer periods of crisis in the market-directed production, the regional situation of land scarcity, together with limited marketing options, high costs of transportation, and lack of government loans and subsidies, forced peasant families to shift from subsistence and small market-directed crops, to coca

production (see Morales, 1986; LeGrand, 1988; Ramírez, 1998; 2011; Jones, 2012). Peasants were thus encouraged, pressed, and assisted by the diverse guerrillas, to work in southern Andean-Amazonian regions like Putumayo and Caquetá, as traffickers introduced improved alkaloid-rich strains of the bush to colonists new to coca culture⁸⁷ (Reyes, 2008; Gootenberg, 2012).

The emergence of Putumayo as one of the main coca-growing departments of Colombia was largely the consequence of the government's military pressures on drug producing regions, especially the mid-Magdalena River Valley, located between the Cordillera Central and Cordillera Oriental, where drug lords responded with brutal force by killing politicians, policemen, and soldiers. This pressure forced the drug cartels to find or intensify their activities on other isolated forested regions (Reyes, 2008). Putumayo was chosen by one of the strongest cocaine-mafia bosses of that time, Gonzalo Rodríguez Gacha aka. 'El mexicano' ("the Mexican") for this purpose. Although coca production in the Putumayo began in 1978, the arrival of Gacha's in 1987 and of others after that meant that, this remote Department eventually became Colombia's producer of coca. By the late 1990's Government officials estimated that nearly half of the Putumayo's population (approx. 135 000) directly depended on coca cultivation (Viña et al. 2004:119). Rodríguez Gacha established a highly profitable business of processing and stockpiling cocaine in Putumayo, also serving as a new home base for his personal protection services, and as a training site for paid *sicarios* (trained assassins). His relocation to the Putumayo would also act as the seed for paramilitarism in this region,⁸⁸ as I shall explain later.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime the area assigned to coca cultivation in the Putumayo went from 2,200 hectares in 1991- the year the agency began its survey- to 5,000 hectares in 1995 and 58,290 in 1999. By the end of the millennium 36% of all coca grown in Colombia came from the Putumayo (UNODOC, 2003). The provincial GDP was (and is) a marginal portion of the national economy. Between 1990 and 1997, Putumayo averaged 0.3 percent of the national GDP. In 2000 however, it reached its high point of 0.76 percent at the peak of coca

⁸⁷ Coca (*Erythroxylum coca* and *Erythroxylum novogranatense*) is a domesticated tropical shrub native to the Amazon and the eastern slopes of the Andes, where related wild species are still found (Boucher, 1991). The most concentrated alkaloid in the plant is the one to which it lends its name, cocaine, and the concentrations vary by region and plant variety (Freye and Victor, 2009:27). In its chemically synthesized form, the alkaloid cocaine is a strong stimulant with possible addictive properties (Johnson and Emche, 1994), making hunger less insistent and giving the body energy to endure fatigue (Young, 2004). Like coffee and tea, *Erythroxylum* is an understory species of moist tropical forests, and it is grown for its leaves, which are picked and dried three or four times a year. The crop traditionally was grown on the steep eastern slopes of the Andes Mountains at elevations of 500 to 2000 meters. However, since the end of the 1980s and 1990s, the Amazonian basin overtook the production and cultivation has been expanding into lowland rain forests (Young, 2004: 72). This resistance and adaptability is probably the reason why contemporary coca growers in regions such as the Putumayo, as it appears in my friend's testimony, have selected the Andean specie *Erythroxylum novogranatense*, or "*caucana*" over the Amazonian variety for cocaine extraction.

⁸⁸ For an interesting exploration from the inside of Gacha's cartel and his lifestyle see Velasquez, Jorge Enrique. *Cómo me infiltré y engañé al cartel*. Bogotá, Oveja Negra, 1993

production. After aerial fumigation began, the provincial GDP dropped by an annual average of -0.27 percent (Florez, 2008). These economic fluctuations implied consequently diverse and deep transformations of the socioeconomic and cosmological relations of indigenous peoples such as the Kofán with the territory as we shall see in this chapter.

Throughout the Amazon piedmont, concealed plots of coca were usually located deep in the forest where no state colonization programs were underway; its owners, the arriving colonos, had no legal titles and therefore, could not access bank credits for plantain, corn, rice, and other staple crops (Ramirez, 2011:43). Most of the government's subsidies, as I shall explain later, were mainly for cattle breeding, a business that goes hand in hand with coca production. Small narcos provided indigenous peoples and peasants with coca seeds and the chemicals needed to process coca leaf into cocaine paste. Then, traffickers bought leaf sacks and paste bricks, often bartering goods such as food and clothing at the beginning, and cash later.

“La coca se le robó el cuero a la tierra” (Coca stole the scalp of the land): early environmental impacts of coca crops

The following ethnographic fragments were extracted from long conversations I had with Taita Cristobal in the Kofán resguardo of Santa Rosa del Guamuez. They are intended to show the kind of environmental and social transformations caused by this new economic activity in its early days.

“At the beginning, during those days, we did not know what the buyers used the leaves for. They said that it was money. Leaves meant money, so simple as that, so no questions were necessary. The only important thing thus was to be able to produce some few sacks filled with coca leaves. Later, we understood the use of the leaves and what they produce with them, but without money we had to continue working with the coca. But I tell you, we had only small plots with not too many plants, just some parts of our gardens were plants. However the first cucamas that came here only with the intention of being coca growers, unlike the Kofán were rapidly grabbing as much land they could use to plant coca and more coca. They were fast cutting down the forest, even sacred trees for us, in order to plant coca seeds in every corner of our territory. They were able to open big plots for coca planting within the forest, close to the riverbanks and around their houses. Just one family with one axe and some machetes were able to cut down big portions of the monte (wilderness) in just a week. With all that deforestation, suddenly we noticed how the coca stole the scalp of the land”.

As mentioned in previous chapters, with the roads already opened up by the oil company, not surprisingly, the lucrative cocaine business attracted a new flood of colonists. Thousands of settlers left rural and also urban areas around the country, moving into this Amazonian region in order to escape the problems brought about by the of high rates of unemployment in Colombia's main urban centers that began in the late 1970s through to the 1980s. The colonists' indiscriminate use of slash-and-burn practices to clear land for coca cultivation in remote sloped areas and forested lowlands of the piedmont radically transformed the region. Satellite imagery analysis of deforestation rates and patterns along the Colombia- Ecuador border between 1973 and 1996 indicates the magnitude of the impact of such large colonization movements into the area as evidenced by a forest-cover reduction of approximately 43% on the Colombian side of the region (Viña et. al. 2004:121).

In Colombia, the most conspicuous land-cover change during the 1973-1985 period was from forest to agriculture, and during the 1985-1996 period, the dominant changes were from forest to barren land and even more notably, from agriculture to barren (*Ibid*: 121). These results dovetail perfectly with three paradigmatic phases of the coca-colonization. First, the forest clearing and family settlement, which normally implies that the first already settled family calls other relatives; after this phase is completed, the amount of agricultural lands dedicated to coca increase; finally, the settlers tend to abandon the already established agricultural areas and proceed to colonize new forested areas.

Coca money and the rapid increase of cattle

Taita Cristobal continued:

"But the problem was not only that Cucama took down all the trees to plant coca, it was furthermore, that after their coca plants were mature and they had harvest the leaves, cucama people always brought lots of cattle to those places were they had their crops. Having money from the coca and the governments' support to get even more animals, we were rapidly surrounded not only by families but by numerous cows as well. Before this happened, I mean, before the 1960s and during the 1970s, I tell you, there were just a few animals around here. The colonists that came during those days, when the oil arrived started to have some animals indeed, but they were so poor that it was impossible for them to have a lot of animals, because you need medicines for them and enough land, furthermore, you need barbed wire to keep them around. Yes, we had some animals as well. But traditionally we just had very few cows and pigs that

we learn to raise following the missionaries' instructions; but I repeat, just a few! After the coca money, everything changed, the cucama changed for they could get more and more cows".

The major drivers of deforestation in the eastern Amazon region of Colombia during the last 30 years have been the illegal economy of coca crops (Etter. et.al. 2006), however, as Taita Cristobal recounts, the environmental problem was also caused by cattle ranching, now capitalized by coca profits. In their farms, the colonists replace what was once a forest and then coca fields, with introduced grasses (mainly *Brachiaria sp.*) for cattle grazing. With poor tropical soils, and even further depleted of nutrients because of the colonist' constant application of herbicides, these plots were rapidly converted into barren land. Although the information about the relation between cattle breeding and cocaine production in Putumayo is practically inexistent for the 1980s and the early 1990s, some scattered reports produced by the Agriculture Ministry of Colombia are quite informative. For instance, the total area devoted for livestock pasture for the year 1985 was 155,185 hectares, that is to say, 87.9% of the total productive area formerly utilized for subsistence crops in this region of Putumayo. Around 69.7% of this total area was planted with introduced grasses, and the remaining 30.7% was left with natural grasses (URPA, 1986). In 1989, the total of bovines in Putumayo were estimated in 122.000 (OAS, 1989), a number never seen before in this region, for as Taita Cristobal describes, "Before the 1960s and during the 1970s, I tell you, there were just a few animals around here".

It is important to mention as well, that during the first half of 1980, there was a sharp reduction of the already scant state subsidies for staple crops in this Putumayo, and most of the money formerly used to produce food was redirected towards funding colonist's livestock activities (Salgado, 1995:62-63). Hence Taita Cristobal's comment about the cucama augmenting their livestock thanks to "the governments' support to get even more animals". Although such input of money for raising animals certainly contributed for the spread of the cattle in the region, this was not a straightforward process. When colonists received government's credits, all these funds were commonly used for the cultivation of coca first, and then, with the profits from this activity, colonists expanded their coca parcels into other forested regions while setting cattle on formerly productive coca parcels (Corpos, 1991:61). From the total amount of money devoted for rural development in Putumayo in 1985, 70.2% was allocated to the livestock industry and only 11.4% was directed to agricultural activities. The remaining 9.4% funded to other activities such as fencing and basic agricultural technology (*Ibid*: 61). The Corporación Colombiana de proyectos Sociales (CORPOS), an independent organization working on productive projects in Putumayo during the 1980s-1990s, reported that medium

and large landholders took advantage of the window of opportunity provided by the government's new credit program for cattle breeding. Using these loans, mixed with illicit money from the cocaine business, landholders dramatically extended their lands and cattle-holdings throughout the region, displacing indigenous peoples (*Ibid*: 61). The proceeds of crime were thus transformed into ostensibly legitimate money in the form of productive farms in a simple operation of money laundry funded by the Colombian State.

These numbers and facts illustrate how the cucamas' activities described in chapter 8 for the late 1970s were progressively intensified throughout the 1980s decade, as the number of mestizo families increased in the region and the cocaine money allowed them to buy more cattle. This second stage of coca-fuelled colonization constitutes a watershed moment in the social and environmental history of the Putumayo, as we shall later.

The impacts of cattle ranching for Kofán shamanism

Taita Cristobal warns of a different but interconnected cultural impact of the environmental transformations caused by cattle ranching within Kofán territories:

"The Kofán elders did not like to eat beef for you can't learn how to be a Taita eating that animal. You need a special diet. And furthermore, in that time there was plenty of game to hunt, so why would we eat those horned animals? But then, cucama people came with a lot cows bought with the coca money, stealing our lands for pastures and also convincing many of us that having cows was the most profitable business. Because we were young and short-sighted we thought it was a good opportunity. Since we were getting money from the coca we could invest, as they said, in something different than that, so we would have money when there was not enough coca in the fields to gather. At the same time the elders were observing this new cattle business in our territories through the eyes of the Yagé. That is why, after our lands were plagued with the colonists' cows, the Taitas noticed that the Yagé was behaving different: "el Yagé está emborrachando feo ahora" ('the Yagé is getting us drunk in an ugly way') they used to say. They gathered around to discuss this. "Why?" the Taitas asked each other about this change? What was happening with the remedito (Yagé)? They knew what was happening and explained to us: "Before we used to drink Yagé cooked with pure clear water. Not even women were allowed to touch that water because they could be pregnant or menstruating. When the Taita was going to prepare Yagé, he always alerted the rest of the community, letting the people know so nobody would

approached there. Nobody was allowed to be where the water for the Taita's preparation was. Since everybody knew when an elder Taita was going prepare remedito, and that he would go to the creek to get water for that, all women were cautious and washed their clothes and things two days before or after the Taita were close to the water. But then, all that respect for the water ended with those animals [the cows] grazing around headwaters and creeks. Taita Fernando, Taita Drijelio, Taita Mauricio, Grandfather Anselmo, all those great Taitas, the Mayores, they understood that the bad effects of the Yagé, or its weakness to show good pintas (visions) after the cucamas were here, was the consequence of the water touched by animals mainly in the headwaters of La Raya, El Ahotico, La Pedregosa, all those ancient places to get the water, to drink and prepare medicine, now full of animals grazing and shitting in the water. The elders warned the young people not to do the same as the cucama people but nobody paid attention. Naturally, most of the elders got sick and died very young”.

From what Taita Cristobal is saying we can see how the transformation of the forest into cattle pasture affected not only the ecological integrity of the Kofán territory but also their cultural system, particularly Yagé shamanic practices. Such changes caused great distress in all Kofán families, but as many old Taitas agree, these activities had terrible effects especially for the Taitas and their apprentices. As it has been described in chapter 8, the increasing colonist population heavily impacted A'Í peoples' social and spatial stability given their capacity for land clearing, deforestation and overhunting. After the coca boom, however, this process was accelerated for it was possible for colonist to buy better tools to cut down the forest and more ammunition for hunting. Consequently, the last hunting sites remaining after the oil-driven wave of colonists were completed depleted of animals. With the dramatic transformation of the land cover for coca and cattle in in this areas, the scarcity of game animals, and the reduction of their planting fields, the Kofán nutrition, but specially, the Taitas traditional diet degenerated into a sad dependence on canned food, onions, soda pop, packed rice, beef and other introduced alien products that were considered toxic. In addition, as outlined before (see chapter 8), the fact that there were no more animals to hunt not only in their physical territories but also within the Yagé shamanic geographies, caused physical, emotional and mental illness of many elder shamans as well.

Cocaine money, envy and fracturing: the rapid rupture of social relationships

Since late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Kofán began to experience an unparalleled influx of money in a scale never seen before. First they received moderate sums of

money from the commodification of land described in the previous chapter, but it was the illicit production of coca leaves and to a lesser extent, of cocaine, that led to a huge rise in the consumption of western goods, consequently altering social relations.

“We [the Kofán] started with just a few little plants, six or seven bushes in 1980. My daddy planted his few little plants very well hidden in the middle of the monte (wilderness) because he was scared of the army, can you believe that? He was scared for having only six or seven plants! (laughs). But there were other more clever Kofán families that started to plant more and more. In my family, we were not too many, just two brothers, my parents and me. So we could not work to much land for the coca. Other Kofán families, however, were larger, sometimes with eight or nine siblings. So they had to plant and collect much more. That was understandable for they needed more things, because some Kofán began to attend school in San Antonio, so that meant they had to buy shoes, pencils, and notebooks.

With the coca business came the contraband from Ecuador. A lot of goods entered our communities. Peddlers with all kinds of goods and commodities such as good machetes, nice clothes, perfumes, radios, pots, and jewellery arrived frequently and mostly to Santa Rosa del Guamuez. Because the rest of the Kofán communities are distant, many families started to come here, to Santa Rosa and buy nice things with the coca money. Families living far away came often to la Hormiga as well, that was the other place where many shops where open to sell plastic pots, jars, cutlery, crockery, and furthermore, to get herbicides, tools and other stuff you need to work in the fields.

I think it was between 1990 and 1995, when the coca leaves and the cocaine paste were best paid. Can you imagine that for only a small brick of that thing they completely filled our pockets with money? For one kilogram they could give us one million pesos (USD 500 approx.). That is why we worked so hard to get one, two, maybe three kilograms. With the coca money we were like children getting as much things as we could. In the beginning the elders were happy because they could buy cartridges for shotguns and fishhooks”.

Despite the fact that coca producers received but a small fraction of the profits accrued from the commercialization of coca⁸⁹ the income raised through coca

⁸⁹ Studying the dimensions of the South American cocaine industry during the 1980s in Colombia, Lee sustains that coca farmers received less than one percent of the final street value of their crop –i.e., the value of the refined cocaine sold to consumers in industrialized countries- (1988). Morales (1986) comments on this phenomenon saying, “as in any social relations of production,

production largely exceeded that which could be raised from growing alternative crops such as cacao, plantains, and manioc. Such increased incomes offered the Kofán a novel opportunity for instant access to modern lifestyles - the chance to enjoy radios and high-tech sound systems, western clothes and shoes, digital watches, large supplies of cigarettes, outboards motors and motorcycles, and even black market shotguns.

In less than a decade cocaine activities induced profound negative impacts for the Kofán social relational tissue that constituted their territorial notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. However, perhaps the most conspicuous driver of disruption of such relational system I was able to notice after years with them, is the emergence during the coca boom of competing desires among Kofán individuals to be like someone else or to have someone else's possessions. This is, in plain words, the propagation of envy as a source of conflict, leading often to violent situations in which more than often, alcohol was involved. Aurelio comments in this regard:

"However, it was not that long before we realized what was happening. Cucama people was invading us and despite we fought with the help of INCORA to defend our lands on the other we were allowing them to be here in order to maintain the only way we could have some little money to live. After having money, sometimes a lot, we ended up with nothing, no lands and no money, but rather a lot of problems, and not only between the cucama but also between us. This was because many families were envious of others and like I tell you before, there was a lot of alcohol, so problems were here all the time.

Envy, this was the problem with my cousin Fernando and his brother in law, Ramón. Both were nice persons but when they were drunk, things were different. Once Fernando was too drunk because that day he had received a lot of money from the selling, I don't remember how much sacks of coca leaves, but it was a lot. His brother in law, Ramón, was drinking in the same place and was drunk as well. Ramón was annoyed because Fernando was talking loud and paying beers for everybody except for him. The same thing happened more than once and Ramón decided one of those nights to face him, and said that if he was so rich why he never paid for the drinks of his own family? You have a lot of money now, you just buy a motorcycle, but you don't invite me to drink? not even a single beer? Fernando responded that he had no responsibility to do that, and that he was actually disappointed with Ramón for he was incapable of providing his sister with enough money and the things that women like.

those who contribute most in the creation of the commodity (cocaine) are less economically rewarded than those who market the end product in the underground industry" (158).

Ramon was mad with that comment. But nothing happened that day. But then, Ramon sought for a Taita friend because he wanted to hurt Fernando. And well, that Taita knows how to do it. During the next months Fernando was depressed and sick. He drank a lot of alcohol and had no money because...well because of that thing that Ramon asked the Taita to do... One night Ramón was walking alone and Fernando was coming from drinking, completely drunk and with his machete. He attacked Ramon and almost killed him. The next day Fernando fled from the community. I think he is living in Ecuador now”.

After hearing many stories like this during my years working in Putumayo, it was easy to see how envy permeated the social landscape of indigenous peoples struggling for survival as they were incorporated into the cocaine capitalist economy. As a powerful driver of cultural and social dynamics, envy had been active part of indigenous quotidian relationships long before the massive arrival of colonists and the cocaine economy, however. Case studies from all the Upper Amazon provide clear examples of how envy is vital in the field of shamanic micro-wars between shamans, apprentices and families. Thus, as noted by many Amazonian anthropologists, envy, is not only an individual feeling but a paradigmatic driver of social and shamanic confrontation intrinsic to indigenous social systems since pre-Hispanic times (see Dole, 1966; Buchillet, 2004; Brown, 1989; Wright, 2004). In her ethnography of ayahuasca rituals in Peru, Eugenia Fotiou describes the role of envy: “He explained to me that there were dark forces as well as light forces in shamanism. He and his teacher, a very powerful shaman, were warriors of the light, and the dark shamans wanted to hurt them, motivated by envidia (“envy”), or in attempt to steal their powers. Thus, he said he had often been attacked by other shamans in his ceremonies” (2010: 196). But envy is so common in Amerindian cosmologies that it is not only circumscribed to the human realm but the human-spirits as well. Alicia and Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff provided ethnographic illustration of this in the 1940s. They found in the town of Aritama, located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada on the coast of northern Colombia, that envy is even common among the spirits of dead people. Spirits of the dead feel envious of the prosperity of those still alive for all the things they did not have and enjoy during their lives. Thus, “(...) if the living should boast of their health or luck or property, the spirits are likely to destroy it and take revenge by making its possessor poor and ill. Anything that might rise above the average will call their envious attention -a beautiful woman, a healthy child, a strong man, a tree laden with fruit, a new dress, a plentiful harvest- sometimes the living even deem it necessary to destroy such obvious prosperity in order not to awaken the spirit's envy.” (1961:353). Prestige, status, wealth and success arouses envy and resentment among neighbours, relatives, and others not as lucky or successful, and

if a person allows the envy to fester, he or she may be driven to deal with this situation through sorcery (Wright, 2004). In Amazonia, sorcerers “attack their enemies with objects, such as spirit darts, limbs, or crocodile tails, aided by their spirit helpers. The ultimate goal is usually to steal the other shaman’s “juice,” or power. The motivation might be simply envy, or the fact that they lack that power themselves because they have not gone through as rigorous a shamanic training. Power, itself, or else the power source, is neutral and can be used for purposes of good and evil” (Perruchon, 2003 in Fotiou 2010: 197). In this respect, many anthropologists speaking of Andean Amazonian shamanism have noted that accusations of sorcery are made most often not against strangers but, rather against those with whom the accuser has maintained the closest and most necessarily relations of trust (Taussig, 1987, Glass-Coffin, 1992).

Overall, there seems to be enough ethnographic evidence to indicate the importance of envy as a central element in Amerindian social systems and cosmologies, and thus, the epidemic spread of envious feelings after the coca boom within Kofán communities cannot be disconnected from long-standing indigenous cosmological structures. However, it must also be placed in the particular moment of the coca and cocaine boom, and therefore connected with an emergent collective sense of unbalance and failure of the system of reciprocity that used to rule social relationships; such system, I suggest, was altered by the new individualistic forms of production and limited cultural exchanges that used to be common part of Kofán sociability. As I have sustained, Kofán individuals, as many Amazonian indigenous societies, place enormous importance on reciprocity and gift exchanges as fundamental elements of their social systems in order to control envy to its minimum (Gow, 1991; Viveiros de Castro, 1996; Fausto, 1999; Perreault, 2003).

Scholarship on reciprocity and redistribution in non-industrialized societies has been translated by many into an overly romanticized notion that indigenous people give freely of themselves and happily share their property with everyone in their group (Erazo, 2010: 1033). Anthropologists dating back at least to Malinowski (1922) have nevertheless argued against this notion of ‘primitive communism’ by unravelling the altering and distressing social effects that take place when such system is altered as individuals violate its codes of conduct. Take again for instance Fernando and Ramón shamanic and physical confrontations that grew out of envious feelings, which ended in a violence confrontation involving physical violence and sorcery attacks. In this sense, amity, affinity and ultimately safeness, in this Amerindian perspective, are based largely on the possibility of incorporate alterity, being whites or Indians, through shared work activities (agricultural partnerships, logging partnerships, and mingas) and the constant exchange of gifts,

shamanic knowledges, favours, and ritual practices such as *compadrazgo* and *Yagé* ceremonies (see chapter 9). Following again Overing (1983-1984) and Santos-Granero's (2009) arguments, for certain Amazonian peoples, including Kofán, the incorporation of otherness into the social and economic functioning of the society represents 'safety' as long as there is a 'proper' mixing with that Other. Such relations are thus categorized as safe and necessary insofar there is "fulfilled reciprocity" in contrast to unfulfilled reciprocity where dangerous forces meet one another dangerously (Overing, 1983-1984:333). An enemy in this perspective thus, is someone who has but does not give, or who does not have and so takes (Rubenstein, 2002: 81).

The rise of envy after the coca boom within Kofán settlements is thus related to the fact that coca and cocaine production is an economic activity that did not respond to indigenous socially levelling conceptions of fairness, exchange, and reciprocity. This new economic system is rather associated with the more obvious dynamics of the free market economy such as productive individualism, immediate, anonymous, market-style exchanges, and social stratification. This is so, for coca-planting and harvesting in Putumayo is carried out by workers individually. In some cases small nuclear families plant and take care of the coca crops in isolation, sometimes hiring and paying just one or two helpers. It is done in this way firstly because coca crops had to be concealed. During the 1980s, furthermore, The FARC guerrilla became the linchpin that linked and guaranteed the correct functioning of the coca business. As I shall explain in more detail in chapter 11, Kofán people were suddenly ruled by a set of controls and laws provided by the revolutionary armed forces. Marketing regulations, taxes, trading hours and locations, business partners, crops' security, road and riverine trade routes, were amongst other aspects, regionally governed by the FARC guerrilla. As part of this strategy, the rebels introduced several controls to erode the internal channels of communication between people. Their common spaces of interaction were reduced, and the communities started to operate in a different way from the relational dynamics that formerly constituted the social fabric. Consequently the Kofán traditional and quotidian spaces of sociability in which many tensions between relatives and friends were remedied were reduced to encounters so to spend the coca money and drink a lot of alcohol.

And secondly, as I was told in private conversations, they worked in isolation and being very cautious about not showing to the rest of the community how much land they were planting and thus how much they were producing and profiting, for this was precisely a source of conflict in a society that was accustomed to relatively equal productive capacities and incomes. Prestige, status, wealth, or success (material or political), as Buchillet (2004) has pointed out for the Desana people in

Brazil, “however temporary or qualified inevitably arouses envy and ill among neighbours, close kin, and others not so lucky or successful” (117). Because of this, a prudent person will never boast of his accomplishment or wealth so as not to arouse the envy and resentment of others, hence the Kofán cautiousness with not showing to the rest of the community how much they were producing and profiting from their coca business. “Since such resentments often leads to evil desires that result in actions performed by the man or the woman harbouring the antipathy or jealousy towards the person- if he or she knows how to do it- or through a specialist hired for this task” (*Ibid*: 117).

Being carried out in relative isolation only by the family, coca productive activities do not require the alternating reciprocal labour exchanges that have historically occurred between families joined by marriage or ritual kinship (*compadrazgo*), so central in strengthening Kofán social ties. Furthermore, in order to avoid being arrested for drug trafficking, Kofán transactions with local buyers tend to be done in an anonymous-market-style. This means to exchange money for sacks of coca or cocaine paste bricks, usually during the night, with little interaction and as quick as possible. This new form of market relations was radically different from the Kofán traditional economic practices of sharing crop’s yields and game meat. As mentioned in chapter 6, before the process of colonization, the Kofán forms of sociality that constituted *pa’tssi ingi ande* were largely based on families living in relative isolation, hunting alone in the forest and walking around the territory to find medicine plants; but such isolation was necessarily punctuated by periods of contact in which Kofán visited friends and relatives to share hunting meat, to provide medical-shamanic treatments or to exchange diverse forest products. All these exchanging activities were openly engaged, and served as a form of constant weaving the social fabric.

Envy increased in this new context of illegal coca production, I suggest, for the coca economic and social system operated in way that did not allow the same kind of former sociability but a fractured one. People were ‘disconnected’ from each other, and thus, reciprocal practices and relationships that guaranteed the ‘proper’ mixing with others, were severed. This alienated social situation characterized by a high degree of distance between individuals and the disintegration of common values created in turn new and multiple fertile spaces for the emergence and growth of envy. As I will show in more detail in chapter 12, the envy related to the new coca boom was a crucial driver of community divisions and social conflict, a process that was further intensified by the rise of sorcery attacks inspired by the circulation of envy feelings.

Envy and new class relations among Kofán families

The growth of envy must also be understood in a moment in which the Kofán were undergoing a transformation from a horizontal status-type of society into a stratified one. The differences between families in their purchasing power, as in the contrasting case between Fernando and Ramón, are largely related to the unequal distribution of land after colonization. This situation, together with varied degrees of family involvement in this activity (frequency of production, amount of money invested, and knowledge of the commercial networks) created subtle but perceivable class differentiation among indigenous families. Extreme individualism and class stratification altered consequently Kofán former conceptions of *pa'tssi ingi ande* for these elements stand in complete opposition to the relational social behaviour that constituted their traditional socio-spatial constructions.

Although I do not believe that Kofán were 'acculturated' and simply transformed into a class structured society as a consequence of their contact zone with the cucama people, the cocaine economy and their acceptance of capitalism, I do however consider that cocaine in particular had an irreversible negative effect for the Kofán internal forms of sociality. And furthermore, for many pivotal cultural elements that sustained their relations with the territory. I most certainly do not attempt to put forward images of Kofán pre contact circumstances as a bucolic reality in which Indians, living in pristine conditions, related to each other in harmony and tranquillity; and that this imagined situation was perturbed by these two new social dynamics. In fact, as I have suggested in previous chapters, the Kofán are experts in exploring conflict, pain, and distress as sources of power through shamanic techniques, and consequently the cocaine period-social distress ultimately strengthened many parts of their shamanic practices and thus their culture. But inevitably this situation caused dramatic situations of physical violence and shamanic attacks between relatives, neighbours and friends, causing deep ongoing social wounds. Today these past experiences are doubtlessly part of the reasons why the Kofán have to struggle so much to generate processes of social organization, collective decision-making, consolidate its political unity, and effectively mobilize their ethnic and territorial claims.

Shootings, alcohol, and cocaine business: the spread of violence between Kofán and Cucama

If during the 1970s, oil colonization had already caused several confrontations between indigenous peoples and settlers around territorial issues, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, drug trade in Putumayo spurred yet another more drastic

decade of local conflicts and violence. Fights and shootings between colonist and indigenous peoples because of the coca business were commonplace. However, as van Dun (2013) suggests based on her ethnographical research in one of Peru's most important cocaine enclave, "the mere presence of an illicit economy, in itself, does not automatically cause violence" (181). Thus, to gain a deeper insight into the violence related to the drug industry, we must focus on the social realities, local perceptions, and particular processes through which people get involved and interact to generate or avoid violence. Let me quote some of Taita Cristobal memories in order to illustrate this type of local processes:

"In San Antonio, the cucama settlement right next to the resguardo, the people had their permanent coca-buying posts. The "narcos" sat there with a gunman on his side and the person they used to call the "tester". With a scale and a spoon, they checked the quality of the paste by burning it. We had to go there since inside the Santa Rosa del Guamuez reserve, we never accepted to have a permanent post for the narcos. After going to the San Antonio post the Kofán people always came back to the reserve packed with money. Like crazy they used to buy aguardiente (cane liquor) and sometimes they liked to buy champagne in La Hormiga and get wasted for days. There were problems and even killings between Kofán people because they were drunk. There was so much money everywhere. But with that, of course, there was a lot of violence within our communities as well. The violence was above all, between the Kofán of Santa Rosa del Guamuez and the cucamas from San Antonio. The cucama people drank a lot of aguardiente because they had so much money, and since they were always armed, you know the result of that... (laughs)".

Most of the people, nonetheless, were murdered by cucamas in la Hormiga while drinking. During parties or drinking nights these murders happened when a person was angry with his neighbour for selling coca cheaper to the buyer and stealing his business; or because someone had a good crop and thus earned good money, and that other felt envious; or women's problems between men, all that caused a lot of deaths among both the cucama and the Kofán peoples. Most of that happened because there was plenty of money and thus a lot of alcohol. In Santa Rosa, this reserve that you see, as poor as it is today, can you believe that people drank whiskey, with good clothes and shoes? But then they could get mad and kill somebody they knew with a machete because there was some unresolved business problem or because someone wants what the other has.

Violence here came also because of another problem, the consumption of basuco⁹⁰ drug inside the Kofán communities. Several young Kofán got lost because of that thing and died. Many other died but not because they got intoxicated with that thing, rather because they were so drugged and so stupid that they did not know how to behave in front of the army, or the guerrilla. So they opened their mouths too much in front of one or another, and ended up murdered in a ditch. Other young Kofán people died because they got involved in the business; with huge debts and no money, they were killed by the “traquetos” (drug lords’ intermediaries) or armed cucamas. Or by the guerrilla, since the FARC used to prosecute those who consumed the drug labs’ leftovers and usually they were shot for having incorrect behaviours, especially drug addicts who became thieves. However, many of them were killed because the very people of the community asked the commanders to solve that situation. The guerrilla did not like addicted people - even less if they were thieves or “sapos” (snitchers), so they killed them.

Although oil and colonization described previously certainly involved violent episodes, it was the presence of the cocaine industry that turned this region into an area characterized by prolonged violence. As the previous ethnographic accounts attest, the contact zone between cucama and Kofán came to be particularly tense during the coca boom. Cecilio, an indigenous Kamentsá working in Santa Rosa del Guamuez in a government’s program during the early 1990s, told me how when Kofán held meetings in the cabildo, the colonist neighbours of San Antonio used to notify anti-narcotics authorities, that “the indians were doing coca business at that moment” and that “several indian coca growers were gathered in the cabildo house, taking advantage of the meeting to the sell and trade the cocaine paste packages”. Cecilio told me that this was a common tactic among colonists utilized so as to beat their Indian competitors. He laughs remembering the angry police entering these meetings, and how Kofán, who were there certainly doing business, hurriedly passed the packages to their wives so they could hide them in between their breasts. No so humorous is the fact that these situations led to episodes of revenge very often during situations of contact between the cucama and the Kofán when alcohol was involved. Accordingly, resguardos such as Santa Rosa were in a constant state of social tension because problems were not only between indigenous peoples as described above, but also between Indians and cucamas already confronted around land issues for more than a decade. The coca boom further fuelled former problems

⁹⁰Basuco is a drug produced by heating cocaine hydrochloride with sodium bicarbonate and water (Sabogal, 2010). Basuco is thus a mix of cocaine residues mixed with various harmful materials such as clay, sand, chalk, talc, and various other toxic substances (*Ibid.*)

related to land ownership, parcel's boundaries, trespassing cattle and damaged chagras.

Furthermore, as Taita Cristobal comments, robbery was associated with the sudden appearance of *viciosos* or people addicted to *basuco*, a drug that came to be popular among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Putumayo after the spread of clandestine cocaine laboratories close to or within indigenous and peasant communities. Young cucama thieves stole radios, clothes, chainsaws, and goods they could exchange for *basuco*. In response to robbery, retaliation became frequent, leading to ingrained enmities between Kofán and cucama families.

The Kofán ambiguous incorporation of the Other during the coca boom

Violence and distrust between indigenous and colonists increased to point that shamans incorporated these anxieties to shamanic fields of understanding. People such as Claudino's dad were having ega ayo'o (bad dreams) about the cucama, and then, in some sort of bad dreams- epidemic, he passed the ega ayo'o to other Taitas. Claudino, told me about how this situation affecting his father that:

"The more coca was planted, the more settlers arrived. When all the people around here started to plant coca, very rapidly there were more and more colonists from the highlands buying but mostly invading what was left of our lands. My father went to the wilderness to kill a danta; he had been hunting for days without resting not even one day). Then he arrived home and slept and suffered for the ega ayo'o (bad dream) that came in the night. The next morning I heard him telling my mother how during the night he saw his body andeccoeña (drowning) in the river, next to a cucama coyecchu (plantain field) and he in'jañe rûrû'chu of the cucama (felt the mestizos' happiness for someone else calamity). He had this dream for several nights until another Taita called Rufino, cured him with Yagé. But then that Rufino himself started to see the cucama bad intentions in his own dream, and became deadly ill. Then his brother and cousin, both good yagé drinkers, saw the same threat in their dreams. Many Taitas got sick from these visions."

Taita's epidemic of ega ayo'o (bad dreams) is symptomatic of the situation of social anxiety that Kofán society was experiencing during the coca boom. But it is crucial to notice that on the one hand we have this widespread violence between certain indigenous and cucama families and individuals. Consequently, distrust, anxiety, greed and rage plagued indigenous communities, fired by new social phenomena such as alcoholism, drug addition, and theft. But disconcertingly, we hear on the

other hand, stories of collaboration between Indians lending land and providing manpower to cucamas, who in turn brought coca seeds and capital, creating coca partnerships and amicable relationships around this business. The pressing questions are thus: how does such violent social situation dovetail with a functional system of mestizo-indian alliances? How is this related to the cultural hybridizing process described in chapter 8, and what is the role of the Kofán conception of territory as a network of relationships in this contradiction?

I contend that in order to understand the ambiguity of this situation in which violence emerges concomitantly with amicable sociality we must go back to the Kofán cultural understandings of alterity. As I have sustained earlier, Kofán engaged cucama relationships from the same standpoint they used to with very harmful/beneficial beings of the wilderness; that is by simultaneously negotiating, confronting and incorporating otherness in order to maintain the living the relational structure of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Accordingly, when the coca economy was consolidated in the Guamuez and San Miguel regions, the Kofán had already weaved new forms of sociability with mestizos' families to the point that the territory was no longer used and perceived from an exclusively indigenous perspective but from a hybridized one, as I described in previous chapters. The coca economy, I argue, stretched on to bind Kofán to cucama families, strengthened thus former indian-mestizo alliances in spite the pervasive violence permeating everybody's lives. This is why Taita Cristobal's observations about the cucama-Kofán relationships are filled with episodes of violence but also acknowledging the importance for certain Kofán individuals and families of the new partnerships to produce coca in the second half of the 1980s and 1990s. Let me illustrate this with Taita Cristobal's account:

"In that time (1990s), the main objective of the government was to destroy the coca. That was the only policy for Putumayo, and therefore, we were all fucked up, cucama and Indians together, eradicate coca...that was the government's decision. So yes, we finally saw the government here, but they came only to destroy the crops and nothing more. They came here and said that we had to convert our coca plots into chagras, that we must produce food. The problem was that it was not only the chagras that were planted with coca but everywhere around, even the smallest inch of land had a little plant of coca growing".

"The other big problem was that we were already living with the cucama, and they were good at convincing the Indians to plant coca. They used to come here, to my house, asking if I had some land available for planting more coca and

used to say: "Take this money, or the herbicides and chemical requirements, or the seeds, and then we can split the benefits after harvesting". That is what they said to us everyday. Since many of them had become relatives of us, my daughter for instance is married to a cucama, we decided thus to work together. I worked with him because we both need the kuri'findi (money). And I wanted further to help with my grandson's education, so we started to do business together. My brothers were in the same situation, because their daughters got married with cucama people as well. And they all lived from the coca, so they invited my brothers to work with them. After all, the cucama sons in law had all the supplies we needed, so we say yes. That's why in Santa Rosa del Guamuez, during that time, one could find coca plants even inside the bed (laughs)".

Coca and cocaine production brought a massive wave of violence between Kofán and cucama, with, as I have said, irreparable effects for many families that lost several relatives during this period. However, within this contact zone both subjects' ideologies intersected, and became constituted in and by their relations to each other, a process impelled firstly through the economic process of land commodification and productive alliances, but later, through the engagement of not only economic but also cultural shared institutions such as interethnic marriages, *compadrazgo* and *mingas* (see chapter 8). Accordingly, we may see how the Kofán acceptance of cucama relationships is not a simple matter of material benefits and money.

The point thus is that there is not a straight difference between the moral economy embedded in Kofán incorporation of others to maintain a cosmological order (the maintenance of a relational tissue) and the incorporation of others to guarantee the physical survival of the people (the maintenance of a material economic system). Ultimately, both the reproduction of the Kofán cosmological structure and productive system are all at stake in engagements with capitalism.⁹¹

Observing the violent/amicable dynamics of Kofán and cucama may require henceforth, as Sahlins' (2000) points out, to reconfigure the usual binary opposition by "including a complicated intercultural zone where the cultural differences are worked through in political and economic practices, a zone in which structures of conjuncture emerge" (486). Thus, in colonial and postcolonial spaces of asymmetrical contact and conviviality such as Putumayo, relations of dominance and imposition are much more complex than encounters of polarity; they are rather

⁹¹ For interesting ethnographic analyses of the relation between moral economy and the objective values embedded in objects and transactions in rural contexts see Taussig, 1980; Parry and Bloch, 1989; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Austen, 2010)

complex assemblages of imbricated power relations (Hiddleston, 2009). My argument therefore, is that during the coca boom, the Kofán not only continued confronting the cucama but also relied on the already formed system of relationships and shared productive practices with them, in order to be part of this new regional illicit economy. Thus, the shared workforce and investments to produce coca, their violent but some times also amicable drinking parties, and the kinship ties formed during previous years, among other variables, prompted a new process of cultural hybridization between allegedly opposed cultural poles. These variables, which formed what García-Canclini (1989) calls a dialectical framework constituted of “symbolic vectors” and “material forces” as mutually constitutive of a hybrid social reality, explain how Kofán-cucama relations are interwoven with each other, and each one achieves an effectiveness that it would never be able to by itself (García-Canclini, 1989:259).

From the second half of the 1990s, nonetheless, this dialectical framework between cucama and Kofán became even more complex, for now it was not a simple matter of two cultural and racial poles interacting and creating hybridized constructions of the world. It was not a group of ‘pure’ Kofán people incorporating the cucamas’ material practices and culture into their system of *pa’tssi ingi ande*. At this point, the Kofán had cohabited with mestizo people for more than two decades, with a much more intense period of interaction prompted by the coca boom, which led to interethnic marriages and new generations of Kofán-mestizo descendants. These processes occurring within the cucama-Kofán contact zone had several implications for their territorial conceptions and forms of self-representation, especially amidst the convoluted situation prompted by the coca boom.

The cocaine boom effects for Kofán territorial perceptions and some comments on the politics of intercultural identities in Putumayo

As in Taita Cristobal’s example of his nieces married with cucamas, indian-colonists offspring formed a new demographic sociocultural sector, transforming previous Kofán perceptions of Indians and cucamas as self-evident sociological and opposed ethnic categories. As such, the nature of sociality and alterity amongst Kofán changed since now they had not only incorporated new types of social relationships, but from this action, they had also generated different types of Kofán families. Consequently, the generations born after the coca boom inherited the mixed racial and cultural features of their cucama and Indian parents. Within communities these new generations were internally perceived either positively or negatively depending on the viewers’ judgments upon the closeness or distance of these new individuals from an ideal Kofán ethnicity and race. This is to say that for some

families, Indian racial features and keeping cultural values alive such as the A'I language, drinking Yagé, employing traditional medicines, and eating game meat was the only way of being Kofán. Conversely, other families wanted to speak Spanish, dress with western clothing, and adopt other livelihood not necessarily dependent on the forest. Consequently, the families that openly engaged a different lifestyle, mainly by incorporating aspects from the colonist world, were perceived as somehow different in spite of having other family member that still conserved more 'traditional' ways of being Kofán. In turn, these 'acculturated' families began to associate tradition with backwardness, abandoning certain cultural markers and practices perceived as undesirable or obsolete. These possibilities undoubtedly caused social tensions amidst a plurality of internal perspectives about ideal forms of Kofán identity alongside other ideals that leaned toward new cultural transformations. Negotiating cultural hybridity and difference The increase and spread of such internal community tensions associated with the cocaine bonanza were intensified with these anxieties between the 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of self-representation within A'I communities.

This internal differentiation certainly does not mean that intercultural marriage and their offspring prompted a simple classificatory system that created two clear and discrete social categories ruled either by tradition or modernity. My point rather is that these processes induced the construction of new, often very ambiguous, forms of self-representation between these two imagined poles. These forms were in constant fluctuation between what could be considered the 'traditional and ideal Kofán identity' and one more akin to colonist's western lifestyles. As such, rather than an opposition between two possible identities (purist vs. acculturated) I suggest that these polarized traits prompted by the cocaine-culturally hybrid context, rather highlight the multiple in-between and shifting imaginaries for being Kofán.

It is important to mention that Kofán internal disapproval or acceptance of certain ways of being Kofán, had to do in part with the fact that the A'I people as a collective were facing a critical political moment that required a solid outside projection of their indigenous identity in order to receive the necessary and appropriate protection of the state; this is, they were looking to legitimize their territorial struggles relying on the already imposed indigenist stereotypes of their former INCORA's political partners (see chapter 9). Consequently, many Kofán leaders and families sought to make visible the group's different identity, their 'Kofán-ness' underscoring their cultural difference with mestizos in spite of the already culturally hybrid lifestyles they were living. Amidst processes of racial mixture and cultural hybridity the Kofán as other Amazonian groups were struggling to position

the 'indian cause' in the public space through the appropriation of systems of norms (laws) and values (symbols) set out by INCORA. These codes of legitimation and constructions of *indianness* emanating from the state, as Albert (2005:205) contends, provided "the framework for political and ideational negotiations through which indigenous societies must redefine their alterity and territoriality".

Accordingly, the emergence of such internal Kofán community tensions arising from the emergent different forms of self-representation cannot be separated from external stereotyped representations of Amazonian Indians formerly introduced by INCORA's indigenist agents. The stakes for the Kofán leading the cultural and territorial struggle were far too high, and thus, there was no space for ambivalent identities in front of the Colombian state's policies of assigning lands depending on how much 'indianess' could indigenous peoples demonstrate. Acting accordingly to the external demand of the 'proper' or 'real' form of being indian, many Kofán people felt that adopting new identities closer to western lifestyles would erode their credibility with the state and its promises of health, educational, and territorial benefits; hence explaining many of the internal quarrels between Kofán families.

In this regard, Rogers (1996, in Cepek, 2008:201) has pointed out that: "the externally oriented nature of these conflicting identities demonstrates that all self-representations are "constructed." This self-construction, moreover, is not free but a *response*⁹² to power-saturated contexts, which force indigenous subjects to inhabit certain positions if they wish to be recognized by governmental and non-governmental institutions". Although I share Rogers' point about indigenous' strategic self-representations to fit Western expectations of native Others, and thus obtain certain political benefits in what is conceived of as an "exercise of social engineering" (Conklin 1997, 712; Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983:13; Warren and Jackson 2002:9), I disagree that we should be analysing this process solely as an indigenous "response". I would rather suggest that such processes are expressions of complex indigenous political agency in which cultural adaptations and adjustments were happening within the social structure of Kofán peoples to incorporate, process, filter and reject the encounter with the colonist culture. The assertion of ethnicity can never be reduced to the imposition of ethnicity (Albert, 2005: 208). Even if the violent and exclusionist conditions they have undergone "compel aboriginal societies to reconstruct their identity and territorial references in line with the state's exo-definitions and development apparatus, they do so in terms of an autonomous social project and according to their own symbolic perspectives (*Ibid*: 208). Accordingly, Kofán feelings of friendliness or rejection

⁹² Emphasis added.

towards both cucama and Kofán-cucama families living western lifestyles, amidst their project of ethnicity assertion were ambiguous since they emerged depending on the political or community arena in which they were displayed, but furthermore, because the lines that separated mestizos and indians as discrete sociological categories were not as clear as in decades prior to the intensive cohabitation prompted by the coca boom momentum.

In less than 20 years, Kofán made their official contact with the Colombian state, colonists from all around the country, and new illegal and legal economic sources, and thus entered full speed ahead into the whirlpool that carries all of the characteristic transformations brought by such encounters. They suffered diseases, hunger and death. At the same time, they gained access to western food and new medicines. New artefacts such as radios, rifles, cooking pots and western clothes, motorboats and so on, were also obtained in larger scales. Consequently, in the late 1980s through 1990s indigenous populations from the middle Putumayo went through an active process of cultural change, disruption and accommodation. However, the distinct A'I levels of engagement, acceptance and rejection of all these processes of contact with the oil promises, the cucamas' culture, the capitalist perception of the territory, and the coca and cocaine boom, varied from family to family, and even from individual to individual, which fostered the transformation of what used to be a rather homogenous and collective perception of the territory into a new multivocal and polysemic construction among Kofán people. This is why, when I observe Kofán commentaries upon these transformative processes, describing deep and specific connections between historical events, geographical locations, and social life, it is clear, that the *territorio* concept, as much as race, class, and ethnicity, was and is a set of social and political relationships. Amid changing socioeconomic circumstances all Kofán families were able and required to act and participate in one or another form in such system of relationships, which meant that although there is certainly a Kofán shared culture that conditioned the process of engaging alterity, it cannot be said that such culture (or identity) was acting for all them or un-contradictable prescribing which mode of behaviour must be chosen in any situation.

This is one of the reasons that make the territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande* a contradictory and shape-shifting notion. For on the one hand, the Kofán were able to incorporate new allies and produce new cultural forms since all parties, despite the hostile situation, possessed some mutual need or desire to cooperate. This process therefore produced a new *pa'tssi ingi ande* resilient to changing socioeconomic conditions. But it is precisely this incorporation that eroded many of the relational

practices with the environment and between the Kofán themselves, causing deep cleavages and fractures within their social fabric.

In this sense, the Kofán, following Ortner's (2006) arguments on the idea of agency, must be seen neither as thoroughly determined beings nor as free agents acting outside of a social system. Agency "is not an exercise of free will (too Western a notion), but a form of reflexive, feeling, social activity. Social agents strategically engage with the world that they perceive around them, analysing the hierarchies imposed on them and reflexively considering their own thoughts and feelings about them" (Mukerji, 2009:560). Such an understanding of agency is fundamental in order to recognize the Kofán cultural ontology as a flexible frame that allows the incorporation and reappropriation of diverse cultural subjectivities, material forces, human and nonhuman entities, political practices and discourses. I argue therefore, that in situations of plural identities and historical cultural hybridity such as in the Amazon piedmont during the different cyclical booms within their lands, individuals cannot be strictly bounded to a cultural consensus but exposed to a plurality of conflicting perspectives and interests and must, like the Kofán families that engaged new lifestyles while continue being Kofán, make their way through a maze of different identities (see Sökefeld, 1999: 430). Consequently, from the late 1980s onwards, Kofán peoples radically changed again their relationships with the territory. Multivocal and polysemic readings of the space emerged out of the particular forms and degrees of intensity with which individuals or families participated in the oil, land commodification and coca economies, and in tandem with their processes of cultural hybridization in face of the seemingly arriving forces of modernity. From these processes, the Kofán territorial perception was fractured into multiple, contradictory and paradoxical readings of space, which were about to enter into a new phase of transformation after the coca and cocaine bonanza attracted a new set of armed actors with other, and more violent, forms of territorialization.

PART 3

Chapter 11

Kofán-FARC contact zone: beyond the domination-resistance paradigm

In this chapter I am interested in the undeniable connection between the production of illicit crops and the intensification of violence (Pecaut, 1997; van Dun, 2013). Diverse investigations have shown in this sense how FARC's geopolitical expansion and strong control of the coca production, processing, and trade was the direct outcome of their military capacity and brutal mechanisms of social intimidation (Rangel, 1998; Echandia, 1999; Rabasa and Chalk 2001). However, I would like to explore in furthermore how not only violence but other kinds of ambiguous relationships emerged between Kofán families and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia -FARC ("Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia") within the coca and cocaine boom context. Accordingly, I shall attempt to analyse the nuances and details of how power has been locally produced and legitimized not only through violence in this region but also as the product of complex political, economical, and cultural interactions with local social actors.

In postcolonial studies, for some time now, there has been a growing post-resistance critique of "hydraulic models of domination and resistance" (Hofmeyr, 2004:130). In this sense, Chabal and Daloz explicitly reject "those interpretations which conceive (...) societies from an excessively dichotomized view, emphasizing divisions between 'high' and 'low' politics, elites and masses, ruling classes and populace" (1999: 42). Instead, the authors suggest that rulers and ruled are always linked by relations of "asymmetrical reciprocity" which "(...) despite the undeniably large gap (in terms of resources and lifestyle) between elites and populace, leaders are never dissociated from their supporters. They remain directly linked to them through (...) networks staffed by dependent intermediaries" (*Ibid*: 38, 42). A point also made by Mbembe, who has stressed the "epistemological coevalness of ruler and ruled" (2001: 104). "These groups" contends the author, "do not inhabit incommensurate spheres of oppressor and oppressed, elite and mass: instead their interactions can be characterized as 'illicit cohabitation'" (*Ibid*: 104). Drawing on these critiques of binary oppositions for they conceal intertwined histories and engagements across dichotomies, it is my broad purpose here to suggest how we might more successfully read, interpret and understand contradictory and ambiguous relationships between oppressed and oppressor and therewith to dismantle

domination/resistance analytical models. This perspective can lead to a different understanding of subaltern political agency, one which recognizes that in contexts of oppression and war, reality is more ironic and complicated than the imaginary line between “the zone of 'the oppressor' and the zone of 'the people'”; between the realm of resistance and that of domination” (Hofmeyr, 2004:130).

In the following pages I would like to explore thus, how rejection and contestation but also connivance and even amicability have been part of the Kofán - FARC contact zone during specific time periods. I am certainly interested in the guerrilla’s violent ideological, military and economic impositions on indigenous peoples, but also, on the Kofán mechanisms of alterity incorporation that shaped and redefined such encounter. I argue further, that this relationship between Indians and rebels, in spite the intrinsic violence against the former and the negative effects for its cultural and social structure, impelled among the Kofán new models of shared power and governance with FARC, and furthermore, of territorial understandings. I also ask why indigenous peoples, not only resisted and negotiated, but also allowed and even encouraged diverse forms of relationships of cooperation with the FARC guerrilla? And moreover, what kind of functional and pragmatic reasons supported such contradictory engagement of a violent Other from the Kofán cultural perspective? Was this simply the effect of a moment of contingency, or the outright consequence of coercive methods? Were the drivers behind such associations exclusively economic?

The first part of this chapter provides a very brief introduction to the FARC’s history in Colombia and their struggle to gain territorial control of Putumayo and its regional illicit coca and cocaine economy. In this context, I will explore the social process and pragmatic reasons behind the acceptance of FARC as a legitimate form of power within Kofán communities through the role of cocaine as a powerful ‘catalysts substance’ of such emergent system of governance. From here I explore the consequences of the Kofán tolerance and even encouragement of FARC’s authority in their everyday lives, but also the complex and ambiguous process to dismantle such “illicit cohabitation” with them. Drawing on the ethnographic material presented on the Kofán-FARC contact zone, I discuss the inadequacy of domination/resistance models to understand postcolonial relations while providing an alternative understanding of indigenous agency in such conditions of asymmetrical relations of power. Finally, I offer some insights on the implications of this argument for the Kofán current territorial conception.

FARC: a social movement turned into a terror and money-making machine

The FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) is the dominant guerrilla group in Colombia, with strong presence in much of its rural territory and in the main cities. The FARC's roots can be traced back to the Liberal guerrilla bands of *La Violencia* - the civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties that raged from 1948 until 1958.⁹³ However, it has deeper historical roots, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, in the early agrarian conflict of poor agricultural workers against the large *terratenientes* ("landlords") in rural areas of Santander, Tolima and Boyacá. (Pizarro 1992:180). Founded formally in 1966, this Marxist-oriented guerrilla emerged out of peasant self-defense groups linked to the Liberal and Communist parties that fled to remote parts of the country to garner support among the landless peasants (Richani, 2002:23-25), while escaping from the persecution of the ruling conservative party. The main regions in which FARC started its operations were areas of recent colonization such as Sumapaz and southern Tolima located in the Andean region, in the center-west of the country, where land titling and agrarian conflicts produced a strong base of politicized peasants, many of them influenced by socialist and communist parties (Pizarro and Peñaranda, 1991). These small insurgent guerrilla groups subsequently spread to other poor rural regions, where victims of *La Violencia* period escaped from the state harassment, such as the Llanos Orientales, Magdalena Medio, the Sinu and San Jorge Rivers areas, and the east Antioquia (Molano-Camargo, 2004).

The FARC's political demands were primarily centred on the demand for an agrarian and land reform that would counter the inequitable land distribution, which currently favours a small but powerful Colombian elite (*Ibid.*). From its origins until the 1970s, the FARC could still be considered a peasant movement with communist-oriented goals and with control over a reduced area (Pizarro and Peñaranda, 1991; Ferro, 2002; Offstein, 2003). However, after the spread of the cocaine production in marginal rural areas of Colombia at the end of the 1980s, the younger generations of the FARC began to assume control over the illegal economies of entire regions of Colombia while usurping the role of the Colombia state by dispensing justice and regulating market relations (Richani, 2002). The consolidation of such power, nonetheless, implied the liberal use of violence and terror against the civilian populations, while the original social cause and political goals of the guerrilla started to gradually decay. As well as drug-running, the guerrillas are accused of the murders, massacres, and violent displacement of uncooperative communities; the widespread use of landmines, forced recruitment of child soldiers, and the

⁹³ *La Violencia* period begins with the assassination of the important Liberal Party leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on April 9, 1948 and concludes with the signing of the *Frente Nacional* ("National Front") agreement in late 1957. Gaitán's death marks an escalation in the fighting between the members of Colombia's two traditional political organizations, the Liberal and Conservative Parties. The conflict, which resulted in the death of approximately 200,000 people, has alternatively been described as partisan political rivalry and rural banditry, with partisan rivalry being the single most important cause of violence (Offstein, 2003; Uribe, 2004)

kidnapping of thousands of innocent people for ransom (Pécaut, 2008; Chavez, 2002; 2010). In Colombia as a whole, the number of deaths attributed annually to the war's political violence during the 1990s to 2000s was between 3,500 and 5,000⁹⁴. The FARC is responsible for kidnapping more than 16,000 people between 1995 and 2000.⁹⁵ Their threats and use of civilians as human has also led to thousands of displaced families.

FARC territorial control in Putumayo

Organized in three major military units⁹⁶, the FARC settled definitely in Putumayo around 1984. (Torres, 2012:29). By the mid-1990s, the FARC dominated the entire region, including the vast majority of the coca growing areas along with strategic town centers, especially in the middle and lower Putumayo (Reyes, 2008). The absence of the state's institutionality, due to its excessive centralization of the power in the Andean capital cities, and the existing rich environments for oil companies and coca producers from which FARC obtained regular illegal taxes and extortions, facilitated the guerrilla's own goals of continued expansion and regional control. Locally, FARC's domination of Putumayo relied on the combination of violence and economic control. Aurelio recounts how this process was established within Kofán communities.

“The guerrillas had been around here since the 1970s. At the beginning we did not know the type of people they were. The first guerrilla here was the EPL⁹⁷ before FARC. But then, in the mid 1980s, FARC arrived and decided to stay on our lands. They came here and said that coca was good for this was a poor region and without marketing possibilities of any product, this could only be the business. We already knew how to work the coca but it was after this first meetings that everything changed because they started to organize the whole thing, for instance by giving sanctions to the people who did not comply with its word, or for example when people did not pay what they owed after buying the coca, or in cases were people did not produce the amount of product that had committed to hand in; they asked money from people when they committed

⁹⁴ Scott Wilson, "Fewer Massacres in Colombia But More Deaths," Washington Post, June 24, 2002:15

⁹⁵ Una Verdad Secuestrada, cuarenta años de secuestro en Colombia 1970 - 2010. Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica, 2013

⁹⁶ FARC's structure is organized in Blocks and Fronts. Fronts can take together military assaults or specific mission and then start again to operate separated; when operating divided they organize into 'columns' and 'companies' with a smaller number of members and regular control tasks or smaller attacks. In Putumayo the main fronts operating have been the No. 32nd, 48th, and 13th (Ferro and Uribe, 2002)

⁹⁷ Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army or EPL); The EPL was founded by the Communist Party of Colombia (Marxist-Leninist) as a 1967 offshoot of the main Colombian Communist Party that disagreed with the Soviet ideological tendencies. The new party created the EPL that same year, and implemented its strategy of promoting socialist revolution from a rural base in order to launch an offensive against urban centers, where it tried to insert urban cells, while simultaneously engaging in sabotage and terrorist activities (Calvo, 1987; Villarraga and Plazas, 1994; Pécaut, 2008)

such fouls. They also charged if one person robbed or hurt another, in those cases, the one who committed a crime had to pay; even if someone was drunk and beat his wife. All these were the FARC's 'fines'. The other source of money the guerrilla had were the taxes they charged the intermediaries whenever they bought us the coca. From every coca selling there was a portion going to the FARC's pockets. This is why it was not uncommon to find them in the ways of the villages or making controls inside communities, during which they had clashes with the army. Consequently they reinforced their presence to see that the producers were behaving correctly and the intermediaries were complying with the payment of taxes. It was difficult to have the guerrilla around but somehow it was good for this was quite a violent area, it was no man's land. There was no respect for life. The FARC took advantage of that situation, and begin to make a some sort of...ordering, to start dictating certain behaviour norms. We accepted them because we needed that order since we were tired of the cucama problems or being diddled by them "

At the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, the FARC's role in the coca economy was primarily focused on charging taxes to poor coca farmers, local buyers, intermediaries (*traquetos*) and drug-lords (Tovar, 1999). In general, as Zarate-Laun (2001) has shown, during the 1980s the market forces of supply and demand determined coca prices. During the 1990s in contrast, coca prices were imposed mainly by guerrilla's commanders on local producers. In other words "there was no such thing as free markets in Putumayo. FARC sets a price for a kilo of coca and only allows the sale to those authorized by them" (*Ibid*: 1). Although they were only in an intermediary position during the mid 1980s, the FARC had a powerful regional control.

After 1990 the rebels launched a series of deadly attacks against the country's economic infrastructure in retaliation. In the Putumayo alone, from December 10, 1990 through April 1995 there were more than twenty attacks with explosives against parts of the oil infrastructure as well as two mayor FARC-organised peasant strikes and several direct confrontations with the army (*Ibid*: 1). Throughout this decade the Colombian state exerted pressure on the guerrilla without achieving a final breakdown of their force. In fact, FARC's responses were progressively more brutal with each attack of the government. During the end of the 1990s, but particularly, after the state counter-narcotics offensive in Putumayo known as *Plan Colombia* in 1998, (see chapter 13), FARC fronts and blocks were under siege, given the army's new armament, high technology and modern intelligence systems. In addition, the government targeted FARC's economic resources by spraying coca plantations with herbicides, which not only resulted in the destruction of thousands

coca crops destroyed, but also devastated food crops and adversely affected the health of local people (Gibbs and Leech, 2006: 69); a situation that enhanced local support of the rebels in some peasant sectors and indigenous communities.

As a consequence of pressure from the military, the FARC required to strength its illicit finances in order to improve its own military capacity. From this point they stopped being just an intermediary of the cocaine economy in rural regions, and began directly buying and selling coca paste in order to increase their economic resources and affirm their territorial control. Consequently, during this time, the guerrilla waged a gruesome war to sustain the trafficking control against the *traquetos* (intermediaries) and druglords, from which they formerly obtained taxes, and began directly buying from peasant and indigenous producers, attempting to gain complete control of the coca and cocaine productive chain. The elimination of intermediaries increased indigenous and peasants' profits, for the guerrilla, being in complete control the economy, provided poor locals with better buying prices than the intermediaries. This point has been demonstrated by Richani, 2002; Ferro, 2002; Jansson, 2006; and Vásquez, 2009, but in the words of Aurelio:

“Then all the army came here to fight the FARC. The guerrilla was like crazy because they had to get more money to be strong enough to fight the government. We knew that their bosses located in mountains far away from here were pressuring them to obtain more kuri'findi (money) and thus, they decided to finish the intermediaries and buy the coca or the coca paste directly from us. This moment was very difficult because there were a lot of people massacred, without heads, shootings all the time and we were very scared. But some families, the ones selling directly to the guerrilla started to get more money because the milicianos did not have to pay commissions to everybody so they paid better and directly to us. At the same time, many Indians and cucama died because they were getting more money and with that came a lot of problems; more alcohol and guns inside communities, and thus more violence. The guerrilla wanted to have ordered communities, without drug addicts or drunks fighting each other and making trouble, so they solved violent problems inside communities with more violence”.

As the previous testimony indicates, the FARC's struggle to regain territorial control was accompanied by the use of strong violence against the local population. But in spite the violence, Kofán sustained their previous relationships with the rebels. In the following testimony made by Aurelio, we may find some clues to understand why the Kofán allowed such contradictory engagement with a violent Other.

The power of Cocaine and Kofán connivance of guerrilla's ruling mechanisms

"They [FARC] stayed for some time inside our communities. But this was possible because they found among us, some amiguitos indios (little indian friends) inside the resguardo. Those little friends helped them and formed strong relationships with the commanders. After some time the guerrilleros took advantage of that relationship and used it as a door to affirm their voice among us. Suddenly they were calling meetings and convincing the Indians that it was very important to join strikes against the government and to help them collect intelligence against the army. The soldiers use to tell us that they represented El Pueblo (the people)⁹⁸ and were fighting for our rights so we had the responsibility to support them in turn. We did not know what the guerrilla movement was, what exactly they were looking for. However, the guerrilleros said that they were here to help us. I thought that maybe they could do something with our land problems and the escalating violence between colonos and Indians so we gave them a space for some years.

We used to hold meetings with the "milicianos" (guerrilla soldiers). Especially with two commanders, Giovanni and Gonzalo; those two ruled the region at that time. They used to explain us why we should not let the army inside our territory, that we had land rights, and that we must reject every government action here. They offered us their force to do so. Their proposal was good because Kofán people did not want the army here. But the problem was that some Kofán families had already been working and helping the army, antinarcotics, and the police to stop the guerrilla from getting here, so we knew that at some moment we were going to be screwed by one or another. However, we could not do anything, and actually, we wanted to cooperate with them for we could not control the cucama people because they were very violent and furthermore, because they were producing a lot of coca leaving us out of the business. This was like that because they were grabbing our lands remember? So we were not able to plant coca anymore. This is why some of us came to be allies of the guerrilla. In the end that caused a lot of troubles and death around here. But you know what? It was our fault since they could stay hidden here, camping and eating close to our houses, only because of those "little friends" I told you about, those that cooked for them or offered their houses or land behind the houses so they could camp. It was good for some families since the

⁹⁸ The colloquial word in Spanish for a rural village is "pueblo." Yet el pueblo has myriad meanings that span race, class, nationality, and space. Two fundamental components are noteworthy, a particular geographic place and body or community of people (Hunt, 2006:93). Every assertion of el pueblo thus contains both spatial and sociological borders, which in the sense used by left wing ideologies in Colombia, refers to the people in opposition and/or subjugated by the state or a ruling elite.

guerrillas use to carry a lot of groceries, so after cooking the family received what they did not use, and sometimes medicines if someone in the family was sick, or money as well. The FARC were dangerous people, we knew that perfectly well, but those families, those of the little Indian friends wanted them to be here and help us with our problem with the cucama; they were the only capable of organizing where to sell the coca, and for how much without getting ripped off as we used to be by the cucama with our coca business with them. So we accepted those meetings and talking with them”.

Aurelio’s testimony indicates how the Kofán-FARC relationship at this point, in spite of the intrinsic violence, might be seen as an amalgamation of interests. On the one hand FARC derived the majority of their revenues from diverse criminal activities, including kidnapping and extortion, but especially from the protection, production, and trafficking of coca and cocaine (Offstein, 2003; Holmes *et. al.* 2006; Pecaut, 2008). This had allowed FARC to dominate entire regions and keep at bay the state forces in the name of their political project. Accordingly, FARC inevitably required indigenous manpower in Putumayo to obtain a steady production of coca leaves or cocaine paste. Furthermore, rebels used this economic relationship and communication channel to proclaim themselves as the voice of the politically disenfranchised within indigenous communities and thus as a mechanism to spread their political ideology.

For indigenous peoples on the other hand, the FARC presence was the only mechanism that guaranteed their steady, fair, and organized access to the coca and cocaine illicit economy. “The FARC were dangerous people, we perfectly knew that”, asserts Aurelio, but “they were the only capable of organizing where to sell the coca, and for how much without getting ripped off as we used to be by the cucama with our coca business with them”. The FARC came to be accepted by Kofán families not only for this regulative role, but also for as I have outlined in the previous chapter, for their capacity to control intra and inter-community conflicts. Violence within Kofán communities and between Indians and cucama had escalated to an unbearable level (see chapter 10) in the early 1980s since coca and cocaine production reordered all socio-economic relations between them. But then, through force -“they solved violent problems inside communities with more violence” says Aurelio - but also persuasion - “*The guerrilleros said that they were here to help us. I thought that maybe they could do something with our land problems and the escalating violence between colonos and Indians so we gave them a space for some years”-*, FARC guerrilla became the linchpin that linked and guaranteed the correct functioning of this new illegal economy in the region while providing some social order in the face of an absent state apparatus. The Kofán engaged their

authority role thus, for this was the only way, I contend, they could continue being active part of a very lucrative economic system and reduce the level of internal social conflict. From the perspective of several Kofán families I interviewed, without the rebels' regulations it is very likely that they would have ended up excluded from the coca economy by the cucama, as it happened with the land distribution process in this region.

It is noteworthy in this regard, that the government represented by the INCORA agents, had already failed in to protect indigenous land rights and thus their very livelihood (see chapter 9). The Kofán already knew how vulnerable they were from having faced colonist invasions and other forms of territorial dominance without any effective institutional protection. In this respect, the guerrillas provided -not only in this region but in every coca producing region located at the rural margins of the Colombian state – a certain measure of order and, arguably, protection for the most vulnerable, in this case indigenous peoples, if not in terms of land distribution, at least in terms of the coca economy (Reyes, 2008: 81; Gutierrez, 2005; Molano, 1989).

For indigenous peoples, we must understand thus, that cocaine represented the only quick, effective way to enter the world of white goods and commodities and hence its power. In an isolated, violent region mired by poverty such as Putumayo, not surprisingly, cocaine embodied many indigenous peoples' desires that ranged from basic ideas as having a good house, to be able to pay for shotgun shells for hunting, having a motorboat or having enough money to drink alcohol for days, to more ambitious dreams of becoming rich landlords or cattle ranchers.

“With the coquita (cocaine) you could solve any problem. For having money to pay and solve every problem makes you feel different. If you have a sick child or if you want to buy meters and meters of barbed wire to fence your animals, or pay the drinks of everybody, or just go to the town and buy clothes for your wife you simply do it, without thinking. I remember that feeling when I realized I had a lot of coca paste to sell and the price at that moment was so good. We were not poor anymore we thought, we could do whatever we want, that is why we were all obsessed with the coca”. (Mariano, Kofán from Santa Rosa, 2012)

“We were all obsessed with the coca”, a statement that from my perspective is indicative of how cocaine came to be for people such as the Kofán, not simply a source of income but also a sort of powerful symbolic entity, that served to mediate between the very real world of poverty and exclusion and the rather imagined world of wealth and power. In this regard we only have to remember the

unbelievable and surreal environments created by the cocaine power in the form of copious circulating money, in which in spite of the framing brutal violence, Kofán individuals could be drinking champagne and whiskey in the middle of the jungle after a good sale of coca (see chapter 10).

Taussig has pointed out in this regard, that gold and cocaine “seem to be a good deal more than mineral or vegetable matter. They come across more like people than things, spiritual entities that are neither, and this is what gives them their strange beauty. As fetishes, (they) play subtle tricks upon human understanding” (2009: xviii). Cocaine can be further seen in these types of marginal contexts, in the same way as Watts (Watts, 2004b) considers oil in Nigeria and the violent relations it engenders within communities receiving revenues from its exploitation. Watts departs from and traces the variety of violences engendered by oil -not just civil war or rebellion - but the complex entanglements of oil wealth and the history of social disorder with its spaces for violence, claims making, local participation and community building. The interesting point in Watts’ argument, which is directly connected with Taussig’s understanding of gold and cocaine, is that oil is as much a biophysical entity, a commodity, as it is a source of imagination and meaning for all the violent and non-violent actors implicated in producing it. And hence its parallel with cocaine in Putumayo, for it is precisely this capacity to engender concomitant fears, desires and illusions amidst war conditions, which makes it a powerful substance that, as I have said, served to open another contact zone between Kofán, cucama people and FARC.

The interesting part is how, within this contact zone, cocaine, in the same way as oil in Nigeria, stimulated the simultaneous production (and reworking) of different forms of pre-existing rule and governable spaces (Watts, 2004b: 54). In this sense, Watts provides a typology of the geography of violence and control, but one that has also space for contentious politics. In this context too, social, economic and political relations cannot be reduced to oppressor and oppressed for there is a margin, largely created by the symbolic and economic power of cocaine, in which power relations can be negotiated in spite the violence. In this regard, Michael Taussig’s idea of the “space of death” developed in his work on the atrocities exerted by rubber barons on indigenous peoples of the lower Putumayo during the rubber boom in the late 19th century, seems to be pertinent to analyse the indigenous situation of the middle Putumayo less than a century later. As he describes it, “The space of death, created between the colonizer and the colonized is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness (...) We may think of the space of death as a threshold, yet it is a wide space whose breadth offers positions of advance as well as of extinction” (Taussig 1984:467). Taussig’s space of death dovetails with the

paradox of local people's day-to-day lives and their acceptance of the FARC ruling presence within their territories while rejecting them; this is a complex interface in which amidst conditions of domination people create their own desires and dreams, ignited by the magicity of cocaine, and from this, negotiating and resisting potential "positions of advance as well as of extinction" (*Ibid*: 467) in Taussig's terms.

Hence my point that in order to guarantee the continued access to the economic benefits of the cocaine economy, the Kofán had to bargain their cultural and political autonomy as inevitable part of this very violent regime. The point that I would like to underscore here is that these local dynamics have often involved concomitant cooperation and resistance between opposed actors, which indeed, a number of more recent studies have attempted to explore from a point of view that deconstruct binaries and show the ambiguities entailed in these types of local struggles that involve powerful resources.

Based on a case study in Sri Lanka, Bohle and Fünfgeld (2007), for example, argue that new frontiers in livelihood research might be creatively blended with a political ecology of violence by focusing on contested entitlements and politicized livelihoods. In the Batticaloa Lagoon system, the extended conflict caused the entire fabric of entitlement relations — by which the fishing communities gain and lose access to environmental goods and services — to become subjugated to the logic and dynamic of violence. As a consequence of restrictions on movement and mobility, violent displacements and limited access to resources, markets and social networks, the environment became an arena of contested entitlements, where claims over resources were constantly negotiated and fought over, lost and won (684-685). At the same time, livelihoods became highly politicized, and individuals would navigate through different positions of power in ways that are more complex than conveyed by the simple idea of the 'subjugated'. In the same vein, Lubkemann (2010), analysing violent regions in Africa, argues that for the inhabitants of such places, war has not been an "event" that suspends "normal" social processes, but has instead become a normalised context for the unfolding of social life. War might be better seen therefore, as a "transformative social condition" (*Ibid*: 1) that entails different and switching positions of power, rather than simply a political struggle conducted through organized violence. In this same perspective, the works of Richards (1996), Goodhand et.al. (2000), Collinson (2003), Korf (2004), Nordstrom, (2004), Keen, (2005), Utas, (2005), Macamo (2006), and Bohle, (2007) are suggestive, for they explore how marginal groups thriving in conditions of poverty and violence are at the same time are dependent on powerful resources such as gold, oil- we might add coca and cocaine- in order to navigate through the difficult

terrain of markets or oligopolies of violence. Through these navigations nevertheless, they “make use of opportunities for economic gains where they find these; or display strategies to keep belligerents at arm’s length in order to survive, to safeguard precarious livelihoods or to actively engage in clientele networks” (Korf, 2011:748).

This is why I propose that notwithstanding the fear and anxiety produced by the rebels’ violence in Kofán settlements, the new regime imposed by the FARC provided a hitherto absent but very necessary ruling system inside communities, which functioned in spite of an atmosphere of violence. The possibility of FARC to become a legitimate authority among the Kofán was thus the product not only of their brutal violence and their capacity to intimidate people, but furthermore, their ability to create a functional system of dependency. Remember Aurelio’s comment: *“It was difficult to have the guerrilla around but somehow it was good for this was quite a violent area, it was no man’s land. There was no respect for life. The FARC took advantage of that situation, and begin to make a some sort of...ordering, to start dictating certain behaviour norms.”*

Thus, as Chabal and Daloz (1999) suggest, rulers and ruled are always linked by relations of “asymmetrical reciprocity”: “(...) despite the undeniably large gap (in terms of resources and lifestyle) between elites and populace, leaders are never dissociated from their supporters. They remain directly linked to them through (...) networks staffed by dependent intermediaries” (38-42). Such a link might be seen, I propose, in the regulatory system provided by the FARC, which created not a shared ideology between all actors implicated in this system -the cucama, Kofán, drug intermediaries, and FARC- but rather, a political and economic framework for living through a social order characterized by conflict and domination (see Roseberry, 1994). Over time, consequently, indigenous people not only accepted but also naturalized this system of regulation, since the coca production was the only profitable means of economic subsistence in this environmentally devastated and spatially constrained territory; but more importantly, because in spite being a foreign imposition, the system provided certain levels of social stability and economic equality, “some sort of ordering” in Aurelio’s words.

As I shall explain in the following chapter, the authority of shamans to manage relations within the community was now circumscribed to certain practices linked to health and sorcery. This shift was in turn made possible by the way in which the cocaine economy and the increased influx of money eroded the role of the Taitas as intra communal political leaders and spokesmen, generating a pervasive social ‘disorder’ which in turn favoured the local acceptance of the FARC’s system of

governance. Without strong traditional authorities and without any competent state institution, the FARC gradually filled the role of a political authority, controlling the increase of domestic and communal violence not only through force- realized or potential - but through economic fines and more importantly, through the control of the entire coca economy. This is largely the reason why I argue, that some Kofán families, or as my friend call them “*amiguitos indios*” (little indian friends), allowed the settlement of the guerrilla in their territories.

Finally, it is also important to mention that in some areas the guerrilla also found a moderately fertile ground for its populist Marxist-Leninist discourse now that the coca economy had induced class differences, not only among peasants but also among indigenous peoples themselves (see chapter 10). But more importantly, because what were once lives of self-sufficiency, came to be mired in poverty, hunger, disease, internal violence, without any interest from the Colombian state for these matters. As a consequence, several coca farmers, including Kofán families, felt common ground in FARC’s anti-imperialist stance (see Ramirez, 1998; 2002). Without alternative spaces for political mobilization to achieve their own territorial sovereignty, some Kofán families found in the guerrilla movement a partially useful mechanism for economic regulation and a way of expressing, to some extent, their own dissatisfactions with the Colombian state.

Simultaneous cooperation, violence, and fear

In spite of the benefits expected from their agreements with the guerrilla, the Kofán were perfectly aware of the dangers such relationship entailed. The brutal campaign of violence and terror deployed by FARC in its attempt control the cocaine economy induced a chronic state of fear inside communities throughout Putumayo. While maintaining agreements with the guerrilla, several Kofán families started to question such established economic and political relationships with the rebels. However, as Aurelio remembers, such reaction against the FARC was certainly problematic for this was not a problem between the Kofán as a cultural unified group and the guerrilla, but a rather more complex space of interaction in which certain families had specific bonds of cooperation, while others did not. Communities were thus divided between supporters, opponents, as well as those who did not have a clear position. So in spite of the fear that the guerrilla was causing among all of them, it was difficult to set up a strong unified response. Aurelio remarks how:

One day Taita Guillermo was drinking Yagé and he said to us that those people, the FARC people were massacring civilians in their campsites. He knew, because

he was a good Yagé drinker and knew well all these lands. From here, sitting in his 'U'fa tsau' (ceremonial house to drink Yagé), he saw all the blood far away from here but within Indian territories. We investigated a little bit more and it was true. Close to the Kofán resguardo of Santa Rosa de Sucumbíos, the guerrilla soldiers were taking by the force the thieves, basuqueros (drugaddicts) and beggars into their main campsite to murder them. Many people died there, including Indians because they were not eager to cooperate with the FARC's request to become 'sapos' (snitches) and become useful for what they call "intelligence"... to be informants I mean.

Several Taitas were worried and very afraid so they decided to stop them. "I'm very scared to go alone," said Taita Guillermito, "but there are a fey Kofán families living in those places so we must help them. Now we need to take strong Yagé, a lot, and we will see how to defend ourselves. They must be stopped from coming inside our communities", he said. When I heard that I was in completely agreement so I called the indigenous governor of that time. "Mr. Governor", I said, "we are not going to allow those people here anymore. No more meetings inside the community. No more speeches or talking nor getting in touch with them."

But the problem was people such as my cousin Alonso -and some other families- that were good friends with them; especially Alonso, for he was some sort of Indian helper for all of the guerrilla's initiatives and ideas inside the resguardo. In spite of being relatives, I insisted so much to cut that link but some families continued supporting those peoples. We knew that the problems were close, and not surprisingly, one night the guerrilleros came to the resguardo and dragged Alonso's brother in law out of his room while he was sleeping. Like killing a pig, they shot him in the head in front of his family. There was blood all over the porch of the house. I don't know the reason exactly in that case, but this kinds of murders were common around here when the guerrilleros thought that somebody was giving information to the army or the police about their movements so they felt betrayed by their indian friends. They did this also so we knew that they did not want to leave our lands. From that moment onwards we were not at ease, hearing stories about a colonist, Indian, or even entire families murdered for being suspected of supporting of the army.

Death camps, people dragged out of their houses and murdered in front of their families, blood spilled on the porch, and the constant threat of killing suspected snitches, pressured certain Kofán leaders and families to stop such relationship. Taitas started to alert everybody of the dangers of collaborating with them for they

observed, during Yagé ceremonies, the perils entailed in this relationship; “He saw all the blood far away from here but within Indian territories” tells Aurelio about Taita Guillermitos’ vision on the FARC’s murders occurring close to the Ecuadorian border. Another Taita told me how after watching a FARC’s commander eating fiercely a calf that he had just stolen from a cucama family, the next day, in his visions during a Yagé ceremony, he saw the same military eating him and his family in the same way. Notwithstanding the emergence of these feelings of fear, it was not easy for the Kofán to dismantle such complex relationship of connivance, for now it was not a matter of a unified group against the FARC. In this regard I asked Aurelio whether or not the families decided to undo their relations with the guerrilla and how? He responded:

“Seeing all the FARC violence I was aware of what would happen in the future if we let them stay here. The government and the military and police authorities, hand in hand with the paramilitary would come to hunt down the guerrilleros, and we, like the poor Indians we are, would end up losing our lands, lives, and everything, because when they fight there is no respect for anything or anybody. So we said, we are from here; here we have to survive and stay strong, and that was the general Kofán position here in Santa Rosa, to kick them out.

It was around 1999 I think, and the FARC called for a special meeting with all of us in the cabildo’s house. I told everybody “I know you are very brave so now you have to speak loud and tell those people to go and leave us now”. When the FARC commanders arrived we said, “Look my commander, we appreciate your help all this time but we don’t want you here anymore. We can’t help you with your cause. From now, you can’t stay inside the resguardo, nor can walk through our fields; since that was what they were doing for years with our help to the point that several young Kofán had ended up living with them in the mountains, in the forest, guiding them or actually carrying a gun and shooting national army soldiers.

Because of that friendship many people were not only killed by the milicianos, but also ended up landless. Some of them were kicked out by their own families, because of internal problems that had to do with their business with the FARC guerrilla. Also because when people were drunk with alcohol bought with the coca money, and were envious of one or another person from the resguardo or community, they use to threat them, saying things like “I know that commander, and I know that you are doing wrong things so I’m going to report you”. And that is how the problems started between families and friends. People had to leave their settlements due to these kinds of problems. For instance, in

Bocanas de Luzón or Villa Nueva (Kofán and multiethnic settlements), where did people end up? In Santiago de Cali, far away from here. They had to flee from here because they were involved with those people, first as friends and then as enemies.

This is why, during that meeting, we said no more to that situation in our territories. No more guerrilla presence in here. Immediately, those commanders threatened the families that said that to them, saying that we would have to face the consequences, because some day this region and the country would be different and we would remember them. After that day we were terrified but we agreed that we had to stay together, so they would respect us. And if they came after any one of us, they would have to kill us all; we will not leave the governor alone with this problem, if they call him we all have to go. No sir! If the guerrilla wants to talk with somebody, from now, they would have to talk to the entire community.

The problem, however, was not solved after that meeting. A lot of problems between Kofán families came in the aftermath of that decision since, you know, there were a lot of cowards here supporting the FARC because they were scared, or because they received things or bribes. Additionally, some people want them to stay here also because they had relatives working or helping them far away, so they were afraid that the FARC could kill them to punish the people here. But most importantly, people wanted to have them here because they continued to be the only capable of keeping the coca business and the cucama in order. So, in spite the Kofán of Santa Rosa decide to cut their relationships with the guerrilla, that position was not the same in other Kofán settlements. So you know why other Kofán communities are so fucked up? Because they allowed these people to continue being their friends and even more, partners in the coca business that is why they are now displaced from their territories.

But it was not that easy for the Kofán families of Santa Rosa. Two months after that meeting with the FARC, the commanders came back because we had a new governor. They tried so hard to corrupt him with things and promises, and not just the governor they were talking to everybody to convince them of the necessity of having them inside here. But they could not convince anybody since at that moment, the mafia soldiers – now turned into paramilitary were already operating in the region. They were butchering the guerrilla soldiers and anybody that helped them or had business with them, so we decided to be

strong with our decision of rejecting the FARC's friendship or we would have ended up in the ditch".

FARC-Kofán relationships and the of question of binary domination /resistance paradigms

Indigenous involvement in the war in Colombia has been mostly addressed in the human rights reports of NGO's, international agencies, and state institutions (ACNUR, 2002, 2011, 2012; CODHES, 2009). In spite of its fundamental role in putting the atrocities committed against native peoples on the spotlight, most of these analyses fail to unravel or explain the quotidian ways, arrangements, involvement and reactions of local people towards these new forms of internal colonialism imposed in their territories. For instance, the document elaborated by the Colombian vice-presidency in 2010 as part of its *Observatorio de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario*, denominated *Los indígenas colombianos: la constancia de los pueblos por mantener sus costumbres* ("Colombian indigenous peoples and their constancy to maintain their customs") condenses this tendency by obliterating indigenous cultural and political mechanisms at the local level to reprocess and in some cases take advantage of domination regimes:

"Indigenous ways of relating and explaining the world and the environment they inhabit, and to balance and regulate the coexistence of their congeners began and continue from the moment they came to populate their lands from pre Hispanic times (however) the arrival of violent actors and drug trafficking activities have irreversibly destroyed their culture and ways of living (...) their capacity of self-determination has been completely undermined (...) tribal ancestral practices have been silenced under the constant threat that armed actors represent (notwithstanding) Colombian indigenous peoples have demonstrated a tenacious constancy to resist external pressures while maintaining their their customs" (2010:3-4).

For necessary humanitarian reasons, these types of analyses are grounded on the domination/resistance model. Accordingly, they portray indigenous peoples only as passive victims of civilization without any possible response to external forms of domination but to accept them, loosing their culture and values. The problem with these types of documents is that they reinforce a tendency of creating a simplified version of indigenous peoples, which ultimately make possible, as Ramos (1994b) contends, "the production and maintenance of the simulacrum of the Indian: dependent, suffering, a victim of the system, innocent of bourgeois evils, honourable in his actions and intentions, and preferably exotic. (...) The Indians thus created are

like clones made in the image of what the whites themselves would like to be” (10). Aimed to challenge these simplified versions of indigenous peoples and engage diverse territorial questions concerned with the rather multiple, paradoxical and contradictory territorial perceptions that transpire in daily social life of Kofán people, I propose that we must acknowledge their forms of contestation of external powers indeed; but also their ambiguous cooperation with those very forces of oppression undermining their cultural and territorial projects. The complex dynamics of these ambiguous and contradictory relationships constitute the notion of contact zone, which I consider an insightful scope to understand indigenous active participation in the social dynamics of war in Colombia; and furthermore to explore the effects of this process for their territorial understandings, rather than fix them in the immobile and generic position of mere victims of the conflict.

Although the anthropological literature on the relationships between indigenous people and guerillas in the Amazon is limited, Marco Tobón (2008) provides an interesting analysis from Colombia. The author explores the responses, actions and solutions that Uitotos, Muinanes, Andokes and Nonuyas indigenous peoples of the middle Caquetá river, launched to address and deal with the presence of the FARC guerrillas in their territory, and particularly the onslaught of the army that occupied their lands towards the end of 2003. The narratives and explanations offered by the People of the Center regarding the arrival of the armed actors are fascinating, suggesting that their understanding of the contemporary conflict is shaped by the long history of colonial violence during the rubber boom and the penal colony that was built in the area. Moreover, akin to the situation with the Kofán, it seems that their understanding and their degree of acceptance or resistance were strongly shaped by the extent to which the guerillas were able to assume a position of authority by controlling and mediating community economic relations, just as other violent colonial authorities did in the past. Santos Granero (2004a) provides another interesting example of indigenous alliances with rebels by exploring the initial relationships between Asháninka people and *Sendero Luminoso* ('Shinning Path'), a Maoist guerrilla insurgent organization in Peru. Very similar to the Colombian case, this relationship was shaped not only by the pressure of brutal violence but also by the regional economic control provided by the organization, which ended up in a system of subjugation of the local communities. At first, during the 1980's, explains Santos Granero, "the revolutionary political discourse put forth by Shining Path attracted many Asháninka. By calling for the destruction of the exploitative "old order" and announcing the advent of a more-just "new order" in which Asháninka were to become millionaires" (292). However, when the Asháninka realized the unfulfilled promises of riches and justice, amidst the most abhorring violence

exerted by the communists, their communities were already under absolute control of the rebels.

Drawing on these analysis and my own ethnographic work, I suggest it is possible to understand how in spite of the verticality of the relationships between FARC and indigenous people, in which doubtlessly natives have been targets of violence, extortion, and displacement, there have also been spaces where indigenous strategies of self-subjection are guided by an ideal form of strategic harnessing that in contingent situations, colonize and subvert the hierarchy of the power-powerless relationship.

This argument, nevertheless, does not attempt to frame the pragmatic responses of the Kofán within the concept of resistance because this postmodern optimistic solution is somehow an easy opt-out for thinkers to describe the world as we would like it to be, rather than as it is. In Putumayo, I believe, the Kofán eventually accepted or rejected simultaneously the FARC regime because from a practical perspective also influenced by their cultural pattern of accepting others into their social fabric when functional. Therefore the comment about the guerrillas presence that “(...) *we needed that order since we were tired of the cucama problems or being diddled by them* ” and hence the appearance of *amiguitos indios* (little indian friends) of the FARC inside resguardos and indigenous settlements. The agreement and connivance of the Kofán with FARC control within their territories, which effectively undermined their territorial autonomy, requires as Achille Mbembe sustains, a shift in perspective so we can come to “understand that the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterized as illicit cohabitation, a relationship made fraught by the very fact of the *commandement* and its 'subjects' having to share the same living space" (4). We therefore need to examine “the way the world of meanings thus produced is ordered, the types of institutions, the knowledges, norms and practices that structure this new 'common sense' as well as the light that the use of visual imagery and discourse throws on the nature of domination and subordination”(Ibid: 4). Hence, the necessity to observe these contact zones with particular attention to the complex operations of power, exposing, “the mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide” (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:116).

Accordingly, Kofán-FARC ambiguous relationships can lead to a different understanding of subaltern political agency, one which recognizes that in contexts of oppression and war, reality is more ironic and complicated than the imaginary line between “the zone of 'the oppressor' and the zone of 'the people'”; between the realm of resistance and that of domination; between the world of state-enforced order and

popular carnivalesque laughter” (Hofmeyr, 2004:130). In a volatile context such as Putumayo, even between opposed subjects and asymmetrical relations of power, differences and sovereignty tend to be constantly negotiated, rather than permanent accorded. And hence that moment in which my friend Aurelio ponders on Kofán complex relationships with the guerrilla:

“It was our fault since they could stay hidden here, camping and eating close to our houses (...) because of those “little indian friends” I told you about, those that cooked for them or offered their houses or land behind the houses so they could camp. It was good for some families since the guerrillas use to carry a lot of groceries, so after cooking the family received what they did not use, and sometimes medicines if someone in the family was sick, or money as well”.

But let me add that the deconstruction of the colonial dualism between oppressor and oppressed is far more complicated since the cleavage is not only located between these two poles. It is also inside the very social structure of the oppressed, where there is space for fracturing and dislocations. And this is why the system provided by the FARC simultaneously provided order and social conflict; just remember “those little indian friends” that went so far that they “ended up living with them [FARC] in the mountains, in the forest, guiding them or actually carrying a gun and shooting national army soldiers”. Here we may see the inadequacy of the binary conception of domination/resistance, power/powerless model as constituted by discrete units in opposition. Rather, what we may find in this system of “asymmetrical reciprocity” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999) is a very ambiguous boundary between such imagined unities. In certain contingent conditions, especially in circumstances in which the exploitations of crucial resources requires all parties to cooperate, were intimate cohabitation and also contestation occurs simultaneously, and where opposed social actors eventually create a contact zone, the understanding of clashing cultures rather than a site simply of resistance is a terrain of contradiction and ambiguity. This is why I suggest that in Putumayo, indigenous territory and ethnic identities are intrinsically linked constructions, which are neither monolithic nor static concepts, held by specific actors or groups. As part of a process of self-representation and the production of adaptive identities, the concept of indigenous territory is fluid, numerous, dynamic, and positioned with regards to ever-shifting socio-political and economic realities. The state neoliberal reforms, armed conflict, cocaine production, diverse struggles over lands and its resources, transnationalization of indigenous politics and the state’s permanent deployment of mechanisms of territorial surveillance and control constitute the complex scenario in which indigenous peoples construct multiple, paradoxical and mutable ideas about themselves and the territories they inhabit.

This discussion inevitably takes us to the re-examination of the idea of indigenous people, in this case 'the Kofán' as a bounded homogenous group, with a uniform cultural and political project and a single unified territorial agenda. As Latour (2005) contends "groups are not silent things, but rather the provisional product of a constant uproar made by the multiple contradictory voices about what is a group and who pertains to what" (31). In this sense, I argue that the multiple and mobile assemblages of the group would define its temporary borders more as a network of mobile connections than a steady structure. This is so, for as Suzana Sawyer (2004) lucidly states in her ethnography of indigenous relationships with oil in Ecuador:

"Divisions are real (...) no pure politics emerged ontologically from being Indio: from having been born, grown up, and grown old together. The historical accident of living in the same region of the world, experiencing shared histories of oppression, participating in similar livelihood practices, and speaking the same language imputed no common essence. There was nothing inevitable about an indigenous politics of opposition; it had to be produced. But then, such was also the case with an indigenous politics of compliance. Indigenous identity was anything but stable" (87).

Underscoring the transformative and also adaptive process of the Kofán cultural identity to new modern circumstances of war and capitalism might not be confused however with a question of Kofán 'cultural loss'. This is certainly not a discussion on the authenticity of the Kofán *indianess* or a debate on acculturation. Rather an observation of the daily contradictions facing ordinary members of small-scale societies as they are incorporated into the dynamics of war and the capitalist economy, along with the kinds of internal political and identity-making conflicts that often ensue. Accordingly, the simultaneous emergence of different and conflicting feelings among the Kofán about who and how particular 'Others' be incorporated into the social fabric, illustrates the process they were going through in which the territory, or *pa'tssi ingi ande*, was definitively changing. This is so, I believe, for now the original relational premise of incorporating Others with potential beneficial or harmful effects was largely mediated by the 'pragmatic perspective' provided by a new system of market relations related to the cocaine economy. The guerrilla's presence was therefore a very complicated Other in this sense, given its capacity of destruction while at the same time was the only powerful enough to maintain some level of order. Many Kofán accepted their presence while others, such as Aurelio, were certainly aware that this transformation of their own system of alterity incorporation was going to end up tragically, and thus, as he concludes: "*So you know why other Kofán communities are so fucked up? Because they allowed these*

people to become their friends and even more, partners in the coca business, that is why now they are displaced from their territories."

Surviving violent regimes, indigenous agency and the reproduction of culture

From my point of view, these forms of cooperation between Indians and rebels, in spite of the ever-present coercion by FARC, allowed indigenous peoples certain level of agency, understood not as an open free will to take decisions, but an specific and contextual capacity for action created and enabled by such relations of subordination (Butler 1997). In this sense, Butler locates the possibility of agency within structures of power, rather than outside of it. She suggests that the reiterative structure of norms serves not only to consolidate a particular regime of discourse/power but also that it provides the means for its destabilization (Mahmood, 2011:21). In this way, the incorporation of FARC's forms of authority within the Kofán system of government provides "for a radical rearticulation of the dominant symbolic horizon" (Butler, 1993:23). According to this view of agency, as Walker (2012) contends, "the subject is formed as an effect of power and as such remains 'passionately attached' to his or her own subjection, because therein lies the possibility of its continued existence as a coherent identity. Agency must likewise be located within structures of power and in particular ways of inhabiting norms, and cannot be understood merely as resistance to external forms of domination or as the capacity to realize an autonomous will" (143).

By addressing the complex issue of indigenous agency (participation and complicity) in the dynamics of war I do not intend to deny that indigenous populations inhabiting this region, as in other parts of Colombia, have suffered a devastating reality, which lies concealed beneath the discourse of national freedom preached by the guerrillas. What I attempt to show here is that indigenous involvement in the mechanics of war has been the only way available to guarantee their actual physical survival. However, and more importantly, I have also tried to show how within these long lasting processes Kofán people have not only survived, but they also created a complex contact zone in which diverse and conflicting social interactions, agreements and disputes, have reformulated their local understandings of their own social fabric, their forms of self-governance and consequently, the ways in which they individually and collectively represent their territories.

Kofán, like other indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in the Putumayo, learned to cope with the political coercive power imposed upon their region by opening up spaces for interactions with their oppressors in order to achieve their own personal

goals as best possible. In this sense, Kofán accepted the FARC because it was the most effective regional administrative system option in an otherwise lawless land. As a consequence, FARC guerrillas entrenched its territorial authority within indigenous communities, leading to a form of “illicit cohabitation” (Mbembe, 1992). This process, nevertheless, as I shall explain in the following chapter, can not be seen merely from a pragmatic perspective in which Kofán accepted the arbitral role of the FARC out of a conscious, collective, rational decision as I have explained in this chapter. The decision of accepting their presence must be seen furthermore in its proper historical contingency, this is, as the outcome of a complex process of Kofán political and cultural change caused not only by the rebel’s actions, but also by the convergence of several variables within the Kofán contact zone with previous process of economic extractivism, violence and ultimately colonialism. I suggest thus that the FARC’s capacity to occupy roles of authority is the consequence of this complex process of transformation within the very core of the Kofán society’s political structure, in which the Taitas’ former governing functions, entered into a process of change and in many cases, they became obsolete in the eyes of their peers. Consequently, as we shall see in the following pages, the guerrilla took advantage of such situation both forcing and inducing a new system of politically hybrid powers and territorialities which indigenous peoples accepted not blindly, but once again, as part of their own forms of agency within an already settled and very violent, structure of power.

Chapter 12

Shamanism and Political Power within the Contact Zone

In the previous chapter I briefly explored some of the reasons that partially explain why certain Kofán families supported the authority of the guerrilla within their territories. I argued that this situation was certainly related to the possibility of being killed if they didn't. But also because the FARC provided a system of social stabilization, and a correct distribution of the economic possibilities associated with the coca trade that would have otherwise ended up being monopolized by local mestizo authorities in the same way as had previously occurred with the land. I would like to underscore, however, Kofán's acceptance of the authority of the FARC was not equivalent to accepting the socialist ideological commitment of the revolutionaries. Rather, they tolerated and even encouraged the FARC regulatory regime because it was the most effective regional administrative system option available at the time in an otherwise lawless land. If one, however, wishes to analyse this process not only as the product of the decisions by certain Kofán families to sustain an economic system, but from a broader cultural perspective, then we need to focus our attention squarely on the Kofán cosmological conceptions of power, authority and leadership.

My intention thus, is to examine in the first part of this chapter, the changes, adaptations, and erosion of the political power of Taitas as shaman-chiefs. For as I shall attempt to show, their power was embedded in cosmological and economic processes that were drastically affected by the socio-environmental effects of oil, colonization, and especially cocaine. Understanding how such power was contested and redistributed will help us understand not only the pragmatic and functional, but also, the cultural and political reasons that led them to consider the guerrillas as legitimate authorities, and thus, to incorporate them into their relational conception of the territory.

In this chapter I am further interested in exploring how the erosion of the political power of the Taitas contrasts with the increased relevance of their shamanic power gained in the field of sorcery amidst the coca boom and its associated violence. In order to examine the social, economic and cosmological drivers behind this reconfiguration of the Kofán forms of power, I first provide a discussion on of some pivotal aspects of the Yagé shamanism and the epistemological production of shamanic power among Taitas. I will try to show how the political crisis experienced by Kofán people was a by-product of the coca boom and its socioeconomic effects, while the increase in shamanism and sorcery is consistent

with Kofán long-standing cosmological structures and ideals of political action in situations of colonial contact and violence.

My discussion then examines the proliferation of sorcery attacks as directly linked to situations of social distress, anxiety and conflict. As has been well documented for many other Amazonian peoples (Taussig (1987; Gruzinski 1988; Langdon, 1991; Wright and Hill 1992; Gow, 1994; Vainfas 1995; Hugh-Jones 1992; Carneiro da Cunha 1998) the intensification of sorcery occurs particularly when people endure external pressures, social disruption and encroachment. In this last section thus, I would like to explore the relation between Kofán conceptions of shamanic power with circumstances of conflict and violence, and the process through which Kofán Taitas may transform dangerous feelings, violent images and war experiences into shamanic power. Henceforth that the case of Putumayo shamanism provides good ethnographic evidence for the revaluation of how Amazonian shamanism is projected through western fetishized imaginaries and neocolonial ideas that tend to emphasize only its positive, therapeutic, and socially integrative dimensions (Harner, 1998; Whitehead and Wright 2004).

The economic dimensions of the power of Taitas as community leaders

As I mentioned before, most of my work with the Kofán during the previous years has revolved around territorial issues and food autonomy. One day, walking through Taita Cristobal's Chagra he was telling me about the changes his father and he himself, had experienced as shamans after the colonization processes and the cocaine bonanza:

"I learned the science of Yagé from my grandfather and his brother in law. We used to call this knowledge 'seje' sũismo', in A'i language. This has to be conducted by a person that knows, a Taita I mean, which is the 'Seje' sũ'. He is the only capable of dealing with the force of this knowledge for he learned how to obtain the cuancua's (forests powerful being cf. chapter 6) 'tsunjenchu', (knowledge-power). With the tsunjenchu acquired, the Taita could help with the hunting 'fortune' of everybody since he was able to see what was going to happen and then advice hunters how to be successful. With Yagé and chants, the Taitas gave power to hunters, or they gave cured 'etsa'tsen'cho' (special whistles for hunting that imitates animal sounds) so they could easily 'etseñe aiña'ch'o (attract animals as if they were domesticated). The 'seje' sũismo' changed nonetheless; this was after the cucama colonization because there was not so many animals, and people could not hunt as our forebears did. And then the cucama brought all those chemicals that killed the land so they could have

more grass for their animals. The Kofán, very foolish too, decided to do the same, but for other crops (coca). And 'seje' sũismo' started to get...weak. People did not drink Yagé as before when planting their chagra (swidden), or consulting Taitas for this. Everything was different".

Kofán cosmology legitimates the monopoly of the cosmic cycle of reproduction by male shamans or the 'Taita', a Quichua word meaning: "father" (Butler, 2006:120). Accordingly, before Kofán peoples' dependence on the quick and abundant cash flow produced by the illicit production of coca and coca paste, the economic reproduction and social well-being of the peoples and their natural environment were largely ensured by the Taitas' shamanic knowledge and skills. These capacities allowed them to interact and control mystical, meteorological, animal and both beneficial and harmful forces of the cosmos. This is what Taita Cristobal is referring under the Kofán concept of *seje' sũismo*, a faculty circumscribed only to shamans, and which granted them a crucial and well-respected political role within the Kofán society.

Observing diverse systems of shamanic-political power in Amazonia, Fernando Santos-Granero writes that "the political power of Amazonian shaman-chiefs is embedded in economic processes, for they are believed to participate directly in productive and reproductive processes through their monopoly of the ritual techniques of life-giving or the 'mystical means of reproduction'" (1986:657). "In our efforts to emphasise that which is specific to stateless societies" goes on Santos-Granero "we have oversimplified the phenomenon of political power" (*Ibid*: 657). More specifically, he points to the economic dimensions of the power of leaders, in that political power and the ritual of production are 'two sides of the same coin' (*Ibid*: 657, 678): political power, whether it is in the hands of warrior leaders, shaman-chiefs, or priests, is rooted in their monopoly of the ritual techniques of life-giving, or 'mystical means of reproduction' (*Ibid*: 657-658, 662-663). Some years later, in 1993, he continued developing this argument, focusing primarily on the Amuesha 'priestly leaders' of central Peru. Granero departs from the established consensus among certain Amazonists as to the general lack of political authority wielded by Amerindian leaders, associated to their lack of means of physical coercion (see Polanyi, 1944: 52-53; Wagley and Galvao, 1969; Clastres 1974: 174, 1980: 107; Maybury-Lewis, 1979; Muratorio, 1991). In this regard Overing contends, "There are hierarchical aspects to the social organization of all Amerindian groups". However, in many cases such as the Cubeo indigenous peoples, hierarchy of statuses is played out in rituals, and thus, Overing's argument also recognizes that hierarchy in Amazonian groups is ultimately encompassed by equality (1989: 161-162). In the same vein, McCallum (1989; 1990) analysis of

hierarchy among the Cashinahua living in Brazil and Peru, is limited to leadership and parenthood, and virtually excludes any abuses of power. Santos Granero acknowledges the existence of hierarchy among the Amuesha in Peru; but he argues that these are an example of 'equality within hierarchy' (1986: 111-112), on the basis that even though hierarchy is structurally encompassing, "(...) it is the encompassed egalitarian values, rather than the encompassing hierarchical ones, which are socially enacted' (*Ibid*: 129).

These arguments based on 'equalitarian societies' have been incisively challenged (see Kracke, 1978; Santos Granero, 1998; Erikson 1988; Lorrain, 2000). In this regard Lorrain, following Taylor (1996:206), points out that "these ideas belong to the English school of Americanism and its 'irenic perspective'" (*Ibid*: 213), which tends "to minimize a vital component of social relations, namely hostility or vindictiveness" (Lorrain, 2000: 206). Accordingly, Americanist 'angelism', namely a tendency to minimize inequality or hierarchy, and the correlated forms of violence in Amazonian studies obliterate the fact that conflict, violence and organized distribution of power are essential elements of Amerindian social systems (*Ibid*: 213). Analyzing these debates on Amazonian's peoples conception and distribution of power from a broader and insightful perspective, Ruedas (2004) concludes by saying that "Efforts to characterize the entirety of Amazonia as egalitarian/convivial (Overing and Passes 2000) or hierarchical (Lorrain 2000) are problematic. "If there is variation within societies, there is even more across the whole of Amazonia, and it is this variety we should be trying to understand" (Ruedas, 2004: 2).

Accordingly, Santos Granero's argument on the relation of political-shamanic power embedded in economic activities can be only applied to peaceful groups such as the Amuesha or the Kofán, but not to bellicose Amerindians groups of the Panoan linguistic family for instance, where warfare was essential to reproduction, social identity, and ultimately, to power and leadership formation (Erickson, 1987). We might therefore suggest: "applying this model to situations where warfare is minimally important and the political sphere can thus be cornered by mystico-economical considerations" (*Ibid*: 165). That is, to put it differently, that the power held by indigenous authorities comes from the control of the "mystical ensurance" of the land fertility, the abundance of animals and fecundity human beings, and of propitious climatic conditions (Santos Granero, 1986:220). And thus, "Through the shamanic domination of these phenomena, 'priestly leaders' participated directly in the productive and reproductive processes carried out by their followers. In sum, these reports confirm the political character of the Amuesha priest's activities (*Ibid*: 220).

In this line of thought, Vidal and Whitehead's (2004) ethnographic analysis of the Warekena, Bare, and Baniwa -Arawak speaking groups, sustain Santos-Granero's point, for as the authors stress, Amazonian shamans have extensive spiritual-political and economic power in their societies because their ritual knowledge is crucial to the reproductive processes, in both biological and sociocultural terms, of the local group. The religious beliefs and ritual powers of Arawakan shamans of the northwest amazon are thus strongly focused around collective death, the rebirth of individuals and groups, and the continual processes of cosmic destruction and renewal (*Ibid*: 55). Among many others, the works of Patrick C. Wilson in Ecuadorian Amazonia (2010:230); Suzanne Oakdale (2005:78) in Brazil and the Kayabi people; and Tobón (2006:377) overview of the Piaroa (Orinoco basin), Panare (Venezuela), Barasana and Makuna (Colombia), Shuar (Ecuador), and akwê-shavante (Brasil), point all to the same idea; that is, that for Amazonian shamans, their life-giving mystical knowledge and powers for reproduction are crucial components of their authority over others.

Kofán political power, shamanic practices, and curing skills

In the Colombian Amazon piedmont, for Kofán peoples, as other groups of the region culturally centred on the Yagé complex, the “mystical means of reproduction”, and thereby, the political power, was almost entirely controlled by the Taitas or *Seje' sù* prior to the coca and oil bonanzas and before the landscape that hosted these activities was radically transformed. Inside communities, the Taitas, occupied a respected political position since colonial-missionary times when they were entitled by the Spanish as “chiefs” or Kurakas” (ethnic lords)” (Salomon, 1983:414). This type of titling, according to Solomon: “occurred in peripheral groups which were often noncentralized small societies lacking the institution of status lineage” (*Ibid.*)⁹⁹. According to Jean Langdon (1992) Siona shamans, neighbours to the Kofán in the middle Putumayo, Colombia, share many cultural and shamanic practices. Langdon notes how “after the initial contact with the Spanish, the Siona experienced significant depopulation and social disorganization. From this, the shaman emerged not only as the religious leader, but also as the political leader of the community” (*Ibid*: 60)¹⁰⁰.

Although the Spanish titling of “Kuraka” is crucial in the political history of the construction of authority and leadership among indigenous peoples of this region, it

⁹⁹ See chapter 5 in which I present an analysis of the possible parallels between the role of the Taitas and the catholic priests within Kofán communities as a consequence of the colonial influences and indigenous appropriations of the mass ceremony among other notions of religious hierarchy

¹⁰⁰ For a deeper description of the creation of the political role of Taitas out of the contact zone with missionaries and colonial authorities see chapter 4-5.

is equally important not to lose sight of the cosmological structures in which shamans, though specific skills, were the only ones allowed to regulate, constrain, and transform relations between people, and relations between people, nature and the cosmos. This meant, for people such as the Siona and Kofán, that Taitas were the main intermediaries in the relationship between the people and Other beings such as *cuancuas*, *cocoyas*, *vajos*, *cucos*, and invisible families (cf. chapter 6). All these different beings controlled vital aspects of the Kofán world such as the availability of game meat or the access to unknown shamanic knowledge. In one of the very few ethnographic works on the Ecuadorian A'i Kofán, Califano and Angel (1995), describe the active negotiation between Taitas and the spirit owners of the game animals, or *cuancuas* as the Kofán refer to. *Cuancuas* are the owners of wild pigs, but they dwell mostly under the earth, and therefore, the Taitas that want to have access to them in order to negotiate the availability of animals or acquire new knowledge must use their shamanic skills to penetrate into such realms:

“There is a part where there are large gaps in the earth... inside those holes went all the pigs. Then, the man went down and came out in a *clarito* (forest open patch), just like up here. There are all kinds of fruits, pigs, armadillos and several indigenous crops down there. The Owners of the pigs live there, the *cuancuas*, so the man stayed with them for a year. Then he asked the *cuancuas* what do you eat? We eat everything, fruits, game meat, wild pigs, and they went to bring some pigs, which they killed right there and offered to the man. Then after, the *cuancuas* brought clay to make pots, so the man could eat what they were cooking. Those *Cuancuas* are people- so they won't hurt you- and they live within the earth” (1995:35).

The shamanic interaction, negotiations and alliance with game owners are paradigmatic elements of indigenous peoples with their worlds throughout Amazonia (Descola, 1986, 1992; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1996; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Kohn, 2007,2009; for a larger discussion of this point see chapter 6). Like the Kfoan, the Kulina people of Southwest Amazonia in Brazil, for instance, see a cosmic cycle of reproduction between this world and the underworld (Lorraine, 2000). “The spirits of the dead go to the underworld, where they are devoured by peccaries, into which they are reincarnated. In turn, these peccary-spirits eventually return to this world, where they are hunted and eaten by their kin” (Lorrain 1994: 9). The cosmic cycle of reproduction is ritualized during the drinking ritual of *Coidsa*, a strongly fermented manioc beer. This ritual is charged with multiple sexual and reproductive symbolisms, being a synthesis of the cosmic predation system. Hence, as Lorraine argues, “It is an important mystical means of reproduction, and as such it is organized exclusively by men with leadership, namely village leaders and shamans,

as is typical in the Amazon” (McCallum 1989: 285-8; Overing 1986b: 94; 1989b: 94; Overing Kaplan 1975: 53-7).

Kofán Taitas, as in many of the indigenous ritual and cosmological systems throughout Amazonia such as the Kulina, occupied a unique role as mediators given their extensive knowledge of sacred plants (particularly Yagé -*Banisteriopsis* in combination with *Psychotria* or *Diplopterys*; Tobacco- *Nicotiana Rustica*; and Borrachero (*Datura* or *Brugmansia*), which are used as gateways, paths and guardians between Kofán and these necessary Others’ worlds (Robinson, 1979; Califano and Angel, 1995; Yumbo, 1995; Fundación Zio A’I, 2002). By mediating for those who desire, for a variety of purposes, to acquire the knowledge and power of, or relationship with, entities, beings or masters of these other worlds, the Taitas were the crucial catalysts of such ritual exchanges. This is why, their knowledge of certain shamanic techniques is vital within productive practices and socio ecological relations for shamans are the only ones capable of interacting and negotiating between human and spirit worlds during Yagé ceremonies, and it is precisely from this negotiation were the physical reproduction of the group can be guaranteed.

According to Jean Langdon’s extensive analyses (1979, 1991, 1992, 2007) of the Siona people, shamanism is a quest for knowledge, and knowledge is considered as power. In her description, the shaman is ultimately a living embodiment of power, for he is the one that possesses ‘Dau’ (1992:59). Langdon explains how “The substance Dau is both a symbol of the shaman’s knowledge and his power that results from that knowledge. When one learns from another shaman, he receives part of the teacher’s Dau” (Langdon, 1979:73), which is accumulated in the shaman’s body. Shamans can use Dau for the benefit and detriment of others. And consequently, the Taitas become:

“(…) central figures in the quest for meaning, for they mediate between ordinary humans and the ultimate forces. In particular, his importance as mediator is underscored through leadership of communal rituals. Because of the dangers that journeys to the other side pose, all rituals require the presence and leadership of a mater shaman. In the past, Siona rituals were held regularly for the benefit of the entire community. Even though they are now performed sporadically, they are still viewed as essential for continued well-being” (Langdon, 1992:59).

In this sense, shamans are ritual specialists who make use of controlled trance experiences and, in some cases, dreams, to establish and maintain close relationships with spirits for purposes that range from harming to healing, for

mediating in human and human/supernatural relations, and to control natural phenomena that affect the well-being of the group (Browman and Schwarz, 1979; Chaumeil, 1992; Fausto, 1999; Buchillet, 2004). Hence, as suggested by other Amazonian anthropologists, the shaman's capacity to cross between thresholds and boundaries and mediate between worlds is, in many ways, the defining aspect of the shaman (see also Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975; Viveiros de Castro, 2004; Descola, 1992, 2005; Descola, and Pálsson, 1996; Wilbert, 2004; Walker 2009).

The role of the Kofán Taitas as intermediaries between social, spiritual and environmental forces was a little clearer for me during the years I worked with Kofán families on issues related to traditional agriculture and nutrition. Analysing the Chagras' production with the A'I families it was very common to hear them complain about the dramatic decrease in agricultural yields not only as a consequence of the degraded soil quality and water pollution, but also because people had stopped performing the ritual practices in their chagras. Remember Taita Cristobal comment:

“The ‘seje’ sũismo’ changed (...) this was after the cucama colonization because there was not so many animals, and people could not hunt as our forebears did. And then the cucama brought all those chemicals that killed the land so they could have more grass for their animals. The Kofán, very foolish too, decided to do the same, but for other crops (coca). And ‘seje’ sũismo’ started to get...weak. People did not drink Yagé as before when planting their chagra (agricultural plot), or consulting Taitas for this. Everything was different”.

According to Taita Cristobal, productive practices inevitably required the shaman's skills for the “*limpieza*” (cleansing) both of the person who farmed and of the land employed for the chagra before the *vachho'paye cattuye* (the process of preparing the land before planting). Blowing tobacco on the hands of the farmer and on the ground to expel possible hazardous forces before the *ccuchaye* (cleaning the undergrowth and coppice with the hand), or negotiating with diverse entities and beings to guarantee a plentiful crop yield, were intrinsic aspects of agricultural rituals. During the night, the entire family drank Yagé with the Taita, who observed and cured each of them by chanting, blowing tobacco smoke, prescribing botanical medicines, beating his curing fan of leaves or *waira sacha* (forests wind or spirit of the forest), or reading quartz crystal prisms. The Taitas knowledge of such practices, entail mediation with diverse forces invoked through the ritual process, giving them the power to heal and protect peoples' bodies, which from the shamanic perspective, mirrors the health of the territory itself. Accordingly, curing people's physical, spiritual and mental sickness and social relationships conflicts, are direct

forms of healing the territory itself. These shamanic actions on the patient's body have therefore direct positive effects on the wellbeing of the patient's land and crops. Accordingly, the physical and spiritual health of both the territory and individuals depend on the absence of collective anxieties, fears, and social conflicts. That is to say, that from the A'I indigenous perspective, the lines dividing the self, the group, and the territory and its history are rather porous and flexible within the field of shamanic healing¹⁰¹.

The Taitas' curing powers, mystical protection and ceremonial activities intersect all these fields of action during the Yagé ceremony, dialoguing with material and immaterial beings and spaces to reorder and cure the physical body as a reflection of the environment, and vice versa. According to this conception, "everything that we include under the term 'environment' is not only alive, but is part of a single cosmos composed of multiple worlds in which plants and animals, gods and spirits interact between themselves and with humans in very much the same way as humans interact among themselves" (Santos-Granero, 1986: 661). Hence the importance of Taitas as the living embodiment of power employing Langdon's words (1992:59) if we consider that Kofán territorial cosmology, and the very notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande*, is structured around the idea of a relational social fabric between Kofán and different others. Accordingly, shamans are fundamental in the complex processes of symbolic and material interaction, construction, and exchange between indigenous people and those inanimate and animated entities, human and non-human agents, and ecological contexts. This is, in Santos Granero's (*op.cit.* 661) terms, the human need to act upon the environment in order to produce the necessary means of subsistence to ensure biological, social and cultural reproduction. In their roles as intermediaries between realities or worlds, Taitas provided the rest of the people with a channel to interact and negotiate with the vital mechanisms that ensured the fertility and increase of land, plants, animals and human beings within their territories; hence their central role, not only as healers, but also as political authorities with the power to guarantee the wellbeing of the group.

Kofán Shamans and the loss of their 'mystical means of reproduction

During the 1980s and 1990s, as my friend Cristobal remembers, the coca crops spread and covered almost every cultivable space in this region of the Putumayo: "during that time, one could find coca plants even inside the bed" said Cristobal,

¹⁰¹ An aspect noted in other Amazonian cosmologies such as in the Miraña people of the Middle Caquetá in Colombia (Echeverri, 2005); the Tsachila in Ecuadorian eastern lowlands (Ventura I Oller, 2005, 2012); the Wari in Brazil (Vilaça, 2007); the Yanéscha of Peruvian Amazonia (Santos-Granero, 2009) and several others.

laughing (cf. chapter 10). Consequently, the traditional Kofán subsistence based primarily on manioc, plantains, fish and game was drastically reduced to the point that the landscape became increasingly dominated by coca and cattle as the two predominant activities, intersected by very few patches devoted to the production of basic staples. As I have argued in previous chapters, the processes of oil extractivism and peasant colonization of Indian lands that preceded the coca boom had already changed the entire cultural, economic and sociopolitical structure of Kofán society, directly affecting shamans' practices. An example of this was discussed in chapter 8, when Kofán shamans lost a great source of knowledge and predictive power as the Putumayo wild game was progressively reduced due to the colonists' overhunting and logging practices. Interpretations of animal conducts and activities during hunting, as I was told by Taita Cristobal, used to feed many of their *Pintas* (visions) in the Yagé ritual by associating particular animal actions with the future wellbeing of their families and community. These environmental changes provoked an epistemological crisis since the Taitas lost a vital source of knowledge to cope with social situations within their day-to-day lives, which I believe, were crucial for them to buttress their central role as leaders within communities.

Notwithstanding these earlier impacts on the authority of the Taitas, the cocaine economy represents a particular moment for the Kofán shaman's power- embedded as it is in economic processes and practices- given the hitherto unseen amounts of money brought by the cocaine economy and the increased capacity of Kofán families for accumulation of capital. Additionally, because of the emergent process of class differentiation, a process in which, as a result of the intensification of commodity production, Kofán families experienced internal contradictions, in the form of economic stratification, gradual concentration of wealth in fewer hands, and struggles for land. Consequently, the Taitas abilities to interact and negotiate with vital mechanisms that ensured the fertility of the land were largely rendered irrelevant by some people. With growing spending power arising from the coca economy, shamanic control over the remaining 'means of reproduction' was disputed given that not only the shamans but everybody had the power to control the environment even if that was reflected through its social disturbance and environmental degradation. The new influx of money from the coca or cocaine production allowed formerly poor indigenous families to buy chemical fertilizers and herbicides in the farm supply stores of La Hormiga town and Orito. Eventually, for some of these families, especially the ones more akin to colonist's western lifestyles, many shamanic practices meant to ensure the chagras' fertility, became less important. This was especially the case for many Kofán who had experienced and adopted other forms of agriculture due to increased cultural and economic interactions with the colonists. Doña Maria remembers in this regard:

“I used to plant chiviya (pineapple), my coyecchu (plantains chagra) and toccocchu (manioc chagra), cunonga ccosu'cho (squash) mixed with cuti'cho (achapo tree); chhochhori'ndi (tree for canoes) and dondofa (yarumo tree). All I had was an axe and machete, and by being very attentive to the cycle of the moon moments for the planting time I had a beautiful chagra. The Taitas knew how to stop the water if there was too much rainfall so we asked them for help so our families could have enough food. Furthermore, they have the knowledge to control that sort of misi cresa (worm) that eat the leaves and damage the plants. But then people decided to follow the colonos example and buy fertilizers and poisons to kill bugs, not too much, because most of the money was used to buy the inputs for the coca planting, but with this many people started also to get these white products for their chagras. My father and other Taitas insistently reprehended many of them; they drank Yagé together and tried to persuade people to continue doing the things the way our elders did; they explained to everybody how those products were not the food of the land. That is not what she eats. But people, and I must say, Taitas that used to criticize this situation as well, ended up following the colonos lifestyle. At the end we started to see how there were more colonos asking for the Taitas help with their crops than the Indians themselves”

Consequently, the monopoly of the ritual knowledge associated with productive activities was disputed as modern agricultural techniques were gradually introduced while shamanic techniques were increasingly being abandoned. Furthermore, because of the environmental degradation caused by coca planting and increased cattle ranching at a scale and speed never seen before, the “theatre of a subtle sociability” (Descola 2005) was severely simplified and stripped of many of its mystical forces, thus, in turn, reducing the shamans’ field of action and their role as spiritual mediators.

Taitas healing powers, new diseases, and health systems transitions

The erosion of the Taitas’ political leadership may stem from the fact that their power as healers became contested too. For many indigenous families, the coca money allowed for the first time ever access to western medicine in hospitals and even private clinics located in the Andean cities of Pasto, Popayan, and even Bogota. New forms of social distress and environmental degradation and pollution also brought different forms of physical and social illness formerly unknown to the Taitas, prompting people to seek other medical solutions.

“During the coca time, I mean, when everybody survived thanks to that plant, we saw a lot of sickness; this was so among kids, mainly Enfermedades Diarreicas Agudas-EDAS (“intense diarrheic diseases”) and Infecciones Respiratorias Agudas IRAS (“intense Respiratory Infections”), this was so I think because we were not eating the same way as our forebears, but also because cucamas brought all those illnesses we did not know. Additionally, some people got sick because they learned la química (the chemical process to extract the cocaine alkaloids from the leaves). Some Kofán families built their own laboratorios (“labs”) very deep in the forest, in isolation. Not many, for only a few people knew how to do it themselves, so the rest of the people just planted their plots with coca and sold them the leaves. The families with their own labs could process alone in the forest and sold the paste blocks directly to the buyers that constantly arrived to the reserve. For the processing, however, you need to know the chemistry. Lime or cement first, then gasoline, then sodium permanganate, and finally the sulphuric acid. The people working la química used to get sick; they burned their palms and fingers; the ‘alergia’ (allergy) damaged the hands and arms of many people as well. It is rough work to produce that white flour. (...) People asked the Taitas to cure babies and toddlers from all these new diseases or heal their hands or lungs after breathing all those substances, but there was no plant medicine that could cure those diseases. This is why many families spent a lot of money travelling to big cities so white doctors could treat them. This was very expensive since the bus tickets and the food and shelter in those places is expensive, so people had to continue working on the coca to have the money. Sometimes it was surgery for a member of the family or a treatment and during those days it was different from now because now we can go to Ecuador to get medical attention but during that time we could only travel here” (Juan L. a Kofán participant of medical brigades organized by the government during the mid-1980s).

Before the times Juan is referring to, indigenous peoples almost entirely depended on their Taitas since the state’s medical infrastructure was virtually absent in this region. Also, travelling to the nearest cities before the 1980s was highly expensive and difficult, thus unaffordable for indigenous populations. And moreover, many elders told me about their low levels of trust in “white doctors” and treatments, considering them to be the cause for the intensification of the patient’s illness following blood transfusions or prescriptions for pills. However, money and new cultural exchanges eventually led the Kofán to shift toward other types of medicine; to be able to pay for long trips to the capital cities and to rely on western medicine for specific treatments. The access to this new medical world challenged the Taitas mystical powers, decreasing thus, their control over the social and physical health of

the group. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to indicate that even with this new possibility of alternative medical access, the Taitas' roles as healers remained somehow active, but especially so in A'I communities located far from the urban centres with medical services. Taita Cristobal commented about this:

“Yes, everybody wants to see a white doctor now. I don't know why, but it is like people like to wait and be poorly treated. They are deaf to our advice because we have been trying to sustain alive the traditional medicine. If you have a stomach pain you can just get 'tombusi'cho', or if a surije'cho'a (pregnant woman) is suffering, you just need to go to the medicine chagra and prepare the remedy even if that is in the middle of the night. You need faith, that's true, because if you don't trust you would never get better. But they don't trust the plants god gave us, they have faith only in pills, and they want to pay a lot for those, even knowing that pills are dangerous. However, there are other families aware of the doctor's lies, but this is so because they have suffered. They have paid for long treatments and after that expensive deceit, people are worse than before. But doctors are cheaters, they continue with the treatment until they kill you because that is how they get the money. With the Taitas is different because you can see clearly with the Yagé if the moment of the person to leave and die has come. So we honestly tell that person “there is nothing I can do”.

By observing the expansion of the coca monoculture; deforestation and land reduction; the increased use of agrochemicals; the food production crisis; and the concomitant loss of animals, plants, and supernatural forces, together with changes in the access to medical systems given the increased cash incomes; and finally, the difficulties faced by Taitas to effectively deal with all these appalling transitions as they were incorporated into the capitalist economy and national society - I suggest, that their power, grounded on the control of the 'mystical means of reproduction', was socially reformulated. In spite of certain Taitas insistency to maintain traditional agricultural and cultural practices, the Kofán were traversing a process in which the political and economic centrality of them as mediators was gradually decreasing since many of the action fields from where they based their political authority were reduced or actually disappeared.

Kofán political representation crisis and the reconfiguration of power

“I tell you a'cho¹⁰², when the [FARC's] commanders came here, the voices of the Taitas were drowned. They became the mayors, lawyers, judges, everything, so

¹⁰² A'cho is a Kofán nickname that means mantled howling monkey (*Alouatta palliate*).

we (Taitas) had no word in most of the community issues” (Taita Cristobal, 2012).

The involvement of Kofán society in the illegal coca economy was critical to changes in previous political demands since there were new emergent necessities and desires that had to be worked out through the mechanism of a representative political authority. However, the challenges of this contingent historical and economic moment were complicated enough as to generate a crisis over the responsiveness of traditional powers to popular demands in terms of new economic desires, medical care, and political guidance amidst violent war conditions.

In this section, I will argue that the political crisis experienced by Kofán people was largely, although not exclusively, a byproduct of the coca boom and its socioeconomic dynamics, whereas the increase in shamanic behavior and sorcery, are consistent with Kofán ideals of political-shamanic action in colonial and violent situations convoluted situations. Accordingly, I would like to challenge the notion that the erosion of the political role of Kofán Taitas explained above, does not constitutes a process of cultural loss. The fact the political and economic centrality of Taitas within Kofán settlements was gradually decreasing for many of the action fields from where they grounded their political authority were reduced or actually disappeared, does not necessary meant the loss of Kofán shamanism. In fact, as I shall attempt to show, the FARC’s presence provided new social conditions that required the Taitas shamanic abilities to deal with the FARC contact situation, and the entire context of violence, modern capitalism and social complex transformation, all elements that ultimately nurtured Kofán shamanism with new practices and activities. In order to explore this process of colonialism and cultural production in the field of shamanism- particularly how the Taita’s power is strengthened as a product of tense situations of interethnic contact fraught with pain and distress - I shall address firstly a brief description of the nature of the Yagé’s power drawing from some anthropological and ethnographic data.

The nature of the Yagé’s power

Many scholars have suggested that Yagé shamanism in western Amazonia has been developed not as an isolated social phenomenon but as the outcome of historical intercultural practices; thus, there is a direct connection between the cultural coevolution of this knowledge with contexts of conflict and resolution, of healing and attacking, intrinsic to intercultural colonial encounters (Taussig, 1984b, 1987, 2002; Gow, 1993; 1994; Langdon, 1991, 2006, 2007). During the missionaries’ abuses during colonial times, the violent rubber boom, and the current war on drugs

and counterinsurgency, the Putumayo as a region has been characterized by exploitation, cruelty, and injustice. Indigenous peoples have not only suffered these circumstances but have also reconstituted their painful history and cultural worlds through novel schemes of understanding and symbolic processes allowing them to make sense of these situations in their own terms (see. chapter 3-5).

All these historical spectacles of torture and death, of massacres and disappearances in Putumayo are now deeply inscribed in individual memories, bodies and the collective imagination through a constant sense of threat. I suggest therefore, that the historical colonial situation is not external but rather an intrinsic and now necessary part of Kofán production of shamanic visions. To a certain extent then, Kofán Yagé shamanism feeds largely on conflict, disturbance and both symbolic and material violence to produce new forms of curing and healing. And these are precisely the kind of disturbing elements brought by the presence of guerrillas within communities. My point is that Kofán are specialists in transforming colonial and postcolonial violence, confusion and fear into a single powerful substance for diverse purposes including healing and harming; take again for instance, the incorporation of the aggressive missionizing process into their shamanic cosmology, forming what I called in chapter 5 “the wild mass”. The increase of sorcery and shamanic practices related to the cocaine trade and guerrilla war are henceforth not an isolated and contemporary reaction caused by this particular contact zone, but in fact, it is the manifestation of a cultural system expert in coping with alien potential hazardous relationships.

Si lo está emborrachando el Yagecito? Asked me Taita Cristobal during a pleasant night in his U'fa tsau (Yagé ceremonial house), in order to know if I was drunk enough from the Yagé. Yes Taita and you? I asked:

“I was in a bad situation, but I’m good now. But I saw things tonight. I saw the place where compadre Antonio’s son, Julian, was murdered some years ago. I could even smell the blood. I was walking around that place, seeing everything. I saw how those people [FARC] were threatening him saying that they would kill his father and his mother if he refused to go with them and fight. But Julian was brave and said that they will have to kill him first, for he was not afraid of that commander’s threats. And then, bang! a bullet in the head of that poor boy. I could see all that from here. Oh god, that moment sent me to throw up my stomach. But then I was lying in my hammock and saw the same place where those things happened, there was the Virgin Mary, and later I saw the grandfather of Antonio. He passed away long time ago. He was a real Taita! And I saw him cleansing the place where all that blood was spreading around,

by blowing tobacco and chanting. And then he showed how to clean dangerous places, I mean, he showed me a secret; but that I will tell you another day”.

During several Yagé nights I heard many stories about the guerrillas’ war, the fear and the destruction caused by all its actors. Lowering his voice and making the gestures of someone revealing a secret, Taitas talk about the crimes of guerrilla, but also of the paramilitary or army commanders; they cautiously discuss massacres and murders, or give anecdotes about the government’s counterinsurgency aircraft overflights and bombings in Putumayo; they analyse FARC abductions, forced recruitment and indoctrination, and how some Kofán became experienced killers. Additionally, during these nights, the Taitas process, discuss, and interpret the guerrilla’s strategy of indoctrination displayed constantly by its agents in community meetings.

Masterfully, with the power of words, thoughts, and ritual techniques, the Taitas dive into these geographies of terror and its vivid spaces of death, which are fraught with fear and anxiety. Along these nights takes place a process of world-making, I suggest, informed by the experience of shamanic penetration into the darkness, which, as Taita Cristobal appearance in the murder site illustrates, doubtlessly has a specific purpose for them. For amidst these explorations of the blood, pain, and distress, unexpectedly, they start chanting, whistling, and blowing tobacco; these acts are mostly about “*limpieza*”, cleansing a person, a house, or an entire community from the malign effects of a spirit attack or sorcery. Interactions with this dangerous world of circulating images of death turns out to be a source of spiritual power used by the shamans to cure sick patients, and manage family conflicts, community disputes or personal problems. And thus, after suffering physical and emotional distress from these interactions, Taitas can learn special techniques such as Cristobal’s vision of a murder, the Virgin Mary and the old powerful Taita, from which he extracted the necessary knowledge to clean dangerous places. To be in contact with these spaces fraught with danger and overcome its intrinsic perils, therefore, makes Taita’s power stronger, not only to heal but also to attack other Taitas. This is perhaps why all the Kofán shamans I know agree that in order to become an atesu'cho¹⁰³ they must drink enough Yagé to die. Then, they will explore the unknown geographies of death, from where they will come back to life with the knowledge and power that this experience grants them.

One morning, Taita Cristobal told me of his own experience of death and coming back. His account is fascinating for it not only includes dying as a vital rite of passage

¹⁰³ Atesu'cho is a traditional and very respectful term used to refer to a Taita. It can be translated as “the one who knows”.

for the Kofán shamanism but also shows how this ritual moment is now permeated with images and symbols intrinsic to the Kofán violent contact zone with the FARC.

"I saw my body covered in dirt. I had crapped in my pants and vomited all over my chest. That was the night my uncle decided that I could be a Taita so he was giving me his knowledge. That night I died in my hammock. I kicked and screamed first. Watching those tigers and snakes eating me. My flesh was rotten and my bones were like dust. I was death, completely. Then I started to see everything different and walked through some sort of tunnel into a room. I knew, because of my father's stories, that when Taitas are ready to heal patients they entered into a room filled with medicines, like a pharmacy. The Yagé shows you everything and what it's for, every plant, every mineral, so you can cure other people. But in my case I saw this but also there were a lot of weapons in that room. It was an arsenal as the army says when they find the places where the guerrilla hides their weapons. I felt good seeing this for I knew that I could go back and be ready to cure. So yes, you have to suffer and die first in order to 'see' later".

Taita Cristobal account is illustrative of Durkheim's point, made in his classic *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), about the uncanny relation between shamans' experiences of danger and distress during collective ceremonial moments as mechanisms for producing ritual proficiencies:

"(...) Even when religious ceremonies have a disquieting or saddening event as their point of departure, they retain their stimulating power over the affective state of the group and individuals. By the mere fact that they are collective, they raise the vital tone. When one feels life within him -whether it be in the form of painful irritation or happy enthusiasm- he does not believe in death; so he becomes reassured and takes courage again, and subjectively, everything goes on as if the rite had really driven off the danger which was dreaded. This is how curing or preventive virtues come to be attributed to the movements which one makes, to the cries uttered, to the bloodshed and to the wounds inflicted upon one's self or others; and as these different tortures necessarily make one suffer, suffering by itself is finally regarded as a means of conjuring evil or curing sickness" (1912: 255).

The curing of diverse illnesses and misfortunes, very often associated with the scourges of war, requires that healer and the patients drink together, at night, the medicine of Yagé. Those who want to learn to be skilled *medicos yageceros* (traditional healers) and patients looking for answers, fortune, or health must

experience the danger described by Durkheim. This is again Michael Taussig's "space of death" (cf. chapter 11) which as he indicates "is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic and where the culture of terror flourishes. We may think of the space of death as a threshold, yet it is a wide space whose breadth offers positions of advance as well as of extinction" (Taussig, 1987: 467). Within these spaces of death, and in spite the insanity and danger intrinsic to war, all of its elements are capable of adopting forms or positions with important meanings in the shaman's eyes. The *pintas* (Yagé induced visions), mainly but not exclusively visual, come here to be fluid and vivid experiences, or rather "translations" of the situation of contact with rebels and other violent agents. In these ambiguous shamanic spaces, Taitas not only experience the perils associated with interacting with a different Other, but may also capture the answer, the medicine, the spell or the power to deal with a pressing situation. A process that can be as enthralling as it was in the case of my friend Cristobal and his vision of an arsenal of medicines.

During the worst years of violence in Putumayo, for instance, Taita D. from the *Afilador-Campo Alegre* resguardo mentioned how the Yagé *pintas* (visions) might turn into vibrant nightmares in which the violent oppressors underwent a metamorphosis into hazardous shadows, *chuquias*¹⁰⁴, and demons. His brother confirmed this by mentioning how all the entities of war- military actors from any faction, victims and perpetrators, and the heavily distorted territory- might appear in visions of Taitas and patients in the form of snakes, swamps, blood, death and rotten animals, or ferocious jaguars. These images, in the same way as Taita Guillermito's testimony about his visions of the guerrilla's murders in a distant camp he has never been before (see chapter 11), permeated Kofán Yagé visions.

As Taita Cristobal said:

"Those days were difficult to drink Yagé in peace for all these images came to your head and "the Yagecito emborrachaba feo" ('the Yagé was getting us drunk in an ugly way'). But if you are a strong Taita you can see that and pass through like nothing. Sure, you are seeing everything no matter how horrible it is, but with your concentration and the help of God you get some sort of bulletproof vest that protects you".

¹⁰⁴ In Quechua language, "Chuqui" or "chuqqi" means: "spear" (Lafone, 1927). *Chuquia* is the common name among indigenous peoples in the amazon piedmont that refers to humid rainforest soils in which thorny branches, splinters, and death parts of trees form places very difficult to walk and especially dangerous because of the abundance of snakes and the sharpness of the thorns.

And here we find again a bridge between my work and Michael Taussig's interest in the way that certain historical events, indeed notably political events of conquest and colonization, become objectified in contemporary shamanic repertoire as magically empowered imagery capable of causing and relieving misfortune (1984a, 1984b, 1987, 1993). This is precisely the kind of indigenous reappropriation-subversion of history in dialogue with the present, emerging from the encounters and juxtaposition of indigenous territorialities and worldviews with colonial and postcolonial Others that largely guides the scope of this thesis (see chapter 3). More precisely, this is about how certain "narratives of the past are used to construct the present" (Fausto and Heckenberger, 2007:4); but also how the constant dialogue between present and past events relating to the colonial and postcolonial contact zones in Putumayo emerge with new shapes and particular purposes today within the field of Yagé shamanism.

The concept of the space of death is in this sense, the interface where all these processes of cultural reproduction unfold, showing again, that in contexts of oppression and war, reality is more ironic and complicated than the imaginary line between "the zone of 'the oppressor' and the zone of 'the people'; between the realm of resistance and that of domination" (Hofmeyr, 2004:130). Certainly, as Taussig suggests, the space of death possesses a colonizing function, aimed to "maintain the hegemony or cultural stability of norms and desires which facilitate the way the rulers rule the ruled in the land of the living. Yet the space of death is notoriously conflict-ridden and contradictory too; a privileged domain for transformation and metamorphosis, the space par excellence for uncertainty and terror to stun permanently, yet also revive and empower with new life" (1984a: 94). And hence my argument that every space of death, intrinsic to all colonial and postcolonial contact zones described in this thesis, provided new symbolic, visual, auditory, and sensorial experiences in general, that in spite the great spread of social conflict and violence, ultimately and paradoxically strengthened Kofán shamanism. "*So yes, you have to suffer and die first in order to 'see' later*", said the Taita; and only passing through this thorny road, while "*seeing everything no matter how horrible*", "*you get some sort of bulletproof vest that protects you*". A process that illustrates how "We may think of the space of death as a threshold, yet it is a wide space whose breadth offers positions of advance as well as of extinction" (Taussig, 1987: 467).

From colonial times, Taitas have been experts in dominating the potent Yagé experience by dealing with chaos and derangement; with sickness and disorder; with pain, sorcery assaults, and defence. They are also experts in healing, protecting, and curing; in developing medicines, chants and secrets to counter and reorder the confusion and physical or social illness during diverse historical colonial periods.

Take again the aggressive disciplinarization of the landscape imposed by missionaries described in chapter 4 and the Kofán shamanic re-appropriation, or as I called historical and cultural 'digestion' of colonialism, in which subversion of the holy church-ordered space, occurs amidst the brutal purging of body and mind during Yagé ceremonies. Penetrating chants encouraged by the inebriating effect of the burning *pegote* (resin incense), intersect the healing role of the Taitas with their sorcery skills to cure or destroy during the same night. Infernal hallucinations of demons and sinners in hell, take on a fantastic appearance together with natural wonders such as old forests, crags, mercurial rivers, and the Andean mountain ranges; elements that fill the shamanic cabinets of the Putumayo Taitas. The central Catholic church corridor through which the silent individuals walk in order to receive the holy sacrament of communion, now transformed into a threshold where Taitas literally march during the ceremonies with firm and very loud step; or dance cutting across the house while soundly blowing their European harmonicas while waving their curing fan of leaves, making all their patients to wake up from their sleepy trances.

Accordingly, it is precisely in these shamanic interfaces of chaos and order, normally fraught with fierceness and horror, but also with light and harmony, were the Taitas exhibit or acquire more power to either attack or help. Consequently, the space of death provided by the armed conflict today has progressively intensified and multiplied these possible interfaces of dangerous contact. And thus the astonishing shamanic ability, to convert those discussions, thoughts and physical experiences of the day to day Putumayo violent context, into visions of shamanic power and knowledge.

Drawing on multiple Taitas testimonies such as the ones presented above, and many nights of Yagé with them, I firmly believe that to become an Atesu'cho requires to walk very close to the edge where death and danger inhabit, and hence Durkheim's point again that in fact, there is a "horror in religious respect, especially when it is very intense, while the fear inspired by malign powers is generally not without a certain reverential character" (1912: 256). And this explains what my friend Alonso was referring to when I asked about the old Taitas' burials. He mentioned that commonly, they are buried following the catholic tradition. However, he had recollection of his grandfather's stories about how powerful Taitas from the distant Kofán past were ceremonially buried under their houses, in the isolation of the forest, and together with the bones of dangerous jaguars and other harmful animals, making such places sacred, mainly because of the combination of shamanic power and hazardous forces that emanate from the land. The underground mosaic of

human and animal remains was a lethal but powerful source of power for other shamans during the Yagé ingestion.

“I went to that old place where my grandfather was buried. I went there one night drinking Yagé and saw the house. But this was a special Yagé for it was made with a plant that grew from some seeds I inherited from my grandfather. That is why the Yagecito took me there. I saw the house; it was a humble and very simple house about to collapse, in the middle of the forest. But then I saw all those animals around roaring and making that sound because I was there. Oh Christ I almost shat my pants (laughs). I was scared for I knew this was a place of the elders and thus very dangerous. But then I stood firm and decided to approach the house and there was that beautiful macaw feather crown and a necklace made of jaguar fangs only for me.”

These types of shamanic dangerous places, emerging also in *Pintas* related to war, concentrate death as a sort of sediment grounded in the physical and shamanic space, which in turn, feeds shamanic power quests which become materialized in such powerful symbolic objects as the beautiful macaw feather crown and a necklace made of jaguar fangs. Drawing on all these experiences of shamanic transformation of death into power, I can see these ancient Indian burials of Taita Alonso's story, as a metaphor of the entire Putumayo territory. This is, as some sort of massive tropical forest graveyard with all its historical colonial and postcolonial violence grounded in the earth, from which Kofán shamanism absorbs and reappropriates all the historical murk and transforms it into magically empowered imagery capable of causing and relieving misfortune, as Taussig suggests. This incorporation of the war into Kofán Yagé shamanism further illustrates Overing's point largely guiding the core argument of this thesis about the Kofán and their relational territorial conception, “that in indigenous theory ‘difference’ is associated with danger, with difference being ultimately understood as variation in the set of the forces of culture, and on of power in general” (1983–1984:333), but also with the fact “that society can exist only insofar as there is contact and proper mixing among entities and forces that are different from one another. It is for this reason that Amerindians place such considerable emphasis in social life upon the “proper” mixing of elements and forces, which must of necessity be different each from the next society to exist: it is only through such “proper” mixing that safety can be achieved in society and danger averted” (*Ibid*: 333).

Accordingly, I can conclude now, that in spite of the apparent cultural erosion and the Taitas' decrease in authority brought by the territorial encounters with many colonial and postcolonial agents such as the FARC, within the shamanic field, all of

this violence and turmoil have also fostered new forms of knowledges and practices, such as Taita Cristobal learning of how to ritually clean dangerous places after his shamanic visit to a crime scene. In this sense, the shaman's translation of violence into power is an activity that is charged with a strangely archaic quality where a lack of political steadiness and social disruption is miraculously turned into an asset. In his quotidian state of anxiety and fear given the circumstances of persistent war, the Taita transforms the image of blood, corpses, hunger, and uncertainty into filling shamanic food. He is set within a hallucinogenic landscape where the very dangerous ground he walks on is transformed into nourishment.

Colonialism, violence, and cultural production in the field of shamanism

Drawing on the previous discussion on the Yagé power and its intrinsic connection to situations of anxiety conflict and violence, I can now proceed to examine how the Taitas political power was contested and reconfigured and in some ways strengthened amidst the hectic context of the cocaine boom. . Though perhaps many of the ritual practices related to ensuring the production of food and the abundance of game, on which their political power was previously grounded, became less important and at times discontinued, the conflict inherent to these processes opened a new era of active shamanism, which given the land encroachment, violence and social distressing conditions, came to be mostly related with sorcery attacks and therewith healing.

As many have noted, accusations of sorcery tend to intensify during periods of social disruption and commotion caused by external pressures, (Taussig, 1987, Whitehead and Wright, 2004, Thomas and Humphrey, 1996). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s indigenous peoples in Putumayo endured systematic terror campaigns unleashed by armed groups. They faced pressures over their lands, resources, and labor; suffered forced displacement from their ancestral territories while witnessing the separation of their families. The land was transformed by new economic practices and plagued with landmines. Their ancestral pattern of mobility was suddenly restricted, and traditional networks of shamanic and economic trade interrupted. People were caught in the crossfire of military confrontations close to the places where they lived, generating a permanent atmosphere of fear and vulnerability. Young people, furthermore, became addicted to *basuco*, or became thieves inside their own communities. Changes in the sexual division of labour also occurred as a result of new productive and market activities related with coca and cocaine production.

In addition to all these distressing circumstances, the rise of class and race differentiations within Kofán communities after the cocaine boom economy

propelled particular internal social tensions. As mentioned before (see chapter 10), these differentiations in the Kofán social structure resulted from the emergence of differences in prestige, status, wealth, or success. As Buchillet (2004) notes for Desana peoples, these aspects, however temporary, inevitably arouses envy and ill among neighbours, close kin, and others not so lucky or successful (...) Envy, often leads to evil desires that result in actions performed by the man or the woman harbouring the antipathy or jealousy towards the person- if he or she knows how to do it- or through a specialist hired for this task” (*Ibid*: 117).

The Kofán situation was closely akin to Buchillet description for in spite that Kofán families attempted to be discreet on how much they were earning from their coca business so as not to arouse the envy and resentment of others, inevitably the economic differences started to be evident in such small communities. Envious feelings emerged during drinking nights and moments of community tension causing violent episodes between indigenous individuals and families. Physical violence often served to stem out those enmities to some degree during this these moments as Taita Cristobal accounts:

After going to the San Antonio post [to sell coca or cocaine paste] the Kofán people always came back to the reserve packed with money. They used to buy aguardiente (cane liquor) and sometimes champagne in La Hormiga and get wasted for days. There were problems and even killings between Kofán people because they were drunk. There was so much money everywhere. But with that, of course, there was a lot of violence within our communities as well. The violence was above all, between the Kofán of Santa Rosa del Guamuez and the cucamas from San Antonio. The cucama people drank a lot of aguardiente because they had so much money, and since they were always armed, you know the result of that.

The institutionalization of FARC’s authority nonetheless, largely suppressed this forms of drunkenness-related violence within communities. These different controls led often Kofán individuals, fearing the FARC’s punishments, to resolve internal differences through more imperceptible means that is, using sorcery attacks. As Aurelio mentioned accounts:

“People drank a lot with the coca money, either here in the resguardo or in la Hormiga town. The difference, however, was that when the people drank here, the guerrilla was ruthless with the misbehaved and punished them if they did bad things to others while drinking. But you know how the people can be when

they feel offended, they had to look for revenge so they looked for help from people that know how to eat¹⁰⁵ others”.

A Kofán friend remembered how a sorcery fight between two strong Yagé drinkers from different families resulted in one of them losing his eyesight and the other losing his wife. But this was not an isolated episode, in fact, as my friend Aurelio commented once, “*Just a chagras’ boundary problem, even between brothers, could cause a war between families when drinking Yagé or simply with the power of the will, to harm the other*”. Cases like this reached epidemic proportions in this context of violence, money and distress- lets recall the story of Ramon and Fernando, recounted by Aurelio in chapter 10, in which sorcery attacks between relatives is directly linked with the appearance of envious feelings. What becomes evident, from these very common episodes, as Ferreira (2002) contends, “is that shamanic perceptions of the world are intrinsically tied to forms of social organization, particularly forms of political organization”(44). And therefore, the extraordinary growth of sorcery within Kofán communities goes beyond a causal reaction to the FARC’s contingent period of postcolonial domination. As has been well documented for many other Amazonian peoples, the intensification of sorcery occurs particularly when people endure external pressures, social disruption and encroachment -for instance during the colonial process of demographic concentration in missions (Taussig (1987; Gruzinski 1988; Langdon, 1991; Wright and Hill 1992; Gow, 1994; Vainfas 1995; Hugh-Jones 1996; Carneiro da Cunha 1998). Sorcery is in this perspective boosted by the spread of fear and confusion, and the communities’ inward retention of these feelings. This is likely to have happened first during the 18th century, when Kofán were concentrated in large missions, and then again between the 1980s and 1990s, during the period of intense conflict generated by the coca economy, war and the FARC. On the one hand, the rebels induced new forms of control and surveillance altering the role of the Taitas as community mediators. But furthermore, FARC’s mechanisms of co-optation created radical divisions between native collaborators that became informants or even *guerrilleros* and indigenous leaders and families reluctant to accept such situation. Without spaces of conflict resolution as the ones provided formerly by Taitas -now heavily challenged by the rebel’s forms of authority- together with the increase of land related problems, economic envies and alcohol-induced episodes of violence, Kofán individuals often resolved their social conflicts in the shamanic sphere. Therefore, whereas the importance of the Taitas’ social roles as controllers of the ‘mystical means of reproduction’, political mediators of internal conflicts, and community leaders

¹⁰⁵ ‘*Comer a otro*’ (“eat another”) is a common expression for a sorcery attack.

became less significant, other practices of harming and healing gained predominance in the new hectic and violent juncture.

The case of Putumayo provides, in this sense, good ethnographic evidence to question western fetishized imaginaries and neocolonial representations of Amazonian shamanism, in ways that tend to emphasize only its positive, therapeutic, and socially integrative dimensions (Harner, 1998; Whitehead and Wright 2004). Here we find that shamanism and sorcery proliferate amidst emergent conditions of anxiety, uneasiness and fear. Challenging the stereotyped image of Taitas as sanctified-ahistorical idols this places shamanism rather as a practice linked to wider sociopolitical goals, especially in the face of colonialism, epidemic disease, modern development or contemporary wars (see Vidal and Whitehead 2004). The fact that Kofán have learned how to cope with situations of pain and oppression through shamanic releasing of such inward conflicts does not void the potential disintegration and entropy of the social system, however. Indeed, my sense is that the intolerable conditions in some cases fueled Kofán sorcery to the extent that it became nearly unmanageable, generating further social fractures and internal violence, which very often cannot be regulated with traditional mechanisms for justice such as conciliation, agreement, or retribution. And here we must return to the Kofán territorial notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande* as a relational social fabric. For I believe that oil extractivism and colonization, but particularly, the systematic use of fear, economic manipulation, and pitched battles staged between left wing guerrillas, right wing paramilitaries, drug traffickers, and the state forces, within indigenous lands, have had the most disruptive effects on the social filaments that constituted *pa'tssi ingi ande* for the Kofán.

Chapter 13

Paramilitary Forces: Dislocations of Self and *Pa'tssi Ingi Ande* Through Fear

Grupos de Autodefensa (“self-defense groups”) is a term that has been used in Colombia to describe a range of different armed groups active during the past fifty years. These groups have evolved considerably since the 1960s, when U.S. military consultants first advised the Colombian government on how to organize “local irregulars” as a fundamental component of the Colombian counterinsurgency strategy against leftist guerrillas (Tate, 2011:164). The most recent resurgence of paramilitaries in Colombia dates back to the mid-1980s, when powerful landlords decided the national army was unable to defend them and their lands from the left-wing guerrillas and so formed their own police and armies which, being irregular could fight a war of terror so terrible that peasant support for the guerrilla would evaporate (Taussig, 2003:xii see also Reyes, 2008; Hristov, 2009). Born as local organizations, these groups received the cooperation not only of powerful landowners and entrepreneurs in diverse regions of Colombia, but also the support of sectors within urban middle class, informal workers, and coca producers extorted by the guerrillas. During the late 1980s and 1990s, the growth and expansion of the FARC’s military machine was accompanied by an increasing indifference on the part of the guerrillas regarding land conflicts and the interests of the popular sectors. This process of distancing became even more evident when some sectors within the FARC, pressured by their central controls to get more resources, increased their economic demands in rural deprived areas, forcing poor farmers and small traders to pay taxes, which led to greater popular resentment against them. That resentment, partly explains the ease and speed with which the Autodefensas formed and grew in isolated regions of the country.

The *Autodefensas* battled against various left-wing rebel groups such as the M-19, EPL, ELN, and the FARC, with implicit approval of the Colombian government and complete support from the army (Reyes, 2008: 85). During this decade Colombia still feared the communist threat as a legacy of the Cold War, and this, accompanied by the doctrines of National Security and authoritarianism created the perfect conditions for the emergence of illegal paramilitary groups assisted by the government (Sanford, 2003). Paramilitaries not only attacked guerrilla groups and ex-guerrilla members, but also left-wing trade unions, academics, politicians, priests and a number of collectives perceived as having left-wing or divergent political positions (Valencia and Celis, 2013).

Throughout rural Colombia, the increase in paramilitary activities implied the spread of fear and terror amongst peasant and indigenous communities. Terror, as Oslender (2008:83) contends, breaks apart existing forms of territorialization and so the use of threats and massacres brought about the loss of territorial control by local populations. “The physical uprooting and forceful displacement of individuals or communities are, of course, the most visible expression of this aspect, as people flee violence and terror, abandoning their lands, their houses, and their rivers” (*Ibid*: 83). Yet, deterritorialization for Amazonian indigenous peoples such as the Kofán also occurred when families or entire communities were repressed or felt restricted in their everyday routine movements around their accustomed spaces; and furthermore, when the social filaments that connected Kofán families that formed *pa’tssi Ingi Ande*, were severed through the systematic injection of mutual fears and distrust. These two aspects would be responsible what could be termed ‘perceptual deterritorialization’ as I shall explain below.

Hence, if as I argue, notions of indigenous territory and ethnic identity are intrinsically linked constructions which are neither monolithic nor uniform perceptions, but rather mobile, polysemic, and positioned with regards to ever-shifting sociopolitical and economic realities, the question here is how did the Kofán encounter with the paramilitary project affect the production of *patsi ingi ande*? Or, said differently, how do collective and individual experiences of terror and distrust inform the current production of self and territory for indigenous people in Putumayo?

In this chapter I argue that in contrast to other postcolonial encounters, the Kofán interaction with paramilitaries did not create a contact zone. As we have seen, “contact zones” (Pratt, 1992) or “middle grounds” (White, 1991) are spaces of negotiation between parties that, despite some underlying contradictions, possess some mutual need or desire to cooperate. The systems of action and thought emerging out of middle grounds are thus an amalgamation of interests, adjustments and very often, misunderstandings. Within this interface, subjects’ ideologies intersect, and become constituted in and by their relations to each other within asymmetrical relations of power and violence (Pratt, 1992: 8). I have maintained that that Kofán territorial perceptions and definitions have been expressed and practiced through their articulation with such contact zones as oil companies, cucama peoples, the coca and cocaine socioeconomic system, the FARC and the state formation process. In sharp contrast to these however, the dynamics between Kofán and paramilitary groups cannot be framed under the perspective contact zone or middle ground. Their contact with paramilitaries, given its particular forms of extreme violence as the only possible form of interaction, and hence, its one sided

forms of imposition, did not leave space for the circulation of mutual demands or cooperation as in in other colonial and postcolonial experiences.

I suggest therefore, that this particular encounter caused a different impact on the very ontology of the self, in the same fashion as the spaces indigenous peoples inhabit. In this sense I shall attempt to show that without the possibility of a contact zone, the paramilitaries presence within Kofán territories became a corrosive substance for the Kofán social relational system, and therefore one of the most drastic drivers of internal community division and conflict and what I call perceptual deterritorialization. In the first part of this chapter, and using diverse historical and ethnographic materials, I present an overview of the arrival of Autodefenzas to the Putumayo Department. I then explore what I see as the unweaving effect of fear, violence and distrusts caused by paramilitaries for the Kofán social fabric. Finally, I present a critical analysis of how the constriction, disturbance, and rupture of the Kofán relational process of identity-making, and thus, of peoples' ways of place making, effected a situation of perceptual deterritorialization.

The arrival of Autodefenzas in the Putumayo Department

As outlined previously, coca cultivation first came to Putumayo in 1978 and the production grew along the San Miguel, Guamuez and Putumayo rivers. However, it was almost a decade later, when the cocaine production decreased sharply in mid-1987 as a result of the actions taken by the anti-narcotics police against the Medellin cartel in Puerto Triunfo and Doradal in the Magdalena Medio (mid-Magdalena River Valley), that the famous drug lord Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, aka "El Mexicano" chose Putumayo as the next and most important center for cocaine production far away from the authorities' control (Ramirez, 2011; Reyes, 2008). In order to gain control over the regional drug trade in the Guamuez valley he had to displace the guerrilla who at that time controlled coca production in the region. In order to do this he began bringing in paramilitaries to the region. Through the use of threats and selective assassinations in communities and small urban settlements, Rodriguez Gacha's hitmen began to fight the guerrilla to wrestle control over trading routes and partnerships with producers (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2012)¹⁰⁶. In the Santa Rosa del Guamuez resguardo Miguel remembers this early stage of the mafia and its incipient paramilitary forces:

¹⁰⁶ Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov>

"The first paramilitaries here were called "Los Macetos". They worked for the 'mafiosos' (gangsters), taking care of the cristalizaderos (jungle labs or "kitchens" where coca leaf is processed into coca paste), but the FARC guerrilla massacred many of them. The guerrilleros were acting like rabid dogs with the "mafia invasion." But the paramilitaries were even worse and they had friends in other parts of the country so they called other killers to fight. They entered through San Antonio, just right there! (Pointing the soccer field of the San Antonio settlement at the entrance of the Santa Rosa Kofán resguardo). I remember a group of paisas¹⁰⁷ that came from Marquetalia, with their faces full of scars, almost disfigured. One of them was called 'Mocho' (armless), a hard gunman. He was the leader of that people making trouble all around. But neither the new ones nor the Macetos from San Miguel could defeat easily the guerrilleros that easily. In sum, everybody was armed and violent, and we were in the middle of that. This is why I say that paramilitary presence means fear. Fear that something might happen to the women, fear of torture and disappearance. The "6" for example, was a Para commander. He used to mochar (mutilate) the hands of guerrilleros and other people, and said to them while those poor devils were bleeding: "now you hijo de puta ("son of a whore") communist, grab your rifle and kill me!" all this occurred in front of us...yes, that caused fear among us.

Miguel is referring to the first wave of paramilitaries led by the *Mexicano* and other less powerful narcos confronting each other and the guerrilla. However, this first encounter would be superseded by a second, and certainly more vicious group of paramilitaries, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* AUC ("United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia"). The AUC was founded in 1996 to bring some degree of central coordination, funding, and political organization to the numerous independent paramilitary groups in Colombia. The group, as Romero (2000:66) writes, presented itself as an anticommunist advance guard in "defense of private property and free enterprise," offering protection to landowners and businessmen in areas plundered by guerrillas. In 1998, AUC descended into the middle Putumayo, announcing an offensive war against the traditional guerrilla strongholds of the western plains and the eastern jungle departments (Tate, 2011:164). Veiled in the discourse of national social order, progress, and civilization, and the eradication of the guerrillas as the main enemies of these ideals, the AUC's first objective was in fact to gain control of the economically-important urban centers, while appropriating key routes for drug and arms trafficking from the guerilla (Aranguren, 2001). One hundred and fifty heavily armed men from the AUC descended upon the village of El Tigre, executing

¹⁰⁷ People from Antioquia department located in the central northwestern part of Colombia

more than 40 people and burning several homes. Three months later, on March 18, they entered El Placer and murdered 25 people. By the end of 1999, after the murder of another 29 people, the paramilitary groups consolidated their control of this region of Putumayo (Asociación Minga, 2008; CNRR-Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011).

AUC: weaving terror, fear, and distrust in the social fabric

The arrival of paramilitaries to the Middle Putumayo prompted deep transformations in the social, geographical, and political relations of indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Through public documents, press statements, and daily-distributed propaganda distributed in small urban settlements such as El Placer, La Hormiga, El Tigre, but also inside smaller communities of the Guamuez Valley and San Miguel, the AUC announced their intention to begin an offensive military campaign against guerrilla and their helpers. Through unbelievably cruel and highly visible acts of brutality, paramilitary mobile squads began to strategically weave panic into the social landscape, undermining local support to the guerilla and affirming power over the cocaine and other illegal economies. Miguel continues:

“Because of the paramilitaries we were afraid of everybody. The paramilitaries used to come to La Hormiga at night to do their limpieza (“cleansing”-massacre), killing whomever they wanted and then disappearing the bodies. People without documents or ID’s were killed because they said they were ‘milicianos’ (guerrilla soldier). Using rubber boots could be seen by the ‘paras’ as a sign of being a ‘guerrillo’ so we stop using them because of the fear of being confused”.

“The paras were ruthless, and it was common that they entered into the houses or when people were in Yagé ceremonies and killed everybody. For instance, one complete family that lived nearby my house was brutally murdered. They were good and decent cucama (mestizo) people, but the mafia-paramilitaries massacred them because they were helping some FARC commander who had threatened to kill them if they did not collaborate. After that, everything turned even more hectic for us. Everybody was talking again about all those gunmen working for one or another ‘narco’, saying that they were killing again to put order on the business and scare the guerrilla out of the Putumayo. People started to talk about the massacres and how the mafia gunmen had their own campsites to kill people close to our resguardo in San Miguel”. (...) “Rapidly these lands became blood lands because the mafias were killing each other, the guerrillas and the army fighting as well, and us, the Indians in the middle of all

this, fucked by everyone because those people wanted us to back up one or another, or to do business with this one or the other”.

Aurelio’s testimony illustrates the kind of brutal practices employed by the AUC:

“Paramilitaries chopped people into pieces with a chainsaw. They left the limbs and the heads there for the people to see. They also used to write on the walls of the houses, were they murdered entire families, “AUC”, and messages saying that this would be the future for anyone helping the FARC”.

These specific strategies of terror employed by paramilitaries, which in fact imitate violent techniques and performances of “La Violencia” period¹⁰⁸, created a peculiar semantics of political terror where public dismembering functions as an effective strategy of communication (Oslender, 2008:80). This “Terror works as embodied spectacle and is enacted in front of the victim’s relatives and neighbors. It thus sends a message to the survivors of massacres, threatening them with the same fate as witnessed in these brutal acts of public torture and execution” (*Ibid*: 80-81). The fear of being considered a helper of either paramilitary or guerrilla spread like a virus, disrupting all social relations by driving a wedge of distrust within families and between neighbors and friends. As in the rest of Colombia, fear entered into active social circulation, not only through the direct effect of experienced or witnessed suffering and brutality, but also through stories were subsequently and endlessly repeated, the ceaseless rumors, the elusive and intricate gossip, and the ubiquitous silence that is often associated with violence (see Green, 1994). Aurelio further said that:

During the time the AUC was around, I was elected as the resguardo’s Governor; during those years I was very busy dealing with the people from the Instituto Nacional de Vías INVIAS (National Institute of Roadways) and their project to build the highway that connected Puerto Asís with the international bridge in the Ecuador’s border, which was traced over our lands. That was the moment that the AUC arrived here so you can imagine how difficult it was to go and work outside our communities. Especially being an indigenous governor, because you never knew if they would think you were a guerrillero and shoot you just because you were complaining about the problems we have with the oil company or with the Colombian government. The other problem that caused a lot of fear among us was that many indigenous people, including some Kofán and many Quichua from San Marcelino, were actually helping the guerrilla,

¹⁰⁸ *La Violencia* in Colombia, from 1946 to 1965, in which the country was split along the lines of the Liberal and Conservative parties, was one of the world’s most extensive and complex civil wars of the last century (see references provided by Posada 2001).

and this was extremely dangerous for us. You know how it is, if they found a guerrilla collaborator they are not just going to come for that family, they will burn them and everybody and everything around.

Every day those people reminded us: if you collaborate with the guerrilla we will come here and make a ("cleansing"). After the AUC came in 1998 there were corpses every day and everywhere. In the morning you could see out of the resguardo, along the roads, scattered corpses of the people from La Hormiga. Paramilitaries chopped people into pieces with a chainsaw. They left the limbs and the heads there for the people to see that. They also used to write on the walls of the houses, were they murdered entire families, "AUC", and messages saying that this would be the future for anyone helping the FARC.

The spread of distrust affected the relationships between indigenous peoples as Aurelio commented, but also between them and the army and police, which in this marginal region, were the only face of the state. Cecilio, a Kofán friend recounts how:

"When the horrible massacre in El Tigre by the paramilitary happened at the end of 1999 we realized the force of those people. That damn day, people were forced to form a line. They were blindfolded because that is how paramilitaries executed people, one by one. The paramilitaries also cut their throats, their balls, and stuff their abdomen with rocks so their bodies wouldn't float in the water when they disposed the corpses in the river. One young cucama managed to escape. He told me that when he was on the line, on his knees, he could hear what the 'paras' were saying. Suddenly he recognized the voice from a Colombian National Army lieutenant that was commonly seen in that area. He was talking and giving orders. Then, amid the gunshots, the dark of the night and the screams, he said to himself that he was not going to die that day so he ran like crazy and jumped to the water. And so, tied like a calf, that boy went into the water of the river kicking and poking with his feet trying to reach the ground, but each time his head was out of the water the buzzing of the bullets passed through the sides. Thank god he managed to get rid of the bandage covering his eyes and with difficulty found a rock to grab on to somehow, after rolling and crashing with everything, like a piece of wood in the river. Finally, crawling like a worm he got out of the water, trying to catch his breath, laying there for two hours. Some days after he went back to his house and told what happened. That is when we confirmed that the army and paramilitary were in this together.

Because many of those people, during the day wear the uniform of the Colombian army and at night they change it to that of the paramilitaries, we live in fear. The association between the paramilitaries and key army generals and commanders, is called around here combos ('package'). Combos worked directly for the narcos, taking care of them and protecting the airstrips for planes taking off with coca. This was very common in Afilador-Campoalegre (Kofán resguardo) for instance. There, at the entrance of the resguardo, people of the combos were always vigilant. They also distributed political posters to us during election times, pressing us to support their own candidates.

During those days, the paramilitaries were everywhere. They were comfortably seated in the central square in La Hormiga every day. They showed their guns and bracelets and sometimes actually killed someone in front of everybody. And the police? They were like nothing, quietly witnessing all that. That's why we don't trust the authorities, neither the army nor the police. That was the situation for years but during the time of president Alvaro Uribe it got worse. La Hormiga, El Placer, Siberia, Las Brisas, every town became the mafia town, with the paramilitaries doing whatever they wanted to protect the cocaine business; while we remained enclosed in our reserves, fearing to be killed like animals".

This state of collective social paranoia divided communities and instilled a widespread sense of suspicion and apprehension towards neighbours and strangers, a situation that, as the previous comment attest, was aggravated by the norm of impunity granted by the paramilitaries' partnership with the military forces, backed up in turn by large sectors of the central government and by national and regional elites involved in oil extraction, cattle ranching, and cocaine production in Putumayo (Holmes et. al. 2006).¹⁰⁹

However, paramilitarism is sometimes difficult to grasp for, as Taussig suggests, it is an ambiguous "mix of centralization and anarchy" (2003:11), so paramilitaries could act in perfect synchronicity with the national army, sharing military intelligence and tactic force, while operating completely outside the legal framework of the nation. by controlling the country's land distribution, the coca economy and the weapon's trade. The military targets and localized economic

¹⁰⁹ "That was the situation for years, but during the time of President Alvaro Uribe (2002 to 2010) it got worse", comments Cecilio. The reason for this was the logic of Uribe's administration that 'you are either with us or against us', and neutrality is proof of guilt. This aggressive political position was certainly far from ambivalent for Uribe's administration focused on the guerrilla's violent and illicit activities as the main problem of the country while making alliances with the paramilitaries, also dependent on the cocaine economy and brutal methods, that Uribe's condemned so vehemently. For a complete analysis of this complex political juncture see Reyes, 2008; Hristov, 2009; Murillo, 2011

operations of the paramilitary violence support the view of the AUC as a regional organization not in conflict with the national government, while also suggesting that rooting out guerrillas was not the only, or even the primary, political goal of the organization (Saab and Taylor, 2009: 462). This is why paramilitaries are thus both friend and enemies of the state, they are part of it and opposed simultaneously, and thus, there is not a clear boundary between the two¹¹⁰.

The point, nonetheless, is that in spite such ambiguity, paramilitaries in front of the people rely also on the discourse of 'you are either with us or against us', and 'us' in their perspective, means the Colombian state. Hence the passionate support provided by the Uribe's administration which paramilitaries employ to disguise their illicit activities under an imaginary national crusade of national security against the guerrillas. This dual and very violent ideology produced a situation in Colombia in which union activists, peasants, and indigenous leaders accused of sympathizing with the guerrillas were gunned down by paramilitaries with complete impunity (Sanders, 2013). Silence during that time was further imposed by a paramilitary-controlled judicial system and local government, making it impossible to defend political actions and protect victims (Asociación Minga 2008).

The unweaving effect of fear, violence and distrusts upon the Kofán social fabric

As mentioned before, *Kofán territorio* or *pa'tssi ingi ande* is the idea of a socialized space, constituted by the complex system of relations between the A'I people other indigenous and non-indigenous people; entities and forces, natural phenomena and the physical landscapes. The articulation, merging, and permanent dynamics between these elements, I suggest, compel us to understand the *territorio* concept from a relational perspective. The question here is how situations such as the Kofán encounter with the paramilitary and its project of violence and fear affected *pa'tssi ingi ande*? Or, to put it differently, how do collective and individual experiences of terror and distrust inform the current production of self and space for indigenous people in Putumayo?

Thinking space-identity from a relational perspective help to address these questions for it makes us realize not only the power of violence but also of fear and mutual distrust as corrosive substances for the diverse relationships, seen as vital threads, that make possible the social fabric that constitute the territory from a

¹¹⁰ It is estimated that during Uribe's presidency 32% of all senators, all of them belonging to his party, had connections or alliances with paramilitaries (Álvaro, 2007; López, 2007; Salcedo, *et. al.* 2008; Ávila and Velasco, 2013) This ruling political sector used the paramilitary violence and political patronage as the most commonly used strategies to expand their connections within the political leadership, the political parties, and control the elections to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Kofán standpoint. The dislocation of the individual from his/her community, and henceforth of the entire *pa'tssi ingi ande* system can be seen in Aurelio's comment:

"In this region no one can be sure who is who, not even within our communities because we don't know who is friend of one or another [armed actor]".

His statement, I believe, reflects the problem for the Kofán cosmological understanding of the territory, for it was not merely the paramilitaries' systematic use of physical violence which fragmented Kofán *pa'tssi ingi ande* by physically and viciously destroying people. Ultimately, they also succeeded in inoculating the virus of fear and suspiciousness in everyday community social relations. This social illness eventually forced people to stop interacting freely with neighbours and friends, for there was always the possibility that they had established forced or voluntary agreements with one or another armed actor. Take again Aurelio's comment quoted in chapter 11, when talking about the difficulties of being in the middle of the war dynamics: *"They [FARC] stayed for some time inside our communities. But this was possible because they found among us, some amiguitos indios (little Indian friends) inside the resguardo"* while, on the other hand (...) *"the problem was that some Kofán families had already been working and helping the army, antinarcotics, and the police to stop the guerrilla from getting here, so we knew that at some moment we were going to be screwed by one or another."*

In the middle of this ambiguous allegiance to one or another within communities, paramilitaries, in contrast with FARC or the Army, never provided spaces of interaction within communities; rather, they unequivocally and consistently terrorized people. Faceless violence was thus a crucial difference between indigenous experiences of paramilitaries with the rest of the armed actors. The army and the FARC, in contrast and despite their frequent and brutal use of violence, there were frequently holding meetings inside communities, and there were many moments of direct interaction and dialogue. The Kofán, sometimes by force and sometimes willingly, attended to FARC's meetings to be informed and even discuss coca regulations or because they required the guerrilla authority to solve community problems (cf. chapter 11). Simultaneously, from time to time army troops arrived to indigenous settlements obliging the people to assemble for a community meeting. The message was more or less the same: *"The comandante would begin by telling the people that the army is their friend, that they, no matter being Indians, are Colombian citizens as well, and the soldiers were here to protect them against subversion, against the communist's threat cowardly hiding out in the mountains"* (Taita Aurelio). Thus, in spite the tension there was also communication and exchange.

In contrast, the paramilitary's forms of contact with indigenous peoples were mostly through the performative expression of violence and here lies, from my perspective, the impossible contact zone formation, for extreme violence was the only potential communication channel. Unlike FARC's violence, anti-civilian violence characterized the AUC. Significantly, data analysed by Restrepo, Spagat, and Vargas (2003) suggests that civilian killings increased dramatically after the consolidation of the AUC in 1997, and moreover, "it was not until 1999 that the paramilitaries began to kill many guerrillas" (20, 34). But before that, and even as late as 2002, "paramilitaries killed far more civilians than guerrilla combatants, hence that in this year, over 80 % of all fatalities caused by the armed conflict in Colombia were committed by paramilitaries" (Rabasa and Chalk, 2001:16). These numbers illustrate how the paras' violence, more than the violence from any other actor, was specially conducted against civilians. And therefore, it is suggestive of how different the relationship with the paramilitaries was in contrast to that with the FARC's. For in the case of the former, the massacres, assassinations, torture and forced disappearances were carried out as a passing shadow of death with minimum interaction with the people, and therefore as Maria, a Kofán women that suffered the murder of all her sons by paramilitaries comments:

"They came here with a list on a paper. No questions or explanations. They came in their trucks, with all those guns and their faces covered with black fabrics. We cried and screamed but they were silent. Then, those soldiers dragged them out of the house and pushed them to the ground. When my sons were on the floor they shot them in the head without hesitation. Before getting back to the truck, the one that seemed to be the captain or general I don't know, looked at us and said: this is what happens to the bravest and the ones who want to be friends of those bandits" [referring to FARC].

In contrast to FARC commanders and soldiers, with the paramilitaries nobody seemed to have a clear idea of who they were, and what they wanted. Nobody knew what to do. As Michael Taussig (2003:22) points out in his analysis of paramilitaries in Colombia, "people here are much too scared to confront them, organize against them, or join them. What's more, they seem to disappear and appear at will within the town itself, like phantoms. Their tactic of appearing out of blue in an isolated village, assassinating the inhabitants in grotesque ways, and pulling out within hours or a few days has given way to this bizarre form of permanence occupation". Faceless violence, that is the sign of the paramilitaries, a mechanism that naturally is capable of injecting even more fear, for unlike with the FARC, in this case there was no possible "*amiguitos indios*" (little Indian friends- cf. chapter 11), that served to

build a contact zone between the power and the powerless; neither a process of traditional authority substitution or hybridization; no economic bonds or personal relationships emerged from this contact, and therefore, no threshold between Indians and *paras* emerged in which their power might be affirmed relying on the circulation of practices and ideas rather than only force.

From diverse anthropological perspectives, many scholars argue that violence might be seen as a driver of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1977; Corbin, 1977; Heelas, 1982; Riches, 1986; Taussig, 1987) and certainly the previous analyses presented in this thesis are grounded on this premise. But violence must be accompanied also by some sort economic, political or social channel of communication and exchange, through which rulers and ruled might be linked, in a system of "asymmetrical reciprocity" as Chabal and Daloz suggest (1999: 38, 42) and as I have shown for the violent entanglement between Kofán and FARC. This is a channel, however, I cannot see in the Kofán-paramilitaries relationship. In fact, I found questionable the very idea of 'relationship' to understand this encounter for no exchange or interaction was possible beyond the rather despicable exertion of violence, exploitation, brutality, and injustice upon indigenous peoples which have had no say and no means to fight back. There was no dialogue, only a black list with names of people to be murdered; no agreements only, leaflets circulating within communities with threatening messages; no open judgments to discuss, reprehend or punish an inadequate conduct of somebody in front the rest of the people, only a wall painted with the blood of an entire family to signal their presence. Accordingly, I do not pretend to formulate any complex theoretical construct in order to fit my central argument regarding intercultural contact zones into a context in which indigenous peoples have been completely silenced. The Kofán, as the Emberá, Inga, Awá, Siona, and many other indigenous groups of the region have indeed been victims of abuse and injustice in every encounter with foreign forces before the paramilitaries, the crucial difference with the *paras* nonetheless, is that natives have had no possibility of contestation, nor any political, economic or social benefit from this violent disturbing presence. Therefore it would be deceitful for me to pretend that things had been otherwise.

I am certain that in this particular case, the Kofán's ability to confront paramilitaries was almost entirely neutralized ¹¹¹, and thus, it is ethically and politically more

¹¹¹ Thinking in terms of networks and flows, and living in an age of globalization, I would like to mention that indigenous movements articulated with national and international NGO's, and with some agencies of the Colombian Government, have been able to direct a lot of attention to the violations and crimes perpetrated by paramilitaries in the Guamuez and San Miguel region. However, these actions and political achievements, as courageous and commendable as they are, did not have the capacity to stop or even

adequate to recognize how the paramilitary violence backed by the state has almost led to the cultural and physical extinction of many indigenous groups in Putumayo and Colombia. Perhaps in future times, Kofán peoples will be able to incorporate these oppressive circumstances and violence into their own forms of historicity and culture as has happened with former colonial encounters and other indigenous groups. For the moment nevertheless, their political autonomy and agency vis-a-vis the processes related to the paramilitary war within their territories is still active and Kofán families still face actual critical threats in their everyday lives.¹¹²

My argument is difficult to sustain however, for in spite the paramilitary violence is undoubtedly the most extreme amongst the rest of the present armed actors, the effects of this violence and the systematic campaign of fear cannot be isolated from the overall context of violence, danger and fear in Putumayo. In their day to day lives, people perfectly understand the differences between the actions and purposes of the army, guerrilla and the paramilitaries in terms of violence, but their concomitant presences create an overall unified and pervasive threatening reality that enters and affects all areas of social life and perceptions of reality. Remember: *"No one can be sure who is who"*. Thus, all acts of violence, regardless of the author, are combined in peoples' perceptions of the world, creating an undifferentiated atmosphere of pain and apprehension. This is Taussig's (1987) space of death, in which violence is a dimension of daily existence, an ambiguous and dangerous unified shadow always present. And, although fear is normally a response to danger, in places such as the Putumayo, rather than an acute reaction to specific threats, it is also part of an ongoing all-pervasive chronic condition (see Green, 1994:227).

Changes in how people perceive reality are largely the effect of an entwined assembly of all these violent actions, which in the day-to-day are merged in people's emotion towards the space. Thus, I suggest, that the process of creation and reproduction of emotional links between piedmont indigenous peoples and their land; that is, the production of locality "as a structure of feeling" (Appadurai 1998: 181), is conditioned by the physical and symbolic circulation of all these forms of

destabilize the power of these groups around Colombia. In this sense, the political native agency cannot be regarded as a counterbalance with enough force block paramilitary operations or form spaces of interaction and negotiation with such agents.

¹¹² In March 2006, Putumayo's paramilitaries demobilized during a public event in Puerto Asís. Nevertheless, communities and organizations in Putumayo together with the Organization of American states' Mission in Support of Colombia's Peace Process (MAPP/OEA) report that the paramilitary groups have rearmed under new names such as the *Águilas Negras* (Black Eagles), the *"Rastrojos"* or new emerging criminal bands known by the Colombian government as *Bandas Criminales -BACRIM*). These groups maintain a presence in Lower and Middle Putumayo's urban areas and continue to exercise power and control over the drug trade (Organization of American States, 'Permanent Council, Sixth Quarterly Report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP-OEA)', OEA/Ser.G CP/doc.4148/06.February 2006

violence as a unified force. This is why, despite the fact that I contend that there is no contact zone with the paramilitaries in particular, I firmly believe that its violence and the violence of the rest of the armed actors combined have created a new kind of shared geography binding together powerful and powerless perceptions of territory.

Perceptual deterritorialization

As I have argued throughout this work, the material and symbolic construction of the territory is a direct reflection of the ways Kofán individuals produce their identity out of situations of economic, cultural, political, or shamanic contact and exchange. Accordingly, any constriction, disturbance, and rupture in this relational process of identity-making will condition peoples' ways of place-making. This is not only a matter of physical uprooting and forceful displacement of communities and individuals –as in fact happened in Kofán communities - but part of a more complex process, one that I call perceptual deterritorialization, and which arises among people even without them having left their lands. I argue that this occurred for the Kofán when the social threads that connected individuals and families were damaged after trust and confidence became scarce social resources, a situation that encouraged internal denunciations, gossip, innuendos, and rumours of traitors, snitchers, and death lists within communities. This particular social disruption affected the Kofán former and very active decisions to connect among themselves but also with many different others a process that ultimately enlarge and strength their relational understanding of *Pa'tssi Ingi Ande* and ultimately, the world.

The arrival of paramilitaries meant in this sense, that the boundaries between fear as the momentary effect of an external-contingent menace and anxiety as an underlying everyday feeling were dissolved. For even where terror has not been experienced first-hand but exists in the form of rumours, anxiety can rapidly turn into concrete perceptions of an external menace and a fear that produces mental deterritorialization. Accordingly this is not only a problem of physical displacement from the territory. Rather, it is a problem of social relationships suddenly interrupted by fear of the other.

Aurelio the governor of the resguardo told me how Kofán families could only survive by enclosing themselves in their already reduced resguardos, avoiding semi-urban settlements where the AUC visibly circulated. But resguardos, he commented, were actually not that safe, since internal problems escalated daily amidst engrained terror and a growing lack of confidence between individuals. This situation was complicated even more by the already tense situation between indigenous families,

and between Indians and colonos due to the cocaine economy, the alcohol induced fights, sorcery and land problems, and the broken regulatory system previously provided by FARC. This permanent state of emergency in territorial confinement became the quotidian life for the Putumayo indigenous groups via the “routinization of terror”, which, as Green asserts, “is what fuels its power. Such routinization allows people to live in a chronic state of fear with a facade of normalcy, while that terror, at the same time, permeates and shreds the social fabric” (Green 1994:231). With tears in her eyes Gloria remarks:

“All this felt different. We felt strange all the time, some of us wanted to leave but where to go? So we stayed, fearing about if they [AUC] will be here again. But even without them around we could not be at ease. For there were families with sons that joined the army, others went to the guerrilla, and others were just idiots talking loudly when they were drunk against those people [AUC] so we were scared all the time here in the resguardo”

Gloria’s painful commentary reveals a fundamental problem for the Kofán and the other indigenous inhabitants of south-western Colombia, the fact distress situation was not only related to physical annihilation but also to an ontological question. Who is who? That simple but terrifying question became the center of all existence, in a context in which the smallest mistake such as small talk, doing business, feeding someone, giving shelter, or simply interacting with the wrong person, might be punished with torture or a horrible death by any of the armed actors present in the area. Consequently, Kofán forms of sociability, their cultural pattern of alterity incorporation as vital part of the relational tissue that constitutes the *Territorio*, and thus, their sense of collective identity were altered and reconfigured since fear induced a permanent ambient of distrust upon the other. As Krohn-Hansen has indicated “All societies are characterized by the fact that their members live through cultural constructions and sometimes fictions. But a culture of extreme fear and violence implies that ontological thought is an everyday activity for the crowd. Questions about what distinguishes human from animal, truth from lies, or civilizing development from savage underdevelopment become habitual” (1994:376). Accordingly, in this permanent “state of emergency” in the words of Benjamin (1969), Kofán were confronted with several ontological doubts since the common relational political activities, cultural practices and economic exchanges between families, friends, and communities that formerly structured their identity and spatial world were disrupted by the pervasive possibility that the paramilitaries, the army, the guerrilla, the colonist, or even their own people discovered or imagined real or fictional actions, communications, friendships, and interactions, as acts against the agenda of one or another violent actor.

Ultimately this situation led to profound changes of their former perceptions of themselves, others, and consequently their inhabited territory as an interconnected tissue of close and functional relationships. But evincing as a causal-linear process how past violent events, fear spread, and distrust still affect this interconnected tissue is certainly not an easy task. It is difficult to grasp in straightforward testimonies the ethnographic evidence of the consequences of this encounter that prove how their current sociability is no longer the same. I sustain however, that the very limited organizational capacities and lack of potential mobilizing efforts of Kofán communities today are largely the consequence of these past situations. Such weakness can be seen in their difficulties to arrive to consensual decisions around territorial, cultural and political issues, as I have witnessed through my years of friendship and working with them. Doubtlessly, this problem is a common feature of many indigenous organizations and communities throughout the Amazon and Latin America, and certainly not a unique characteristic of Kofán people. In many private conversations with Kofán co-workers and friends, nonetheless, I have tried to dig out the roots of such internal dislocations, asking about the reasons for these structural difficulties. What I frequently obtained from these conversations are furtive accusations from one to another; people blaming relatives and friends for being uncooperative because they stopped to be part of the community when decided, some years ago, to be friend of one or another armed actor, so they could not be trusted anymore.

I am perfectly aware that this particular situation of the past is not the only driver of the present incapacity of collective mobilization, for the illegal cocaine economy and its market-style production and exchange induced among the Kofán a pervasive individualism that still militates against the formation of collectives (cf. chapter 10). However, there are several examples of indigenous Amazonian communities that after experiencing traumatic colonial encounters and being intensely integrated into capitalist systems have been able to maintain their capacity to act collectively (Padoch *et.al.* 1985; Smith *et.al.* 1998; Perreault, 2003). This is why I suggest that in the Kofán case, the individualistic cocaine economic system, together with the historically entrenched fear and distrust within the Kofán social fabric, seem to act as two strong forces inhibiting any attempt to act as a unified social group or develop strong political projects. And hence, as Lubkemann (2010) contends, “the fragmentation of social networks, the undermining of trust, and the infusion of uncertainty that ‘violent dramaturgies’ (Richards 1996) provoked became formidable challenges, whose ramifying effects on long-term life strategies and life chances far outweighed those of the moment of violence itself” (38).

As mentioned above, in spite that the systematic paramilitary violence is very likely the most extreme amongst the rest of the present armed actors, the effects of this violence and the systematic campaign of fear cannot be isolated from the overall context of violence, danger and fear in Putumayo. In this regard I would like to explore the contribution of the state to this system of colliding distinct violences and agendas. For in spite the impossibility of a contact zone between Kofán and paramilitaries, they certainly formed a space of interaction, exchange and interpenetration, with the paras' partners, this is, the Colombian state.

Chapter 14

A Collection of the State's Spatial Techniques of Power

“The government here? No they have always been absent until the army spread around like never before and after them came that noise of the sky (tsui'nda fojocco'cho) brought by their planes forming water clouds (unji'mba) but they were charged with poison. Dark dreams (Sintti'o ayo'o) started in my sleep. People's bodies were like rotten flesh (sisipecha'a) and the plaintain and manioc crops (coyeccu y ambaccu) died. Those days were pitiful (ñombi'yeye)” (Grandma Cecilia, 2012)

Grandma Cecilia is talking about the days when *Plan Colombia*, the most aggressive counter-narcotics offensive in the nation's history, was implemented in Putumayo. Army and police units launched intense land and air assaults, aerial fumigations with herbicides to destroy coca crops, and diverse forms of military controls, regulations, and campaigns with nationalistic propaganda. In this chapter I have focused my attention on the state military campaign in Putumayo and its strategic production of state spaces to impose diverse orders and rationalities among civilians. It is about the state process aimed to form a national consciousness among people in Putumayo, and furthermore, to build a Colombia state in this marginal region. Following the ideas of Cassirer, 1946; Nugent, 1994, 2001; Blom and Stepputat, 2001; Mitchell, 2001; Aretxaga, 2003 among others, I examine such state efforts to achieve its territorial control goals through particular spatial techniques imposed in people's day-to-day lives on the one hand, and indigenous subjective experiences of this process on the other, tracing its effects on territories, populations, and bodies.

In the first section, I present a brief introduction of Plan Colombia in Putumayo. In the second section I shall explore some of the more salient state techniques to control the territory through which the Colombian state takes shape, both as a material force and as an ideological construct, producing the state as a structural effect while explaining its intangibility. I shall focus on this process' impacts for Kofán territorial system of relationships, including further a brief examination of the auditory experience of this complex war context and its implications for indigenous territory-making practices. From here I shall attempt to illustrate how Kofán territorialities are currently the outcome of the complex convergence of diverse forms of spatial understandings largely influenced by the military presence in Putumayo.

State formation and the militarization of landscapes in Putumayo

Military presence in the Department of Putumayo has been active since the beginning of the 1930s¹¹³. However, during the late 1970s, the need to protect the new oil infrastructure from the threat of civil resistance and from emergent-armed guerrillas led to a second and more drastic phase of militarization. By the end of the 1990s the military campaign intensified as it aimed to regain territorial control of Putumayo ¹¹⁴. This latest militarization coincided with the government's prioritization of oil explorations as the centrepiece of a long-term regional and national development agenda that started in the 1960s but which intensified after the neoliberal reforms of the 1990's (Kruijt, 2001; Gedicks, 2012). Originally conceived between 1998 and 1999 under the administration of Andres Pastrana (1998-2002) in Colombia, and Bill Clinton in the US, Plan Colombia was strengthened and expanded during Uribe's period. Both administrations encouraged and defended the exploitation of oil reserves within indigenous territories as part of a larger national developmental project based on a cluster of policies aimed to privatize, liberalize, and deregulate the national economy so as to encourage foreign investment and export production. This in turn required the heavy militarization of resource rich, but socially unstable regions.

Since the Putumayo department, but particularly the Guamuez valley and San Miguel municipality were FARC-controlled regions during the 1990s, foreign oil companies were hesitant to exploit the vast oil untapped reserves (Restrepo, 2001; Gonzales, 2011:141). When President Alvaro Uribe Velez (2002-2010) was elected, his administration took a more hard-line approach to FARC, and immediately campaigned on a platform to send large part of the Colombian military to Putumayo. During this period, diverse local leaders, organizations and politicians reported direct links between the national army, regional and national politicians, and the president with the AUC. But it was only after years of massacres, tortures and extortions that former paramilitary leaders finally testified in court of their collaboration with government officials in the region. In August 2008, the human rights organization WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America) reported that 39

¹¹³ On September 1932, over 300-armed Peruvian civilians seized the Amazonian harbor town of Leticia in a demonstration against the Salomón-Lozano Treaty of 1922, which ceded the territory to Colombia. The Colombian government responded by sending several battalions to resist the invaders across the entire length of the Putumayo River - from Güepi in the west to Tarapacá in the east (Stanfield, 1998:204). The first skirmishes took place in early 1933, as the Colombian river fleet made its way up the Amazon to the site of the invasion in Putumayo. The area became the scene of bombing and strafing, artillery barrages, and infantry raids (*Ibid*: 204). After months of diplomatic wrangling over the selection of a mutually acceptable forum for the peaceful resolution of the dispute, Colombia and Peru accepted mediation by the League of Nations.

¹¹⁴ During the early days of Plan Colombia execution, along roads it was usual to see the state propaganda with messages such as "The government and you *Putumayense* (people from Putumayo) are going to regain our region".

members of the Colombian national legislature were under formal investigation for ties to the paramilitaries, while 29 others have been detained, for a total of 68 legislators linked to paramilitaries. Many of these legislators were from parties that supported President Uribe. These 68 cases constituted more than one-fourth of Colombia's 268-member bicameral congress, with important government agents being probed or detained for crimes which included signing secret political and economic pacts with paramilitary death squads, laundering money for illegal armed groups, and conspiracy to commit kidnapping, homicide and massacres (WOLA, 2008¹¹⁵).

In Putumayo, the state-sponsored arrival of paramilitaries in the late 1990s and the implementation of Plan Colombia resulted in greater security for oil companies (Gonzales, 2011; Ballén, 2008). Bankrolled with more than \$700 million dollars from the U.S. government during the last decade in order to wipe out the guerrillas in the name of the 'war against drugs', Plan Colombia focused in different regions of southern Colombia, but given the importance of the oil reserves of Putumayo, "the government prioritized their military actions in this region under a military offensive known as the Push into the South Strategy" (Asociación Minga, 2008: 1). Army troops and police deployed intense land and air assaults on the Guamuez Valley, San Miguel municipality and neighboring areas that used to be the most important coca producing regions (Torres, 2012). Indigenous communities suffered concomitantly since, as Gedicks (2001:41) points out, in marginal oil-rich regions such as the Putumayo, "there is an inseparable connection between the assault on the environment and the assault on human rights". Such a situation contrasts paradoxically with the promulgation of the 1991 constitution, which declared Colombia as a multicultural country reinforcing the legal frame that protects indigenous lands and cultural rights. However, more than two decades after the creation of a legislation that seemed to favour indigenous populations, many fronts of native territorial struggle are obstructed, especially when promising resources such as oil are present in their territories.

With the Plan Colombia, the military and police presence in the region grew exponentially; military bases, garrisons and stations were built in every municipality in the department; the police and army's "friendly" propaganda promoting cooperation and nationalistic ideas, covered the walls of all towns; the prominent deployment of tanks and barbed wire around the towns, together with road blocks, and barricades became part of everyday life; checkpoints manned by heavily armed soldiers with flak jackets ostensibly searching for signs of insurgency

¹¹⁵ Washington Office on Latin America. "Paramilitaries, Human Rights and the Trade Agreement: Questions for Colombian President Uribe". <http://www.wola.org/> (Sept, 2008) Accessed August 2013

were more than common; the continuous toxic aerial fumigation of coca crops flooded the sky and the soil; and human rights abuses, harassment and mobility restrictions, were permanently endured by locals.

From all these actions we may see how the state in Putumayo was represented and enacted through military performances that were strengthened during Plan Colombia, when this region was going through intense geopolitical disputes between different actors and the state. In response, the violence of security apparatuses turned into the policing of the state's own citizens in a paranoid gaze that curtailed civil rights and extended terror through the social field (see Aretxaga, 2003:397). Consequently, the Putumayo indigenous peoples, living formerly in relative isolation from the state apparatus, came into contact with the state essentially through its varied military performances and controlling practices. "The government here? No they have always been absent until the army spread around like never before" retorted grandma Cecilia.

Would it be possible to say that violence is the only and essential foundational element of the state in this region? I believe that the process is rather more complex, for as Clifford Geertz (1980:134) points out, we must overcome the "unfortunate blindness toward the importance of symbols and ideas in their own right to statecraft and state power". Doubtlessly, violence is crucial in the process of state formation, particularly in hectic Latin American regions like Putumayo, but as Linke (2006:205) has pointed out, "any attempt to theorize the operations of power under modern capitalism require us to rethink the state as a site of meaning production, emotional investment, contradiction and fantasy". This is to say, as several scholars suggest, that we must keep in perspective how violence is part of the complex interaction between the state's illusory and mythic essence (Cassirer, 1946; Taussig, 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999; Navaro-Yashin, 2002) and the material and performative practices through which it is socially ingrained as a 'real' and 'palpable' institution (Mitchell, 1991; Nugent, 1994; Das and Poole, 2004).

The following section is devoted to understanding this dual ontology of the state- as unreal as it is factual- for, I suggest, this is precisely what can help us to understand the ghostly presence of the state, , manifest in the ethereal confluence of reason and violence. In this regard I am particularly interested in role of the space in this process, and how through the strategic military use and manipulation of the space during Plan Colombia, the state came to be a social subject for indigenous everyday lives. Each section of this chapter focuses on a different spatial technique of power employed by the government during the early militarization of Putumayo as part of

the statecraft project, the subjective experience of such state power, and its effects on indigenous peoples and territories.

Spatial techniques of power

Aerial Fumigations with Monsanto's Roundup (Glyphosate¹¹⁶)

During the first years of Plan Colombia, coca plantations owned by indigenous peoples and colonists alike were doused in herbicide by police crop-dusters, escorted by US-made combat helicopters. Because their target was the illegal small plots of coca which were interspersed with staple crops, however, fumigation, resulted in the catastrophic destruction of much farmland (O'Shaughness and Branford, 2005; Messina and Delamater, 2006). In Colombia, the spraying of coca crops with glyphosate was done with significantly higher concentrations of that the normal commercial formulations (Maldonado, 2003:1). Additionally, it is mixed with a substance called Cosmoflux 411F, which makes it four times more potent and more toxic (*Ibid*: 1). During 2001 and 2002 alone, 105,000 hectares of land were sprayed with herbicides, almost double the total number of hectares reported as having coca plots (Asociación Minga, 2008). Guided by spy planes and US satellites, crop-dusters criss-crossed the skies of Putumayo every week. Flying as low as 15 meters they were protected by helicopter gunships to counter the FARC's machineguns that often shot at the slow-moving crop-dusters.

Indeed, the campaign of aerial fumigation has been one of the most traumatic environmental and socioeconomic experiences faced by indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Doña Martina, former governor of the Kofán Resguardo of Santa Rosa del Guamuez describes the situation:

Between the fumigation above and the oil below we are screwed! When they came to spread they didn't care about either animals or food, they were showering us with that poison. The plane went back and forth, spraying everything, even the houses. If that liquid touches a person who is not covered, it will eat the person's meat, and he then dies. Children start vomiting, with bad stomach damage, and fever. The adults suffer an itching allergy and dizziness. The animals? They get sick too and die because they eat and drink the poisoned grass and water. Oh, like my little ducks, my chickens, they died too. But what could have I done to save them?

¹¹⁶ Glyphosate is a broad-spectrum herbicide used to kill weeds, especially annual broadleaf weeds and grasses known to compete with commercial crops. The American multinational Monsanto commercializes Glyphosate is sold under the trade name Roundup.

Martina's husband, Taita Cristobal, recalls not only the distressing effect of the fumigation and its impact on the basic staples but also the shamanic technique which he employed to protect his coca crops from the poisonous effect of the glyphosate:

When the plane came, we used to hide, we could not defend ourselves, so we would hide away and listen to that horrible sound of the plane going around. Each week the plane came and spread one farm, the next week the neighbor's place and so on. But...(laughs) we have a "secreto" (sorcery spell to counter the attack). So the more they fumigate, the better and prettier my coca grew, and it was safe. However, the problem was the food and the family health. My papayas, pineapples, manioc, and plantains, all the food became dangerous for us. We got to the point that one day we had nothing to eat so we were compelled to cook some poisoned plantains. Because of that meal all the family was very sick, my children...my children! That is why we had to cultivate more coca so we can get some money to buy food in the town, but only grains because the rest was too expensive. Most of the time we were starving, eating just small chiros (very small variety of banana).

And you know? Here in the Guamuez and San Miguel there was money, a lot of money around, but no food. What was the money for? Well, to pay for expensive canned food, good clothes and stuff. But the money here, inside communities, was completely useless since nobody had food to sell and the little you may found was useless because of the glyphosate contamination.

Grandma Albertina, who is a Kofán elder expert in medicine plants, adds to these accounts by describing the devastating impact of the coca eradication program with glyphosate for their medical system:

"We were always in fear because we never knew when the plane would come. I remember one of the worse times when they fumigated all the Taita's Yagé. We were so sad. Sixty already grown and thick plants of remedio (Yagé) killed after all that care. They don't understand that is our medicine, which is like if I went to the city and set fire on a hospital. They not only want us to starve to death, but kill us with diseases too".

In addition to aerial fumigations, the government also employs "manual coca eradicators" to enter fields of illegal crops and destroy them. These manual eradicators are civilians, generally young peasants from rural, poor backgrounds, who accept the work for its financial rewards, but receive inadequate training prior

to entering the fields.¹¹⁷ Taita Cristobal tells of how amidst this government's program both manual eradicators and the police take advantage of poor coca producers to rob or extort money from them adding to the general atmosphere of fear and distrust:

"They (manual coca eradicators) finished not only the coca but our Yagé chagra as well. But even worse was that because of them, and arguing that they were there to protect them, the Army and police entered again without permission. So they used to go to people's houses and ask: "How many plants do you have? And how much money are you going to get from that? Ok. So you will have to pay us this much if you don't want us to destroy completely your crop. But then, when we already had paid them, they returned and cut all the plants. And because during that time the guerrilla was not here in Santa Rosa anymore, the police could do whatever they want. In other places, such as in La Cristalina, close to La Guisita (Kofán territory) for instance, the eradicators were stealing everything from the owners of the farms, especially food. So you know what they did? Maybe the guerrilla or maybe the peasants, because I do not know who did it, they found the most beautiful plantains bunch and washed in the same poison they use to kill the coca plants. Then those people hang the plantains in front of a house, almost as bait. Of course that the eradicators got tempted and I don't know how many police-eradicator died that day for being thieves".

In November of 2005 the Supreme Court of Justice ordered the suspension of fumigation until they could clearly determine its impact on human health (Serje, 2007:42). The polemic discussion about the health effects never reached a final conclusion in spite of the wide-ranging opposition by peasants, NGO's, and political and academic sectors submitting evidence of the negative impacts on human and animal health. Between the years 2001 and 2004, the areas dedicated to cultivating illicit crops fell sharply, to the point that in 2004 the Putumayo area planted with coca only represented 5% of the national total. This result can be associated with the aggressive first phase of Plan Colombia (Torres, 2012:32). While the military celebrated in Bogotá the success of the drug on wars, thousands of families suffered hunger, illnesses, destroyed fields, sick and dead livestock, devastated nature reserves and poisoned sacred places (see Ceballos, 2004). Such conditions further impelled peasants and indigenous peoples to return to illegal coca production for there was (and still is) no other commercial agriculture alternative in the region. A significant and sustained increase in illicit crops after 2005 demonstrated the failed

¹¹⁷ Alsema, Adrian. "Colombia's civilian coca-eradicators violate landmine treaty". Colombia Reports. July, 22 (2011) <http://colombiareports.co/civilian-deaths-authorized-by-government-as-part-of-anti-drug-measures/> Accessed August 2013

war on drugs' efforts. Most of the cocaine cultivation was re-established in former coca terrains. By 2007, Puerto Asís, the commercial center of the lower Putumayo, became the third largest coca producer municipality in the country, with an approximate of 4,386 hectares planted with coca (UN, 2007)¹¹⁸. Aerial fumigation continues in Putumayo until today, though since 2007 it is subject to stronger regulatory measures in order to minimize damage to food crops. Nonetheless, fumigations in Putumayo still cause common episodes of conflict and discontent among peasants and indigenous communities¹¹⁹.

Aerial fumigations distorted even more the socio-ecological relations of indigenous peoples with their territories. Hunger and sickness appeared as a result, while the traditional ethnoecological knowledge and practices associated with agriculture - already eroded as a result of the coca bonanza- was gradually undermined with each destructive spread of glyphosate. In response, the Kofán people and its resilient Yagé shamanism eventually developed techniques for protection of the coca. In secrecy, I saw a couple of times some Taitas' apprentices singing "*secretos*" to protect very small plots of coca in the middle of the jungle. They wanted to avoid the eradicators and guarantee the health of the crops. In a different occasion, one young Taita invited me to drink Yagé as he was worried about his coca plot and wanted to see if the planes would be able to detect it. Inside his house of Yagé, he said around three in the morning:

"During the chuma (Yagé effect), a couple of hours ago, I was looking straight at the mountains. Those planes were coming from there to here looking for coca and everything else to spread with la fumiga ('glyphosate fumigation'). I did what I have to do. Those planes are not going to be able to see in their machines my plots".

The main problem for peasants and indigenous peoples, however, is not merely the destruction of coca itself, but the consequent and dramatic decrease in food production and health problems caused by regular exposure to pesticides. As a result, the crop dusters, flying everyday around people's settlements, became one of the most important symbols of the threatening power of the state in Putumayo. They embodied the capacity of coercion even without direct physical contact, by poisoning thousands of hectares of food crops and pastures, devastating the local

¹¹⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Monitoreo de cultivos de Coca. 2011-UNODOC. http://www.unodc.org/documents/cropmonitoring/Colombia/Censo_cultivos_coca_2011.pdf

¹¹⁹ Caracol Online Press. "Santos ordena investigar fumigaciones aéreas a cultivos de pan coger en el Putumayo" in <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/santos-ordena-investigar-fumigaciones-aereas-a-cultivos-de-pan-coger-en-el-putumayo/20130802/nota/1838595.aspx> accessed February 12, 2013

economy, and thus propagating deep resentment among the rural poor peoples. With the fumigation, the state transformed itself through the alchemy of the agribusiness industry into toxic volatile substances, creating a contradictory ghostly effect of presence/ absence, while affirming its power not only in the most remote places of the nation but also in the citizen's bodies.

The Polysemic Character of Barbed Wire

Bruno Latour's (2005) sociology has called for reviving its original task of tracing associations in the realm of the social. Latour finds that the word 'social' is used as if it described a type of material, in a comparable way to an adjective such as 'wooden' or 'steely'. Rather than simply indicating what is already assembled together, it is now used in a way that makes assumptions about the nature of what is assembled. Accordingly, he urges us to scrutinize thoroughly the exact content of what is assembled under the umbrella of Society (*Ibid*). Latour calls this approach the Actor-Network-Theory, which is focused on the sociology of associations. In his argument, technologies, objects and 'things' play a crucial role for the dynamics and nature of such relations. His argument is an interesting call to rethink and take seriously the "thingness of things" for sociological explanations (Latour, 2000).

While traversing the Putumayo fragmented landscapes, Latour's call seems timely given the naturalized presence of certain 'things' embedded in the space with direct influence on social relations. Barbed wire is one of those. In valleys, forests and plains, barbed wire stands symbolically and materially as an object with a particular role in the naturalization of an ideology (Bourdieu, 1984). This is, I suggest, the project of modernity, in the form of tamed spaces subscribed to the imperative discourse of capital accumulation, material growth and the disciplining of labour and nature (Escobar, 1995:197). The uses and meanings of barbed, however, range from demarcating colonist and drug lord's cattle pastures oil wells, commercial monocultures and, of course, every military post and garrison. In spite of its material simplicity, as Krell (2002:162) points out, it is charged with many diverse meanings that place it "in that paradoxical zone, between protection and division". That is to say, in a more symbolic sense, barbed wire is vital for delineating the boundaries between public and private, and productive and unproductive space as well as, more generally, culture and nature. This process of delineation is itself vital to the process of commodification of the latter (Leff, 1994; Escobar, 1995, 2000). The intrinsic symbolic value of this technology is powerful for it is a double sign of the external imposition of values and regimes but at the same time of the local adoption. It might go thus from the process of indigenous incorporation into modern capitalism and commodification and privatization of land, to the entire state

building project. We can read the polysemic character of barbed wire in these commentaries:

“With coca money everybody was able to demarcate the piece of land they owned. Indians went to La Hormiga or San Miguel and bought big rolls of barbed wire. We all raised fences for people to know what exactly belongs to each family, something we never did before. But then with people buying and selling land, planting coca, colonists arriving, and because we had money, many people wanted to raise fences. But there were other types of people as well. They just got here with guns and coca money, so there was no way of saying anything. These people marked big territories that belonged to the Kofán reserve, but there was no way of discussing it because at that time people got killed simply for complaining”

Taita Cristobal told me this while he was fixing some of his old and rusty barbed wire fences to stop his cattle from eating his medicinal garden. And in a different occasion:

We need at least 360 meters of barbed wire for each family. We need the wire to show that our “fincas” (farms) are well worked and thus, that we own this territory. Barbed wire serves to show to everybody that this is our property, so anybody coming here with their animals, and thinking ‘these Indians don’t know how to work the land; they are lazy and that is why everything around here is monte (wilderness); they don’t have clean potreros (“pastures”)”, will see with a good amount of alambre de puas (“barbed wire”) marking beautifully our potreros. With well-demarcated fincas we can say to them: no sir! We know how to make this land productive. We know how to raise cattle and feed it.

The second comment was made by Taita Miguel during a meeting to discuss an NGO’s project aimed at strengthening Inga traditional chagras and medicine gardens. From these contrasting local attitudes towards a simple artefact, I see that for indigenous peoples barbed wire may embody, on the one hand, the violence, spatial disruption and land dispossession materialized in the stolen ancestral lands now transformed into mafia-owned cattle pastures. Perfectly tempered wire fences intersect what used to be hunting grounds for the Kofán, Inga, Siona and many others, only useful nowadays for small amounts of cattle given the poverty of this region’s tropical soils. Consequently, any trespassing attempt into these spaces of exclusion may entail serious punitive consequences given the vicious violence of drug lords, but also because of the state’s private property law-preserving violence.

In this sense indigenous peoples of Putumayo have been affected by the same twofold process observed by Razac (2002) for Native American populations and the rancher's use of barbed wire: firstly, their lands were shut off from them and exploited by settlers, and secondly, they were parcelled up, shattering traditional social structures. "Nomadic life and collective tribal existence were all but impossible. In marking property ownership and repelling intruders barbed wire had decisive political effects: its use produced masses of rejected animals and men" (*Ibid*: 74)

On the other hand, however, the polysemic character of this technology can also turn it into a powerful emblem of rural transformation, industrialization, and entry into the world of consumption. It signals the owner's different and better position in this ambiguous class system introduced after the arrival of the cocaine and colonist economies (see chapter 8,10). Consequently, the use of barbed wire is equally attractive to indigenous and non-indigenous populations for practical reasons, but also, in terms of social status, given the already engrained economy of desire and social stratification in a context of rural poverty and marginalization. In other words, even if barbed wire were not the most effective means to physically stop land invasion, it also operates at a symbolic level in profound ways. Given the ongoing reduction of their lands, indigenous families use barbed wire as a statement of private property and status to send a message to *cucama* (mestizos) people, but also to other indigenous peoples living inside and outside their communities.

"When I had money from coca I was able to go to la Hormiga and buy enough rolls of barbed wire so as to divide my farm into plots. You can see how my pastures were clearly demarcated and the animals I had could eat in an ordered manner. I had to do so because of Don Fausto, a cucama neighbour who has always caused me troubles because of his pigs getting into my farm and damaging everything. And furthermore, because his daughters came to live with him and I know that they are going to get Indian husbands here in the resguardo. The cabildo (indigenous council) will try to grant them some land, but as you know, there is no more available. So what will happen? They will start stealing pieces of my land. With the barbed wire they will be aware that this is a farm that belongs to me. So they are not going to start cutting the wire for they know this is not right, and that this is mine!" (Alberto L. Kofán from Santa Rosa del Guamuez)

Aberto's comment illustrates the emergence of a fragmented modern conception of the territory, suggesting that today it is conceived in a different way from the previous notions of *pa'tssi ingi ande*. Many indigenous peoples inhabiting areas of

colonization in the Amazon piedmont have to some extent incorporated the use of barbed wire to establish land use rules, dictating what kind of productive activity is attributed to each portion of land. Unlike their previous traditional modes of ruling human-landscape relationships, mediated by shamanic techniques, cultural taboos, and ritual negotiations with wilderness' beings (see chapter 6), this emergent landscape-zoning, employing barbed wire, is rather related to a capitalist productive model. In this way people are actively subscribing to a state-driven political project principally directed at dismantling the system of collective ownership, and on which the Indians base their own political claims. Now, the territory requires a constant state of alert and the circulation of notions of property formerly absent when colonization did not represented a threat. This is why, today, indigenous families inhabiting collective territories (*resguardos*), refer to their own particular pieces of land located inside through the spatial and legal category of *finca* ("farm") which is in fact a typical colonist's land tenure figure. Ironically, barbed wire, the symbol of their own exclusion after colonization, as Taita Cristobal asserted, is also used by them to send a message indicating their proficiency in the use of the spatial rules of demarcation and division, so crucial for the modern spatial paradigm. Hence that barbed wire, I suggest, means segregation but at the same time inclusion to a larger regional and national social, economic, and political system. Here therefore lies another element of what I have called the shape-shifting territory, for people's territorial perceptions may alternate from ideas of community as a bounded unity in opposition to the modern, rational society and state, calling for positive images of tradition, enclosure, and reciprocity -as the *resguardo* itself stands for- to ideas of separation, private property, individualism, and segregation-embodied in the *finca*. The territory in this perspective is therefore, simultaneously part and opposed to the modern spatial paradigm.

Barbed wire is interesting, for in spite its artefactual simplicity, is capable of embodying several complex meanings related in this case with processes of interethnic contact and cultural interpenetration. In this contact zone, indigenous people, allegedly at the periphery of the nation, have in fact absorbed the very mechanism that represents their territorial division and social alteration as essential part of their own natural space, and hence, of the territory. It is thus the thorny and rapacious symbol of the indigenous lands' theft by colonist. But also, of the indigenous appropriation of the settler's worldview as a cheap fencing option to control stock while establishing a hitherto unnecessary private property message; it is furthermore a status symbol and indicative of the incorporation of indigenous societies into larger capitalist economic systems. As Alan Krell (2002: 181) notes, despite the singularity of function, barbed wire "has nonetheless invited a wide variety of imaginative engagements".

Krell is certainly right, for in addition to its symbolic role among indigenous peoples, barbed wire may also adopt a different meaning when deployed by the state as a “technology of power”, which in Foucault’s perspective, can determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination (1999:4). From the perspective of the state, barbed wire serves to organize, restrict, and control citizens and resources, and therefore to order the regimes of everyday life. This is more so, I argue, in such marginal and violent social circumstances as in Putumayo, where the weak presence of the state demands a different kind of visibility. Accordingly, the use of barbed wire, together with other military infrastructure, helps the state to construct what could be considered as the geography of opposites, separating spaces of life and death, dangerous and safe, of fear and desire. This, in other words, helps redefine space into new military ‘sacred and profane spaces’, a process that inevitably has shaken indigenous people’s mode of living to its very roots. Let me illustrate this point with a comment from Alberto’s, a Kofán friend living in Yarinal resguardo:

“They [the national army] asked me several questions after the soldiers found some bags filled with coca leaves inside my house. The soldiers were calm, explaining me the problems that this might cause me. I was at ease too, for I was inside the resguardo and so I thought they could not do anything to me; after all we have our own law. But the lieutenant got mad seeing that I did not care much about them being here, in my territory. He said that he needed to continue with the interrogation outside, in the military base with the excuse he had to do some paperwork. I resisted but they said it was necessary and that if I were to continue resisting, they would have to force me to do it. I was calm until I entered into that base. With all that barbed wire around like a trap, I felt caught. Nobody will see me again I thought. Thank god they let me out the next day. However, I’ve got sick with ‘mal aire’ after entering that place”

Alberto’s testimony highlights the complexities and dilemmas that many Kofán experienced after the Putumayo territory was restructured through military spatial techniques that were deliberately created to internalize among people opposed ideas of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the realm of the state. This dual-spatial model, nonetheless, is inevitably ambiguous for attempts to show the space behind the wires as safe- these are supposed to be the proper spaces of the nation- while outside, all the war-illegal scourges lurk creating the lawless territory out of the margins of the state. From the state’s standpoint, the construction of that which is deemed lawful thus rests on the definition of a violent world of the non-lawful. The “inscription of a frontier” which may be figurative, temporal and in this case spatial,

as Blomley, (2003: 124) points out, "is integral to this process". And the effect, as Sarat and Kearns (1992:5) assert, is to create a distinction such that law's violence is separated from, and imagined as a counter to the "anomic or sectarian savagery beyond law's boundaries".

Peoples' perception of these 'lawful' places, as Alberto's account illustrates, seems to be very different. For it is outside those state regulated places, in the *resguardo* for instance, where they feel safe. As he says "they could not do anything to me, after all we have our own law. But the lieutenant got mad with me seeing that I did not care much about them because we were here, in my territory". Outside the *resguardo*, and worse, inside spaces surrounded with barbed wire, justice works differently to the point that only the experience of being there is hazardous enough that you might not come back, and if you do, the experience is so traumatic that you may get sick of panic induced illnesses such as *mal aire*.

Mal aire ("bad air") also known as *mal viento*, *espanto*, or *susto* in Andean and Amazonian regions, can be defined as a naturalistic illness related to the humoral theory of illness causation (Pohle and Reinhardt, 2004). Breathing in cold night air, moving rapidly from a warm to a cold ambient environment, or working up a sweat and not allowing for a proper cooling down period causes this illness (*Ibid*: 5). However, there is a consensus in ethno-medical literature regarding the fact that *mal aire* is also related to experiences of terror, anxiety and panic in which a malevolent, destructive force or power is transmitted through the air and wind (see Taussig, 1987; Kamppinen, 1997; Moodley, 2005). According to McKee (1987), *mal aire* in the highlands of Ecuador is caused by a person's exposure to certain places described as *lugares pesados* or *lugares malignos* (heavy or malignant places). These include unpopulated areas, abandoned houses, gravesites, houses of the recently deceased, ravines, rock outcroppings and gorges. McKee's informants said that *mal aire* is naturally drawn to and gathers at these places, or that it is emitted by spirit beings that occupy these places. Upon contact, *mal aire se pega* ("sticks") to a person and over a short period of time it penetrates and pollutes the entire body (*Ibid*: 6). In Putumayo too indigenous peoples consider those places as dangerous because of *mal aire*. However, in this war context, military garrisons such as the one Alberto was forced to enter, have been incorporated as well into the wide set of potentially harmful locations for the human health because of the violence and terror embedded in them.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes: "It is only *in* space that (...) conflicts come effectively into play, and in so doing they become contradictions of space" (1991:365). This can be seen in how the state military territorialization

creates a spatial contradiction between the idea of safe state-controlled spaces and peoples' panic towards them, to the point that such places are powerful enough to affect people's bodies and health. But I believe this goes beyond the experience of the state power through the body. And thus, might we suggest that this sense of 'inside and outside' implies an experience of disjunction in the indigenous conception of status of citizenship, and hence of rights, depending on the spatial location of the individual? From my perspective, Alberto's fragmented depiction of the war landscape in Putumayo points toward this possibility, and furthermore, to a broader perception of the modern state in Putumayo as one that is exclusively located in these military spaces, while the population in the rest of the territory is represented as living under a different set of conditions. In this sense, people perceive these 'safe' spaces of the state as sources of terror and feelings of fear, for they know that being inside them, may transform individuals into subjects of suspicion, interrogation and, in some cases, torture. The visibility of barbed wire in this scenario, fractures the space in such an effective way that being inside or outside these regulated spaces has implications for the definition of the individuals' identity and consequently for the classification of his or her relation with the state. Doña Graciela's comment when we passed in front a military post surrounded by barbed suggest such inside/outside dangers:

"Every time we pass in front of military posts we feel scared that they may ask us to go behind the barbed wire to respond their questions. We try to avoid those places, for we know of many people that during the really violent times in Putumayo, were dragged there and never came back"

Observing the last five decades of cyclical violence in this region of Colombia, I argue, that the state, in spite of local people's feelings of abandonment, remains a crucial presence, a screen for political desires and identifications as well as fears, thanks to these type of military spatial control mechanisms (see Aretxaga, 2003). Through these, the space has been divided, constructing oppositional dimensions such as in Doña Graciela's perception of the dangerous realm behind the barbed wire. The creation of such spatial boundaries between threatening and secure places cannot be detached nonetheless, from the parallel process conducted by the state to classify individuals or collectives into acceptable or dangerous social categories. In these circumstances, social perceptions, as Ignacio Martin-Baro has pointed out, are reduced to rigid and simplistic schemes through state "official lies," in which social knowledge is cast in dichotomous terms, black or white, good or bad, friend or enemy, without the nuances and complexities of lived experience (1989). According to this perspective, the territory itself is more than a passive template for the inscription of violence or an object to be manipulated to create political

representations. Rather, it becomes a power and an animated entity for the governing purposes as Feldman (1991) contends.

But once again, the symbolism of barbed wire is ambiguous. It does not only demarcate profane spaces that must be avoided, since ironically these are sacred spaces for salvation too. As mentioned above, military barbed wire indicates the state's patriarchal presence and its discourse of social cohesion, neoliberal development, and counterinsurgency, or, to use the popular messianic terms of former president Uribe of "democratic security" (see Leal, 2006). Crucial to this ideology is that state controlled places are meant to be 'sanitized' from guerrillas, paramilitaries, and bandits. Accordingly, behind the military barbed wire lies supposedly the realm that is free of any threat. Promoted by the authorities as secure locations, they are replete with visual government propaganda inviting civilians to approach them willingly to provide the army with useful information about their enemies or to submit complaints about human rights violations.

The problem is that most of these complaints directly relate to these same, allegedly secure, state spaces. This dual essence of the state-place, as both dangerous and safe, dovetails with what Scheper-Hughes (1992:233) noted in Northeast Brazil shanty towns, where "The intolerableness of the[se] situation[s] is increased by [their] ambiguity". Concomitantly profane and sacred, military sites surrounded by barbed wired are deeply ambiguous and therefore terribly intimidating and deceiving. Proof of this is Aurelio's response when asked by a low rank soldier, guarding a check post, to "support the state cause" by going to one of these barbed wired spaces in San Marcelino to report a crime committed by the paramilitary:

"What cause do they want me to support if I know what they do in places such as that camp? They kill us right in there, supposedly because we are guerrilla helpers; and now they want me to go to that same place to help them? Am I a friend or an enemy? I don't understand these soldiers, so I will rather remain silent".

Note the question of "Am I a friend or an enemy?" in the previous excerpt. This question, I contend, is quite illustrative of how the state becomes an ambiguous social subject in everyday life in regions such as Putumayo. This in turn, very likely, is the effect of the state's strategic spread of protective images, but also of fear created by militaries and its use of aggressive visual devices such as barbed wire. As simple as it is meaningful, this technology serves the broader project of state production and I would say, the instrumentalization of modernity. Andrew Benjamin and Charles Rice (2009:XX), following Walter Benjamin's ideas on the

architecture of modernity, contend that the strategically guided construction of people's perceptions (spatial, temporal, aesthetic) is a central aspect of the modernizing project. In this process the strategic use of objects is crucial to shape specific forms of perception among people, which are able to establish naturally social and spatial differences and hierarchies and accept particular orders and rationalities¹²⁰. As such, barbed wire seems to work precisely in this sense, that is, as a technique of guided perception aimed to ingrain in people's lives the ambiguous feeling of exclusion/inclusion to the national order, via its message of potential violence if its sacred space is transgressed or its acceptable forms of identity ignored. As Matthewman (2008:117) has suggested in his essay on barbed wire and sociology: "Barbed wire, then ushered in a massive asymmetry of power, allowing for centralized management, the magnification of force and of difference between those inside and those out, and, to some degree, the creation of moral distance between killers and killed".

My aim in the exploration of barbed wire in Putumayo has been to show how simple spatial artefacts can be deeply interwoven into the conditions of modern politics and how they may represent particular perspectives, agendas and values inscribed in the space. In the case of barbed wire this can relate to local peoples' eagerness for new forms of territorialization, private property, and ultimately, modernity. On the other hand, the state relies on the same artefact to express and consolidate its power, to create spaces of inclusion and exclusion, to police and control territorial boundaries, and finally, to create the "state effect" (Mitchell, 1999:89). This suggests an ambiguous presence of power, oscillating between protection and threat.

I am aware nonetheless, that to go beyond this obvious fact and to argue that certain technologies in themselves have political properties seems, at first glance, completely mistaken. As Winner (1980) has pointed out, "We all know that people have politics, not things. To discover either virtues or evils in aggregates of steel, plastic, transistors, integrated circuits, and chemicals seems just plain wrong, a way of mystifying human artifice and of avoiding the true sources, the human sources of freedom and oppression, justice and injustice" (*Ibid*: 122). I certainly agree with Winner, but the important point is to not lose sight of the fact that all these simple artifacts and material structures, so common in people's everyday lives, are ultimately embodying the ethereal confluence of reason and violence within the state, and thus, as Taussig contends, they form the constitution of its very being (1997:38). What I see therefore in Putumayo is that the space, in conditions of political war, is not a passive backdrop to the process of state formation and nation's

¹²⁰ For a comprehensive analysis of the political qualities of technical things see Winner (1980) and Latour (2000).

building (Radcliffe, 2001:143), but it is precisely through the dynamical interplay between the state spatial techniques of power and society's possible responses, that the space and hence, the territory, is created everyday as the outcome of this violent interstice or contact zone.

Military Checkpoints and the Magic of Words and Paper

Military checkpoints in Putumayo are another good spatial expression of power to rethink the notion of the state in a new light, and specifically as a contradictory ensemble of practices and processes (Mitchell 1991, Brown 1995, Trouillot 2001). The control and surveillance of people through random requests for their identification documents at checkpoints came to be during Plan Colombia's days, an intrinsic aspect of the landscape of this region. Somehow similar to the process of the landscape disciplinarization conducted by missionaries two centuries earlier, this is also an example of the process through which the power materializes its presence through a combination of everyday practices directly linked with the transformation of the space into routinized, repetitive, and internalized disciplines (Mitchell, 1991; Das, 2003.).

Along highways and roads, the military presence is manifest. Travelling from Mocoa, the capital of the Department, to the lowlands, for example, requires going through multiple road checks, which in turn involve body and baggage searches, the checking of the *cédula* (national identification card) or such documents as the *libreta militar* (military card)¹²¹. People hand their documents to the authorities while uneasily answering such questions as "What do you do?" "Where are you heading?" or "What did you come to do here?" Every item of personal belongings is thoroughly examined by heavily armed soldiers. In some *retenes* (checkpoints), police dogs nervously sniff people's luggage trying to find drugs amidst fruits, chickens, and clothes. Soldiers and policemen get into the buses, checking the luggage compartments and looking with flashlights under the passengers' seats. The Putumayo authorities are well trained to find any criminal evidence for misdemeanours that range from smuggling Chinese merchandise brought illegally from Ecuador, to transporting cocaine, guns, or illegal wildlife for trade. Even if the treatment is usually not aggressive, yet, the tension is there.

During many trips accompanying Kofán friends, such tensions were not immediately perceptible to me given their calm, silent, and always cooperative attitude towards the authorities. Daily life in the road usually appeared "normal". However, after

¹²¹ Document certifying that the person has done his military service

some time it is possible to notice how this sense of normalcy is very ambiguous, particularly when once safely seated, after the inspection someone says:

“We don’t want this anymore. We want them to respect our indigenous territory because this is not the life we want to live. We don’t want all the time people from the army, asking for our documents, or making suspicious questions, or pressuring us to demonstrate who we are in each kilometre of the road. This is our land, and I know who I am, so I should be able to walk in peace, like our grandfathers did. But they respond us that they are doing all this shit just for us and that we have a responsibility with their cause, with our country”. (Aurelio C. Kofán leader from Santa Rosa, 2011)

Hearing these types of denouncing comments after people calmly not only cooperate with the policemen, but even more, after a friendly exchange with them, illustrates the kind of contradictory relationships between peoples and the state in Putumayo. This is the effect, I suggest, of the ambiguous yet pointed character of the state as both illusory and concrete, distant and impersonal, as well as localized and material; as both violent and filled with coercive symbolisms or as benevolent security provider.

Let me start with the observation of the coercive nature of the military checkpoint, sandbagged blockhouses packed with troops, and particularly, identification procedures, interrogatories and searches. Witnessing indigenous peoples going through the experience of military or police seizures in Villa Garzón, Santana, the Caquetá-Putumayo Bridge, El Tigre, or in the road to La Dorada, to name just a few, I asked them about their sensations and thoughts during these moments.

“We don’t trust the soldiers. They are very tricky; their questions are very tricky. They are always trying to find something about you, as if you have something to hide from them, but there is nothing there to hide. I feel some sort of paranoia when I am surrounded by them asking me who I am for you don’t know if they are a friend of you or just want to joderte la cabeza (“fuck with your mind”)” (Pedro, Kofán student from Yarinal, 2011)

The student’s paranoid experience of the state, seems to be consistent with Taussig’s (1992:16-17, 26) argument that the “strategic use of uncertainty and mystery” is used to create a sense of intimidating/friendly presence among peoples. This situation in Putumayo is very similar to Veena Das and Deborah Poole’s (2004) description of rural militarized regions in Peru. The authors explore people’s anguish waiting for a decision at a checkpoint. Ironically, the absence of identity

documents leads to detention, but the same documents may also be cited as the reason for detention as well. Ambiguity and uncertainty are an essential part of state places in militarized regions, and henceforth the dual character of checkpoints combining incongruous messages of patriotism and security with the potential use of force against civilians.

Far from indicative of a merely dysfunctional state, this ambivalence is, rather, central to the discursive and material constitution of the state power itself. In this sense, Colombia is not the example of a weak or flawed state. Of course it is not the best example of Weber's (1978) theory about the state as the legitimate holder of the force (violence) monopoly, but it is also not what Eric Hobsbawm writes about Colombia in the back cover of Taussig's (2010) book *Diary of Limpieza*, "a place where you can experience where the state has disintegrated". Rather, this state violence and all the incongruities of its presence/absence are instrumental to its very composition.

From a historical perspective this is one of the most important reasons for the abnormality and "strategic incompleteness of the state" (Taussig, 1997:121) in Putumayo; a place in which the multiple practices, above all military ones, involved in policing and controlling territorial boundaries and peoples are in fact what create the nation-state as effect. As mentioned above, this form of local construction of power dovetails with arguments made by numerous scholars about how law functions as a second order that works to obscure the original violence, that is, the origins of the state in violence itself (Das and Poole 2004; Derrida 1976, 101-140; Mbembe, 1992). But this perspective must not obscure the importance of those symbols, images, visual devices, and political ritual practices which allow the state imaginary to retain what Nettl (1968, 565-66) calls a "conceptual existence" as a "sociocultural phenomenon" whose salience cannot be ignored.

In this violent context, I suggest, not only the state but citizenship as well, is always an incomplete and ongoing. Every day, people experience the tense negotiation aimed to demonstrate their allegiance to the state legal framework and the patriotic discourse of the war against drugs and terrorism. Citizenship in this threatening scenario becomes a permanent performative exercise of self-representation to overcome the vigilant and always distrustful eye of state agents. And this is why it is common to witness stressful situations when indigenous travellers do not carry the proper documentation. Amid endless questionings and suspicious treatments from the authorities, they are forced to certify their position inside the legal boundaries of the state through painstaking explanations, showing other documents and convincing the authorities to let them pass through. In these situations, as Chopra

and Williams (2011) have pointed out, citizenship is “a form of self and subject-making that is always in the process of becoming while individuals strive to make sense of events, and to initiate or influence them, in accordance with their own expectations and ambitions” (*Ibid*: 244). Take again my friend’s comment “Am I a friend or an enemy?” I underscore this question, because it is precisely the type of repeated ontological doubt that individuals face as part of their quotidian routines of going to the market, travelling through the river, or while visiting distant relatives, the kind of activities that are punctuated by military interrogations. “In the margins and borders of global spaces and polities” Aretxaga (2003:399) warns us, “the will to legibility present in the violence of the checkpoint or the police questioning of immigrants turns into a repetition of illegibility and uncertainty about the outcome of the encounter”.

This aggravation is especially so for the older Kofán. Several Taitas coincide that military controls are particularly annoying to them since they had experienced a completely different territory before the oil intrusion that eventually brought the state army and these forms of regulation into their lands. Elders said that they never had to identify themselves because almost everybody knew ‘who was who’. As mentioned in chapter 6, this was precisely the kind of social behaviour that constituted *pa’tssi Ingi Ande*. And hence several elder Kofán respond to questions of what constitutes the territory by telling stories of long walks from the mouth of the Churuyaco and Rumiayaco Rivers to the Afilador River, and from what is currently Ecuador to the Siona territories to exchange knowledge or perform Yagé ceremonies in communities, a process I contend, that weaved the social fabric constituting the Kofán territory or *pa’tssi ingi ande*. Through this practice of intra (between Kofán) and intercultural (other indigenous peoples) contact, I believe, the different identities were reaffirmed constantly and naturally. During these years, elders recount, their encounters with the state was partial and infrequent. After the arrival of the Texas Petroleum Company, however, and then, with Plan Colombia, the state intensified its military presence. Suddenly, identification procedures became a routine for all indigenous populations of the piedmont, now forced by soldiers and policemen to produce and prove themselves as legitimate citizens. As such, indigenous experiences of both the nation-state and their citizenship in this marginal region have been somewhat constructed from their encounter with the state bureaucratic apparatus (cf. chapter 9 for the Kofán- INCORA relationship during the 1970s-1980s), but mostly from their contact with the armed face of power. Remember grandma Cecilia’s comment: “The government here? No they have always been absent until the army spread around”. Consequently, it seems to be the army’s counterinsurgency campaign what is perceived by many people in Putumayo, as the arrival of the state.

The tension experienced within the encounter with the state, moreover, is especially intense if we remember my friend's comment that "*No one can be sure who is who*" in Putumayo (see chapter 13). Consequently, how the citizenship and state is experienced through those deformed nodes of authority that are entrenched in roads and highways is often confusing and frightening.

The state, not as an actual structure, but as "a powerful, apparently metaphysical effect of practices" (Mitchell 1999:89), I contend, must be seen in the light of a double articulation, for policing and controlling the social spaces is not only about regulation, discipline, and coercion as I have already described. There is a counter side, whereby social control becomes internalized and normalized through every day social discourse, norms, identities and self-regulations. These, of course, correspond to Foucault's (1977; 1978; 1997) notion of governmentality. This concept, as Dean (1999) notes, is concerned most of all with the "conduct of conduct" (*Ibid*: 10); that is, with the myriad ways in which human conduct is directed by calculated means. According to this perspective, the state constructs a discursive field in which power is not merely imposed, but also socially rationalized. The delineation of concepts, the specification of objects and borders, and the provision of arguments and justifications become, in this way, part of the nation-building project (Lemke, 2007:44). In this state-society contact zone, the deployment of non-coercive forms of domination are common and effective given their capacity to appear as mechanisms for political inclusion and social unity. In this context, the state is supposed to "present an image free of profanities such as incoherence, brutality, partiality, banality, incompetence, technicality, and/or self-interest, as only through ascription to the sublime and rejection of banality can the state earn the legitimacy needed to beget voluntary compliance with its rules and avoid resorting to coercion" (Hunt, 2006: 90).



Figure 11. Policemen holding hands with indigenous child and the message “All with the same heart” Mural painted by the National Police, Mocoa, 2012. (Author, 2011)

In figure 11 we see an example of the kind of ubiquitous military propaganda which invites people in Putumayo to support the Colombian state in its struggle against subversion and terrorism, arguing for shared social and moral responsibility. This strategy was evident in the many road signs erected during the years of president Uribe’s government, with their calls for the eradication of *La cultura de la ilegalidad en Putumayo* (“the culture of illegality”) and the adoption of *La cultura nacional de la Seguridad Democrática* (“the national culture of Democratic Security”). It is noteworthy as well, that the most widely listened-to radio station in the people of Putumayo belongs to the national police, so the state-military advertising is not only distributed through visual means but using the most important media in rural areas of Colombia.

In this way, the government constructs an imaginary state that is simultaneously both violent and caring. Here lies the ambiguity of military landscapes, crisscrossed by the blurring line between profane and sacred spaces, where power shows its capacity for intimidation while ironically fulfilling the local population’s claims for the presence of state fatherhood. Governmentality entails this reciprocal construction of power, naturally, through very unbalanced relations. I am aware, nonetheless, of the simplification embedded in this conceptualization of people’s experience of the ontology of the state in Putumayo through a binary model of

apprehensive/protective feelings. What I propose here accordingly is ethnographic attention to what I call a “spatiotemporal margin” between this dichotomy of oppression – protection. At the margins of the polity and at the local level, encounters with the state are often experienced in an intimate way, where power is experienced close to the skin, embodied in well-known local officials, through practices of everyday life (Das, 2003). Such a margin explores precisely this everyday experience of people in which there is no sharp rupture between feelings of state fatherhood and intimidation, but a complex space in which multiple and ambivalent sentiments of membership and fear to the state emerge simultaneously.

Let me start with a simple example of this margin in between feelings towards the state in Putumayo, one that I experienced personally. After a couple of days walking around the Sibundoy Valley in the upper part of the Putumayo department, I experienced this margin when taking pictures of some of the old government buildings in Santiago, one small indigenous municipality of the valley. Suddenly, I heard loud shouts and was violently brought, face down to the ground. The first seconds with my face against the pavement felt interminable, given my fright and confusion. I could only see guns and green uniforms, hence the uncertainty caused by not knowing who were these people. But then, even under such uneasy and violent conditions, I felt immediate relief when I realized that they were not wearing rubber boots as FARC’s soldiers do, or using paramilitaries’ black armbands; it was the national police. I felt ‘safe’ because even facing the possibility of abuse and humiliation (as indeed happened later) I could rely on that inner-strong perception of the state not only as a violent machine but also as an imagined coherent and rational structure with which is supposedly possible to relate in a reasonable manner. Paradoxically, this perception of the ‘rational state’ emerged amidst such feelings as suspicion, distrust, and fear. It is thus precisely in that middle ambivalent point of the subjective perception, where those colliding sentiments form the *margin* I am referring to, as itself a conjunctural and crisis-ridden perceptual moment and space in which the state emerges as a feared but desired and legitimate embodiment of power.

Another example of this margin unfolded the day I had to visit an old Kofán Taita that was detained by the Colombian police because he had smuggled a couple of shotgun shells from Ecuador in the San Miguel River, on the frontier with Colombia. Despite his always calm, friendly, and cheerful attitude, I found an enraged man, evidently fearless of the police, as he had just punched out a couple of them. When he calmed down we started talking. He said that he had no fear of being there because these were Colombian policeman and we were on Colombian territory so he knew that nothing bad could happen. *“It would have been different”*, he said, *“if*

we were in Ecuador or if these people were paramilitaries". But I thought, what would be different if the Colombian police and army are accused of the same abuses and crimes as the rest of the armed actors in this region? So where did this confidence on the nationhood as a guarantee of safety come from in this lawless region?

The answer to this question may lie in the observation of that *margin*, as a structural part of the power-laden relation between people and the state, in which the emotive agency of subjects, comprising feelings of safety, state 'loyalty' and 'solidarity', or the 'sense of belonging' and 'feeling at home' (Linke, 2006: 207), arise together with the fear and anxiety produced by the state's attempt to set up its regime through diverse techniques of power under military conditions. The state is thus perceived and naturalized as a benevolent tyrant, an effect of the contradictory nature of the state that establishes "the paradoxical position of life as at once excluded and included within the exercise of sovereign power" (Dean, 2001:46). In southern Colombia, this paradox is an intrinsic part of peoples' everyday experience of the military checkpoint, the nationalistic propaganda, and during identification procedures. Thus, in spite the state imposition of disciplines and rationalities, within this margin, there is also space for people to mimicry and subvert such state practices through very effective ways of symbolic-political reappropriation.¹²² Disciplines, as Mitchell (1991) points out, offer spaces for maneuver and resistance, and indeed can be turned to counter hegemonic purposes (93). Let me illustrate this point with an interesting example occurring among Kofán shamans and what I call 'talisman documents'.

¹²² Here lies a big difference between the relations between local communities with paramilitaries and state forces: this flexible space or margin would be impossible to consider in the encounter with the paramilitaries. In this case the relation is devastatingly brutal and there is no exchange rather than the circulation of panic and anxiety. The relation with the state, even if framed by constant abuses and crimes, allows a tight but meaningful margin for the real manifestation and circulation of people's expectations and demands supported on the imaginary of a coherent and benevolent state.[you really think you need this footnote? My sense is that you have already made this point quite effectively]



Figure 12. Taita (X) from Santa Rosa del Guamuez showing his ID (Author, 2011)

Currently, some Kofán Taitas, tired of the coercive identification procedures set up in checkpoints, decided to create their own form of identification cards, one which certifies their role as traditional authorities. These informal ID (see figure 11), designed locally, include their names and pictures dressed in full traditional regalia and the Colombian shield and flag on the background. Interestingly, the cards also include references to the Law 89 of 1890¹²³ with which Taitas uphold their political authority by invoking the post-independence law aimed to clarify and regulate the process of indigenous integration into the dominant society. These identification documents have no legal standing, other than that of the state recognizing traditional authorities as legitimate social interlocutors in the 1991 constitution. Moreover, the strategy raises its own problems because in many cases, it is not clear among the Kofán themselves who is and who is not a Taita and thus a legitimate authority to represent the people. Notwithstanding its lack of official status, the important point is to see how within this flexible margin, which is intrinsic part of interethnic contact zones, the subaltern is able to adopt and refabricate locally the symbols of state control, creating new mutually intelligible ones outside the official and legal realm of the state. And the fascinating aspect of this state-society contact zone is the fact that this local response works regardless of the illegitimacy of such

¹²³ Although this law provides a negative view of indigenous peoples, calling them "semi-civilized" and "savage", stating that in front of the civil and criminal regime, Indians must be considered as "minors", it represents a foundational moment in the protection of their rights as it recognizes their *cabildos* (councils) and collective management of land. It is regarded as the first fundamental contribution to the protection of indigenous peoples and conservation of their territories. Republica de Colombia (Ministerio de Gobierno), *Fuero Indígena: disposiciones legales del orden nacional, departamental y comisaral - jurisprudencia y conceptos*, Bogota, Editorial Presencia, 1983, pp. 57-64.

documents. So here we may see how within contact zones, the exchange of the modern state symbols can be socially replicated, 'indigenized', and then turned back into circulation.

Before travelling, for instance, I heard Taita Cristobal saying to his wife:

"Remember to pack my Taita ID card in the little bag, it is very important! You know how annoying can be those caimanes ("caimans" nickname for policemen because of their green uniforms). But they are like children, so friendly and easy-going, when you show them your Taita ID (laughs); you can just go through those retenes (checkpoints) as if you were invisible"

In the local naturalization of these IDs, not only by indigenous but by the local authorities as well, we find evidence for the way in which the language of the Colombian state and native practices of authority become enmeshed. This intersection forms a sort of parallel system of legality, which although not official, protects the Taitas from the local police and army soldiers', giving them a sense tranquility knowing they dealing with people 'inside' the state's approved bureaucratic system of practices and codes. This is so, given that for both, indigenous peoples and state authorities, these ID cards possess an intrinsic, let's say 'magical', power, no matter the level of legal recognition. The card itself opens a channel of communication and understanding. And here thus, we find another example of those mundane but magical objects and icons explored by Taussig (1997) which are so crucial in the political circuit that connects people and the state. The pressing question nonetheless, is about what conception of magical essence is embedded by the Kofán in these cards and what grants them with the magical power to overcome the military controls?

For the Kofán it is significant that the Law 89 of 1890, which is referenced in their identification cards, was aimed to protect indigenous communities. The law also guaranteed their transition from 'savages' to citizens, their incorporation into the national society, and the native's adoption in turn of the state as the central form of political authority (Roldán, 2013:4). However, when the Kofán Taitas presently appeal to this law in order to deal with the state control during difficult moments -as it is always the case when they are asked to identify themselves- I believe that they do not merely aim to fuse with the national society as the original law intended. Rather, I suggest, that the intention is to subvert and redefine this relation by turning an old piece of postcolonial legislation into a powerful symbolic device of negotiation and protection. The juxtaposition of the symbols such as their traditional attire, the national shield, and the historic law produce a kind of

'talisman' document that they regard not simply as an ID, but as something much more powerful. These documents, I argue, are in this perspective I am proposing, the objectification of a colonial history through the reinterpretation of the Law, from the present. Once again, we can see here historicity processes in motion when Kofán, operating under the constraints of the state, reshape their political-colonial past to assume present forms in relation to current events, political needs, available cultural forms and emotional dispositions (Hirsch and Stewart 2005:262; see chapter 3-4 discussion).

The ID cards as the subversion of a technique of power reminds me of Taussig's 'Mimesis and Alterity' (1993) book on the Cuna people of Panama, and how shamans capture and create power by making a model of the white Other in the form of wooden carved figurines. This process, referred by Taussig as the magician's art of reproduction (*Ibid*: 16), works within the colonial space of contact, allowing shamans to gain "through its sensuous fidelity something of the power and personality of that of which it is a model of" (*Ibid*: 16). I have seen this kind of game of mirrors when the Taitas proudly and even defiantly show their ID 'magical' cards to obnoxious agents demanding identification; and I see this as the confrontation of the Other using its own codes of legitimacy. The talisman documents, created within this contact zone, further illustrate, Bhabha's (1994) formulation, that cultural hybridity may be produced by a 'doubling up of the sign' (119), thus, the same object or custom placed in a different context acquires quite new meanings, while echoing old ones. The *margin* in which the state documentation is reappropriated, suggests that the micro-politics of the local are more complex than the oppositional state-community model, and that state languages, practices and codes of conduct are not just impositions but socially restructured and internalized political and social behaviours.

We must be aware nonetheless, that all these ambiguous possibilities of contestation within contact zones are always framed by conditions of oppression and asymmetry. In the next section I would like to focus on this aspect and its detrimental impacts for the Kofán territorial autonomy, but also to see how relations of dominance and imposition in postcolonial contexts are much more complex than encounters of polarity; they are assemblages of imbricated relations where very often systems of thralldom operate with the complacency and complicity of the dominated (Hiddleston, 2009).

Military Garrisons, Troops, and Police Presence

In the Kofán resguardo of Santa Rosa del Guamuez, *La Raya* Creek appears today as a seemingly insignificant stream. In actual fact, it used to be an important water source for several A'i families. As many other creeks that constitute the complex water web passing through every indigenous resguardo, this particular forest stream feeds the San Miguel River. Its headwaters, located about a kilometre west of Santa Rosa, emerge from a grassy plateau that has been appropriated by the Colombian Army's 13th Mobile Brigade to build a military base established to protect oil wells and control guerrilla activities. As a consequence, *La Raya* is now a muddy, polluted and nearly useless stream that stands as a tragic symbol of the intrusion and superimposition of the state forms of territorialization on indigenous regions.

The construction of this military base began in June 2008. With heavy machinery to open the plateau for the building of the military facilities, the army eviscerated what used to be a sacred place for Kofán, not only because of its location in the heart of their ancestral lands, but also because an ancient Taita lies buried under the strong trunk of an old *palo piedra* ('stone wood') tree, under which soldiers today find shelter from the suffocating heat of the valley. The base was part of the Ministry of National Defence strategy to strengthen its control over one of the most important areas for ECOPETROL activities. Accordingly, the battalion's priority is the protection of the oil infrastructure. The government and the army identified this lot inside the A'I reserve and unbeknownst to the Kofán, they bought it in September 2006 with funds provided by ECOPETROL. The Kofán would not have known about the transaction were it not for the Army's 13th Mobile Brigade's arrival in December 2007 to control the area, setting up a defensive perimeter and installing checkpoints along the road (Salinas, 2011:377). The military base is itself part of a larger geopolitical strategy to control the corridor that connects the Ecuadorian frontier with the Colombian cocaine areas of production and thence with the drug routes to the pacific coast. Accordingly, the regional power of the army is immense, and functioning as the main face of the state for the last three decades, it reaches every aspect of the Kofán people's lives. The consequence of this collision of territorialities, I believe, is the formation of a very complex system of relations between soldiers and Kofán peoples, characterized by collaborations, confrontations and very often abuses on behalf of the army. Gumercinda, a middle age Kofán mother describes the kind of quotidian crimes occurring between 1990 and early 2000's involving police or soldiers:

"We always tried to avoid the police and soldiers so we never got involved in problems. But then they started to come here, more and more. Asking for this and that...We were just trying to live in peace, drinking Yagé and healing

patients, even soldiers sometimes. In that way we were able to get some money to buy cattle. But then the authorities killed my brother when he was drinking beer in the town. They said he was a guerrillero (guerrilla soldier). But they were lying. He was a good boy, and furthermore, he was not from that place, and was just visiting a relative as we have always done. My nephews invited him to drink and we don't know exactly what happened. Probably they were drunk, and because the police of that time was very bad with us (indigenous peoples), so probably they bothered him and he responded aggressively. They shot him several times in the chest".

Helena, another Kofán woman from Santa Rosa confirms this general sentiment concerning the state forces in their territories:

We don't like the police or the army, they only cause trouble; when they are patrolling around we cannot leave our homes alone and even less so our daughters. They are no good for us. But it got worse with that man Uribe (Alvaro Uribe, the former president). Oh Christ! In those days they were here all the time, inside the resguardo, asking and bothering everybody. They were a shadow for everyone. We could not go to fish in the night like we used to, not even walk in the forest. If the army found us doing that, they would kill us right there, supposedly because we were guerrilleros. "If I find you walking alone in the night I will erase you," they would say to us. Even today we don't go out after midnight because they still patrol inside the resguardo every night. We did not any want more of that, so we asked them to have a meeting in the cabildo's house. We were angry furthermore, because they not only harassed our daughters and us but also liked to steal our few things.

They had gone with a chainsaw, a radio and many other belongings. I was enraged when she told me that so I went straight to talk to them but they answered that they were innocent and it was very likely the ones that stole those things were the bandoleros (the bandits), the guerrilla thieves that normally crossed the Achiote creek when going to the Tigre town. So I said: Thieves? How could you be so shameless if we found inside the house an armlet that belongs to the army? But they said that I should better shut up and stop saying that they were thieves or I would pay for my big mouth".

These narratives, so common in Putumayo, express again the potential threat that lurks beyond the idea of military protection and security deployed by successive governments: daily abuses and threats, sexual violence and harassment, robbery, and restrictions to the liberty of movement linked to subsistence and social

reproduction (see ACNUR, 2002; Asociación Minga, 2013). For the Kofán, the militarization of the landscape is therefore synonymous with losing control over spatial decisions, and as I have mentioned in chapter 13 this is in turn the driver of a complex process of perceptual deterritorialization.

In addition, for indigenous groups located in close proximity to the military base, and particularly for Kofán, the possibility of the FARC targeting the 13th Mobile Brigade and the garrison as military objectives, places them in a vulnerable position. In response, they have resisted and confronted these transgressions through legal claims that ended in a significant meeting in 2009¹²⁴ with former minister of defence Juan Manuel Santos, current president of Colombia. Eventually, Mr. Santos acceded to suspend the construction of the remaining planned military facilities so that its potential impacts could be evaluated. However, as Salinas (2011) points out, “While one can discern people of good will in different ministries and positive encounters such as the one with Santos, translating these moments into sustained momentum is difficult at best, in large part because the historical *modus operandi* of the nonindigenous world with the Kofán has been malicious and disrespectful. Indeed, the rule of law has not been respected at all” (378). For the leaders and families of places such as the Resguardo Santa Rosa, struggling against the military presence, the ambivalent position of the Colombian state, shifting from a comprehensive and friendly authority in the political arena yet an intransigent deaf in the everyday reality, illustrates Slavoj Žižek’s (1989) assertion, that “the state-thing touches the subjects’ most intimate emotions by remaining partially outside, as incomprehensible Other, constitutively senseless, not understood, ‘which cannot be integrated into the symbolic universe of the subject’, and therefore, in specific zones of contact, is experienced as traumatic”(37).

In Putumayo the process of state violent expansion under the umbrella of the ‘war against drugs and insurgency’ has placed social groups in positions where their only recourse has been to endure the systematic violence of the state. Not surprisingly, it is easy to identify among them a general attitude towards everything that represents the government as threatening and therefore undesirable. However, as I have argued for every contact zone explored in this thesis, this is only one dimension of the complex and contradictory set of social relationships between people and the state power, and hence my interest in the simultaneous emergence of stories of collaboration where sorcery and counterinsurgency intelligence come to be enmeshed. Taita Miguel, an Inga Taita that was trained by Kofán shamans, told me the following story while we were preparing his chagra for planting, in the

¹²⁴ Colombia anuncia mayor presencia militar en frontera con Ecuador, January 25, 2009. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-4773636>

middle of the mountains near the Caquetá River. The story is interesting for it suggests how in conditions of war and violence against civilians, alternative channels of ambiguous cooperation may be opened between oppressors and victims:

“A couple of years ago, during a ceremony night, the police inspector came by to drink Yagé with us. He was a friend of mine since he had visited me frequently within the last months. But for this visit he had a special question in mind. Because of some informants from around here, he was aware that very soon the guerrilla had plans to attack the police station. They had targeted five policemen and him as the main objectives. The FARC was trying to hunt down the Yunguillo School’s teacher too. The inspector was deeply worried since he knew that the guerrilla are very good at hitting fast, and then disappearing in the mountains that surround our resguardo. Thus, he came here to ask for help but that night we just discussed the issue. Some days after this situation, the inspector appeared here very dirty and disturbed. He had just escaped the first attack through one of the town square sides. From there he ran into the forest, opposite from where the murderers were hiding, then he ran down through the crop stubble and jumped into the waters of the Caquetá River. He managed to reach the bridge some kilometres down the river, and this is how he appeared here. He said that now he really needed our help. We decided to call Taita Yaiguaje and Taita Mojomboy to hear their words.

The inspector told us that he was about to be killed, thus, if we helped him, he was going to pay each one of us a good sum of money. He begged so much. Poor guy, he was really terrified, claiming that the guerrilla was going to torture him. Ok we said. I called the other traditional authorities and we started to prepare the Yagé for that same night and see what could we do about it. We prepared good strong Yagé, to see what could we do, to protect that poor devil, and to protect us as well from the guerrilla. We drank, and around 3 A.M. we finally started to see clearly the strategy to deceive those people and prevent the arrival of the FARC. On the east side of the resguardo we had to bury a conjured package, a second one on the west side, one on the north, and another on the south, forming a cross. Hurriedly, we sent some of our people to do the job. The FARC’s soldiers were closer now, and they would destroy whatever on their way just to find the inspector. The FARC’s commander was young but brutal; he was called Wilson and controlled the area between here and the Descanse region.

I can tell you that the night we drank Yagé and to see what to do was hard. I was looking at the pintas (visions), trying to control the remedio and see the solution, but you know how it is to deal with these problems through the Yagé, it is painful. You have to go deeper and see that darkness. We decided this working plan together, so every Taita focused on this problem, which now was not just a problem of the policeman but of all Indians in this resguardo. Oh Virgin Mary! This was a big problem to deal with. We could see what was about to happen with the FARC's ambush; there was about to be a lot of blood everywhere. So while observing this I felt sick, with all this death in front of me, right here. I called my compadre. Taita Yaiguaje! Please come closer and help me, this remedio is strong. Please clean me because I am scared. He is a very good healer so in the morning I was feeling strong again. We all gathered to discuss what we have seen. I said: Well friends, I was able to see a lot of people suffering and dying, and people with guns in their hands as well. People from the guerrilla I guess, they were all in uniforms, and I did not see any Indian. And this is why I believe that the plan we envisioned with the packages will work. The plan was that those packages that were conjured before being buried would cause the guerrilla squads to be confused in the forest, like dizzy, and so they would walk straight into the Army's trap.

The next day after our work, the inspector had already called some backup, but just a few soldiers. The guerrilla started to arrive precisely through the place we saw with the Yagé they were going to be. That was around two p.m. They walked along the length of that stream called Tilinguara. The people here were very scared because they were so many, probably hundreds. And that commander Wilson in front of them, giving orders to one or another group to surround the Resguardo square and then the area of Osocochoa. They were all around Yunguillo. But the army was prepared and protected with our advice. They knew that because of the force of the packages' the FARC would walk directly to a small path, like a bottleneck. Knowing this, all the army soldiers ran like thunder and hid around that place waiting for them. That place is in the mouth of the river, up the Chorrera waterfall, in between the mountains and the river, in that little pass, you know. The guerrilla was walking calmly since they thought that the inspector was the only policeman around, and the packages worked so well that they ended up exactly in the point the army wanted them to be. The guerrillas were so off guard that they stopped in the riverbank to drink water. Then came the fire. The army was so well entrenched that the guerrillos were completely confused with all those bullets coming from everywhere. The bodies exploded and blood was in the soil and the river water, as we had seen in our visions.

Because of this help, the police inspector and others come from time to time to ask for our help. They want us to conjure the packages that can close the entrance of the town and protect the territory”.

The construction of military garrisons and the permanent circulation of police and military troops for policing and controlling the Putumayo territory have entailed domination and violence against civilians. However, as Taita Miguel's story suggests, there is also a small window for collaboration and alliance with such oppressive forces. A window that has reshaped the cultural structure of indigenous peoples to the point that shamanism has become an active element in the dynamics of war. Collaboration and alliance are nevertheless complicated terms to use here. My intention is certainly not to deny that the war has imposed on them the most brutal and unfair living conditions, while consistently ignoring their rights, nor to depict indigenous peoples as vicious opportunist of such conditions. Rather, what I present here as possible forms of collaboration aims to illustrate, through what I have called the ethnography of the subaltern's hidden life (see chapter 2), how within colonial contact zones and war conditions, indigenous peoples have learned to engage with asymmetrical relations of power in many, different ways, and further, how such engagements imply not only the imposition of regimes but also a more nuanced dialogue between actors in the contact zone. Shamanism is in this regard one of the most interesting and rich fields of enquiry for these kinds of dialectics between indigenous peoples and Others in Putumayo. It is the ideal space to explore how in Amazonia, subjects' ideologies intersect, and become constituted in and by their relations to each other within asymmetrical relations of power and violence (Pratt, 1992). Given the centrality of shamanism within contact zones, and thus the importance for this thesis, this particular aspect shall be examined in more detail in the next chapter through the ethnographic observation of the entanglements between shamanism and the military forces in Putumayo, producing what I call mythologized landscapes shared by both the powerful and the powerless.

Anthropology and the soundscapes of war

I have focused my attention in this chapter on the state military campaign in Putumayo and its strategic production of state spaces to impose diverse orders and rationalities among civilians. However, the sensual experience of the space is not only visual but auditory as well. Recalling the importance of James Clifford's question: "But what of the ethnographic ear? (Clifford, 1986:12), I would like to explore the sound and noise involved in the indigenous experience of this process of

state military territorialization as a vital part of people's processes of place making in Putumayo.

Although Clifford is rather concerned with "the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye toward expressive speech (and gesture)" (*Ibid*: 12), his call to critique the hegemony of 'visualism' is extremely necessary (Levin, 1993; Feld and Brenneis, 2004). This is not to say that anthropologist "have given shorts shrift to the body and sensory perception. But a minority has actually approached the senses as more than just another 'text' to be read" (Erlmann, 2000: 2). This is especially so if we consider that the number of ethnographic works dealing with how the sound is vital in people's construction of themselves and the realities they inhabit are shockingly scarce¹²⁵. Noise in this sense is a fundamental element of the epistemological production of the space among indigenous peoples enduring war. Their stories include very often the description of roaring, cracking, explosive and noisy sounds such as the shaking sound of an exploding bomb, fire blasts, aerial bombings and harrowing panic screams that reach people with force, no matter how well hidden they are or how hard they close their eyes trying to disappear. As Juan said to me:

"These lands used to be que'mba'o (annoyingly noisy) because of the combats. Those planes and helicopters around making hard noises, even worse when they were firing machine guns from above. The mountains roared with all those peoples and their guns. And we just wanted to get our heads under the ground so as not to hear the explosions in our ears. But even buried under the earth, our bodies would have probably been zivacco (fear induced shivering)". Juan (X), a Kofán middle age man from Resguardo Afilador-Campoalegre, 2011).

In this landscape the sounds of war are combined with the noises produced by oil wells, the loud music of cucama people's modern stereos, and the forest's natural musicality. The cacophony of the war, the noise of oil industry, the western music, and the rainforest concert constitute what Murray Shafer (1993) calls a 'soundscape', an auditory terrain of entirely overlapping noises, sounds and human melodies. In this sense, I believe each intercultural contact zone produces particular soundscapes. Recall the Campa'náe story about the missionaries' bell; that mythical artefact that still sounds today in the shamanic cartographies, invoking the deathly illnesses associated with colonial epidemics that emerge in the present to be healed again by the Taitas, which in turn acquire more power from this timeless

¹²⁵ It is noteworthy to mention a number of anthropologists who have criticized the dominance of the visual in contemporary anthropology and have argued for the development of an "anthropology of the senses" such as Howes 1988; Seeger 1981; Stoller 1989.

experience. Historic events, places and sounds of past colonial encounters, are currently reprocessed and expanded in an ongoing process that produces contemporary soundscapes with important meanings for shamans. However, the resonating toll of past bells is complemented today, for instance, with modern noises of the intrusive oil industry. In the Kofán reserve of Santa Rosa especially, drilling machines, movements of tubes, chains, tools, produce persistent and unpleasant metallic sounds and piercing noises affecting the life of the people. The Taitas are specially tired of this situation. In the night, during Yagé ceremonies, they frequently complain about these perturbing echoes of the *pozo* (oil well), explaining how difficult it can be for them to focus in healing their patients, to analyse territorial issues or foresight problems. Some of them agree that that the oil well's crackling and grinding noises change the effect of the Yagé and its master's temperament. The Yagé is angry because of the auditory intrusion and the Taitas consequently get sick or just loose their shamanic capacity for concentration.

Although more silent today, the Santa Rosa resguardo is also affected by the loud music, yelling, and during the coca times, shootings in the colonist's *verbenas* (popular parties) in the town of San Antonio, which borders with the Kofán resguardo. Such disturbing sounds combined with the gunfire of the shooting range from the military base that invaded the reserve creates stress and is annoying to the people of the community attending to Yagé ceremonies. But sorcery may help to counter the noise invasion. Taita Cristobal and his uncle, another well-known and very old Taita, once told me how this problem could be stopped with a special spell. They call this to *mandarles un raton* (to send a mouse), which consists in damaging the machine that produces the noise through special chants and conjurations with which the Taitas can "gnaw the cables" from the distance. The Kofán Taitas I interviewed laugh when they describe the puzzlement and anger of the cucamas from San Antonio when the party is over because the stereo suddenly stopped playing music, or when the oil company workers cannot fix some damaged machine in the middle of the night because of the "mischievous mouse". As humorous as these anecdotes are, the Taitas are deadly serious about the necessity to stop the noise. Disturbing sounds and noises not only affect the tranquillity of the Kofán, but also the invisible families that inhabit the forest, and this is considered a serious transgression. In this regard, an old Taita remembers that after the devastating aerial bombing in Angostura -during which one of the most important leaders of the FARC guerrilla was killed by the Colombian army- invisible A'I families were forced to move to more distant lands, probably to the mountains, because of the terrible sound caused by the explosion. This situation generated great stress, especially for the old Taitas that regard invisible families as close relatives.

But if we talk about noise it is necessary to talk about silence as well, particularly about the relation between spaces of violence and people's silence, and the implications that this has for people's territorial understandings. Riding on a bus around the Guamuez valley I was talking with the driver about places on the road in which situations of extreme violence have happened. The driver, with a surprisingly sharp ethnographic eye, or rather, ear, told me how tangible the passengers' silence can be when going across these particular places. He referred to this situation as "*Esa sensación de psicosis*" (that feeling of psychosis) when people know they are going through locations where the guerrilla killed an army troop or the paramilitaries massacred several peasants. Just that cold but grasping silence can charge the atmosphere with anxiety when the bus enters in these spaces of past terror. Silence in this sense can operate as a survival strategy; people do not want to talk about these past experiences for armed actors, in spite the reduction of military activities during the last years, are still there, and hence, people know the best strategy is to remain silent about everything. But sometimes, nonetheless, when you travel through these sensitive places of death, for instance an old creek, a curve on the road, a decayed house you see that people may break the cold silence that frame this experience. In secrecy, people may talk about these sites not using their original names such as *Dantayaco* ("danta river") *El Alto del Gavilán* (hawk's peak) or *La Quebrada Zabalo* (Zabalo creek) but using new names that recall the violent incident that happened: "*ahí fue el lugar de la balacera*" (That place of the shooting); "*cerquita a donde enterraron ese montón de gente* (nearby where all that people was buried); *por donde es la casa de esa familia que incendiaron*" (around that burned family house). Names of places are themselves stories, and thus, we can see how the war has changed the local toponymy in the Putumayo. Place names, their history, and the local stories related, as diverse scholars argue, root people in their geography, and provide them with a spiritual foundation, as well as a regional or local identity (see Raffles, 2002:39; Huang, 2007; Helleland, 2012). The war has prompted a different relation with an anomalous space that not only has led people to replace the historical toponymy with new war-related names, but also to adopt new emerging codes of conduct such as the powerful silence associated with those new forms of perception of places which have been produced through particular forms of violence and social transgressions.

This was clearer for me during several walks with indigenous elders, when suddenly, the animated talking and laughter were abruptly ended by a cold silence as we approached places in which violent episodes occurred. It seems as if these places, due to that pervasive 'presence' of death, could open another dimension implying a distinct relationality with the landscape forces.

“You cannot walk through those places completely careless. They are dangerous, especially for children, they may get sick of susto, hiello or mal aire¹²⁶. You have to walk silently, very respectful and better if you light a cigarette for protection from the bad spirits lurking in those places” (Taita Cristobal, 2012)

In such places, I believe, space and death are the same unified experience; and here lies a fundamental aspect of the sacredness of indigenous ritual places in Putumayo, as in many other Amazonian regions. That is, that they are not only the geographical places for prayers and devotion to ancestral gods, the nature, and its natural phenomena. This is an oversimplification brought by indigenist and neo-shamanic tropes that tend to emphasize the ‘bright’ side of indigenous rituals and shamanic practices¹²⁷. Sacred places are powerful animated entities because they allow a parallel forms of interaction with the space, in which what is supposed to be ‘out there’ is actually penetrating into the subjective experience, connecting, and I would say, collapsing the body with the space into one same substantiality (see Tuan, 1977). In other words, space and the body become part of an indivisible circuitry. But this is not necessarily a pleasant mystical experience. In fact, sacred places are for many Amazonian cultures, dangerous locations that must be avoided since they can cause illness and misfortune (Santos-Granero, 2005; Hill, 1993). Hence the importance of recognizing devotion but also terror, death, and fear, as quintessential components of indigenous sacred places in Amazonia. And here we are back to Durkheim’s (1912) ideas on the origins of religion, since it is precisely the combination of life and death that makes this places powerful and a motive of sacredness (cf. chapter 12). According to this perspective, religious forces are beneficent, guardians of the physical and moral order and dispensers of life, but can also be evil and impure powers, productive of disorders, causes of death and sickness, and instigators of sacrilege as well. And the important part in what regards to silence following Durkheim’s argument, is that:

“Of course the sentiments inspired by the two are not identical: respect is one thing, disgust and horror another. Yet, if the gestures (silence) are to be the same in both cases, the sentiments expressed must not differ in nature. And, in fact, there is a horror in religious respect, especially when it is very intense, while the fear inspired by malign powers is generally not without a certain reverential character. The shades by which these two attitudes are differentiated are even so slight sometimes that it is not always easy to say which state of mind the believers actually happen to be in” (1912:256).

¹²⁶ All these are illnesses caused by the contact with hazardous places associated with death. See footnote 14

¹²⁷ For a complete critical analysis of these perspectives see Brown 1989; Whitehead and Wright, 2004.

Henceforth the almost impossible task of decoding gestures, in this case silence, as the accepted social behaviour in sacred places, into simple feelings of devotion or fear to those spaces permeated with death. Rather, I suggest that the Taitas' call for a ritualistic silence when experiencing sacred places of death, is not simply a reactive gesture or feeling, but a form of communication, indicating intimacy and interaction with a space fraught with danger, which I can only say, following what I have witnessed, might only be overcome just by walking fast, quietly, and perhaps lighting a cigar. Hence the importance of incorporating into our ethnographic frames other senses that despite in this case has been done in a rough way that cries for deeper analysis to understand thoroughly the formation of new soundscapes, it attempts to highlight the integrality of the space experience, and the mutability of indigenous relations with the space in political and violent changeable circumstances.

People, state power, and new indigenous territorialities: some concluding remarks

In this chapter I have explored some of the practices through which the Colombian state achieves a presence in the Putumayo and how it becomes a social subject in everyday people's life. Through the exploration of aerial fumigation, the use of barbed wire and the widespread installation of military posts and checkpoints, I have suggested that the state power in Putumayo is mainly embodied in military performances and public representations of statehood; in discourses, narratives, and fantasies of security and fear generated around the idea of the state as both protector and oppressor. In order to evince this duality and present it as a very ambiguous and contingent historical creation, I have proposed some of its most meaningful routinized tactics of authority to guarantee civil security while committing acts of political violence; the drawing and reinforcing of spatial boundaries; the classification of spaces, and the strategic construction of self-serving geographies of war. All these tactics of power may alternately contradict or reinforce the ideal image of the state, both digging deeper the gap between the state and individuals, as well as creating a sensed *margin*, an intimate space for contact and negotiation. This is, I believe, the juncture that explains the emergence among indigenous peoples, of parallel and contradictory ideas that both create and undermine feelings of national identity, state presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion, control and disorder. And in spite of being contradictory and obscure, it is through this process that the Colombian state takes shape, both as a material force and as an ideological construct, producing the state as a structural effect while explaining its intangibility.

Putumayo is in this sense, an example of Trouillot's (1990) point that the "nation" and "state" might be joined in ambiguous ways, and thereby, we feel compelled to cast doubt on this seemingly self-evident link and expose its paradoxical nature. But this ambivalent construction of the state based on the inclusion-exclusion spatial model has its own reflection in the also ambivalent construction of indigenous people's subjectivities that concomitantly demand distance and integration to the nation-state. This is why I contend we find indigenous movements and communities in Latin America simultaneously appealing to a sense of independent ethnic identity and also to a national belonging that supports their political mobilization (Jackson, and Warren, 2005; Yashar, 2005). In contrast to what happens in other areas of the world where ethnic movements acquire more exclusivist and even separatist arguments, sometimes leading to the outbreak of armed violent conflicts, in the Andes and the Amazon, indigenous people have formed a kind of ethnic identification which is more permissive, which fluctuates between refusing and belonging to the nation-state (see García, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Albert, 2005; Perreault, 2003). In that way, the ethnic difference is in fact formed, but more importantly, vindicated through the demand for participation in the wider national community. In other words, indigeneity can be defended from a political platform based on demands for territorial and cultural exclusiveness and separation made strictly in ethnic terms (1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Slater 1996; Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Graham, 2005; Hennessy 2008; Bolaños 2010). This is, the struggle for differential geographies and essentialist identities that I have explored at the onset of this thesis when observing indigenous political discourses in the public arena (see chapter 1.). But in spite of these discourses on cultural and territorial difference, and even opposition to the national society and state, ethnographic attention to the day to day peoples' lives, suggest rather that indigeneity is largely constructed and defended out of the permanent complex dialectics with the Colombian nation-state. Ultimately, this 'contact zone-dialectics' is the field where territory and identity are created (see Ramos 1994a; Rubenstein, 2001; Albert, 2005). It is therefore in this encounter where subaltern struggles for survival, sovereignty and political and economic opportunisms coexist, leading in turn to mutable-adaptive identities that lie far away from cultural assimilation. And, inasmuch as space is the locus of all these cultural, political and economic convergent projects, these new possible identities for indigenous peoples are profoundly geographical in their character.

Finally, I would like to conclude this chapter by underscoring that although extremely important, most of the anthropological works that have addressed Amazonian indigenous territorial issues in Colombia have focused on the sphere of the national indigenous movements and land struggles, setting the problem within

the limits of legal analysis, indigenous policies, and constitutional rights (Chaves 2001; Ulloa, 2004; Laurent, 2005). At the local scale, however, there is a deeper and wider ethnographic examination of the process through which the state imposes its central institutions, cultural values and moral premises, creating frontiers inside territories, constraining people's traditional relations with the space, and fostering new native cosmologies out of the state-society contact, that still remains undone. In the next chapter therefore, I would like to draw on some ethnographic cases to illustrate the kinds of cultural and political hybridization that are occurring at the local level. My aim is to explore the possible contradictions and ambiguities of life within the ambivalent and obscure postcolonial contact zone in Putumayo, where both colonizer and colonized are entwined by far more than a violent situation of domain.

Chapter 15

Mythologized Territories and the Modern Entanglements of Shamanism and War

When I observe Taitas singing and blowing over small cups filled with the brownish green Yagé, prior to drinking and offering it to heterogeneous groups of *mestizo* or Indian patients, guerrilleros or peasants, doctors from capital cities, bandits or shaman apprentices, afro-Colombians from the pacific coast or even American or European tourists, I feel the contact zone in its most explicit manifestation. Alterity engagement, one could say, is an essential part of Yagé shamanism in Putumayo. In this sense Shamanism, as Jean Langdon suggests, "is best viewed today as a dialogical phenomenon" which (...) "cannot be regarded as an isolated philosophy or logic without considering the social, political and historical contexts of its praxis"(2013:19). According to Terence Turner (1993), the present dynamism and constant reformulation of Amazonian shamanism result from various factors intrinsically related with modern forms of intercultural contact, including the recognition of shamanism by the state and NGOs as an essentially indigenous practice but also because of the acknowledgment of the shaman's role advantages in interethnic and political relations, negotiations and agreements. New anthropological works, following a wider trend in the discipline, have grounded shamanic traditions in the history and political economy of particular regions and explored the relations between culture and politics, locally and in relation to state formations (Atkinson, 1992). Hence, a large and growing body of literature has investigated the recent rise of shamans as political representatives and mediators (Brown, 1993; Conklin and Graham 1995; Conklin, 1997; Varese, 1996; Rubenstein, 2002). Drawing from these works it might be plausible to say that intercultural contact and indigenous involvement in western-style politics and market economy,

rather than solely destruction, has brought also new dynamics of shamanism and self-representation. As Taussig rightfully asserts “Modern commodity production has not disenchanting the world of the capitalist cultures. Instead, capitalist developments of the Third World have added to the power of its sorcerers and magicians” (Taussig, 1998: 445). The idea that I would like to explore here thus is that shamanism survives today precisely because of its intrinsic capacity to hybridize and be highly flexible and deeply attuned to the transformations and dilemmas of our contemporary world. The question nonetheless, is what does it mean to be ‘attuned to the transformations and dilemmas of our contemporary world’ in a convoluted region such as Putumayo? And furthermore, how the analysis of the synchronicity between shamanic practices and the changing socioeconomic conditions of Putumayo contributes to the unresolved debate on modernity and tradition?

To answer these questions I would like to analyse some emerging sorcery practices directly linked to the drug and violence- ridden context, which could be considered from the outside view, as some Amazonian anthropologist have argued, as ‘morally ambivalent’ (Gow 1994; Whitehead and Wright 2004; Whitten 1976; 1985; Cepek, 2008b). The understanding of the nature and sense in this moral ambivalence requires thus an ethnographic and anthropological scope that grounds shamanism in its contingent historical, social and political context. Using this as a point of departure, a more troubled reading of these practices emerge (Atkinson 1987; Taussig 1987; Santos-Granero, 2004).

My ultimate aim, this being a thesis that deals primarily with indigenous territoriality, is to explore how the territory, underground territories particularly, emerge currently as mythologized landscapes mediated by Yagé shamanic practices, where diverse imaginaries about all kinds of riches, dangers, powers and possibilities collide and fuse for both Indian and non-Indians. Accordingly, I shall focus on how contemporary ideas upon subterranean spaces may blend indigenous shamanic conceptions from pre-colonial times with elements from the modern warfare occurring in Putumayo, creating in turn mysterious and attractive places for both Indians and whites given its symbolic value, but also for its many treasures lying underground. Accordingly, I shall attempt to show how present-day indigenous territorial understandings are the product of complex interethnic dynamics or contact zones between different subjects, in which shamanism and sorcery play a vital role as a field of interaction in which such territorial perceptions are created, negotiated, and moulded.

Amazonian shamanism thrives on the ambivalence of contact

Doubtlessly, Michael Taussig's explorations of shamanism (1984 a, 1984 b, 1987) have opened up a new avenue of enquiry within this field, and I must recognize that this thesis is highly indebted to these works. Taussig has effectively laid bare the colonial processes in which the interpenetration of cultural symbols, ideologies, and practices in contexts of oppression, terror and capitalism, assume incredible cultural forms and shamanic manifestations. His questioning of the taken-for-granted division between the colonizer and the colonized cultural structures dovetails with my own doubts on this dichotomic perception in Putumayo.

Peter Gow's (1994) analysis of the social systems of the Bajo Urubamba River points in the same direction. He suggests that current forms of Yagé (Ayahuasca) shamanism practiced in Western Amazonia, which are focused on curing, are a relatively new phenomenon which have "evolved as a response to the specific colonial history" of this region (*Ibid*: 91). Hence that the values and knowledges associated with the use of ayahuasca must be seen as the product of the extended contact of indigenous peoples with whites and mestizos. Gow's historical hypothesis is challenging, especially his claim that the 17th and 18th Jesuit and Franciscan missions, the late 19th century rubber boom, and Amazonian urbanization during the 20th century have a much greater influence on Western Amazonian cultures than previously thought, especially as regards ayahuasca shamanic curing. Accordingly, Gow suggest that ayahuasca shamanism is deeply embedded in the contemporary structure of social and economic relations, mediating as a fundamental regulator of class hierarchies, racial classifications and commercial production and circulation (*Ibid*: 91).

Another example of Amazonian shamanism understood as an intercultural dialogical practice is Jean Langdon's works on indigenous curing practices in Putumayo. Langdon (1991) argues for an explanatory theory that acknowledges the ability of the individual to negotiate a successful role adaptation in the face of change. She insists that we must consider the social, cultural, historical, and demographic factors in interethnic relations that may condition the shamans' choices in some cases while not in others (62). Moreover, Langdon asserts "we must not make the mistake of separating the medical system from the rest of society and culture. Thus, change in the shaman's role is not produced only by competition with western medicine, but by the large number of changes occurring in the context of interethnic relations within which the medical system is embedded" (*Ibid*: 62). Her explorations are thus an attempt to unravel the complex scenario of hybridization and crossbreeding of health systems and exchange of networks of knowledge and

medicinal plants among indigenous Yagé specialists (Taitas), mestizo healers and western doctors.

The crucial argument in all these works, including this thesis, is that shamanism, and particularly the Yagé shamanism of Western Amazon has coevolved with processes of intercultural contact and dialogue, colonization, disputes and violence, and this implies inevitably, that the use of Yagé among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples entails simultaneously healing and attacking practices. Shamanism in this view is always a relational practice, and given the diversity of social actors and the asymmetry of power relations in multicultural regions such as the Colombian piedmont, “Amazonian shamanism thrives on ambivalence” (Fausto, 2004:172). The origin of such ambivalence, I suggest, is the inherent uncertainty in the process and result of shamanic entanglements with both human and non-human forms of alterity. Consequently there are always parallel possibilities of danger and illness while creating and capturing beneficial power during this incorporation of the Other or the “proper mixing” of forces, using Overing’s (1983–1984:333) terms. In short, for shamans, alterity is dangerous but it is precisely its ability to deal effectively, and perhaps even co-opt these forces and their potential hazards that makes it powerful.

The moral ambivalence of the shamanic experience was made especially evident to me during my stay in the Kofán settlement Jardines de Sucumbíos some years ago. During that time, a group of traditional A’I healers were discussing the possibility of working on a project aimed to recover traditional medicine knowledge, with a German NGO. Some Taitas and people from diverse resguardos gathered on a stormy night to drink Yagé in the house of Taita Q, and talk about the project. One of the main voices back then was Aurelio, a Kofán friend of mine. I was worried since during the whole night he was quite affected by the effects of the brew. The *chuma* (“drunkenness”) was particularly strong that night, and Aurelio was afflicted with a terrible nausea, vomit, diarrhea, and cold flashes in spite of being an experienced tomador de remedio (Yagé drinker) since he was six years old. That night however, he was in a lot of distress. The next morning we were resting in hammocks next to each other so I offered him a cigarette and asked about what happened. Surprisingly, he told me that the night had been great for him since the Yagécito (Yagé) brought the answers to all his doubts on the feasibility of the project with the Germans:

"I saw that this is going to be good for the people because that woman- you know, the tall, blond gringa¹²⁸ that came here to explain the project - Well, she appeared to me completely naked, and I felt the danger immediately; she was tempting me, but as if she wanted something from us in exchange. Something we can't give, maybe our knowledge, but I don't know. She was naked and calling me, not everybody, just me. That is why I was so bad last night, struggling with that sensation, and the chuma did not want to release me. But I was not afraid, so I followed her knowing that she was trying to fool me. But then I saw that. There was a big old trunk, and inside that beautiful old box, there was a lot of gold. She said, take it, this is for all of you and your people".

Might one suggest that Aurelio's anecdote is an example of the necessary simultaneity of danger and benefit as the very vital elements that constitute the shamanic field where the incorporation of alterity occurs? And thus, that the sexual symbolisms of the seductive nakedness and the attractive gold grant, together with the possible usurpation of knowledge -or whatever scared my friend-, are indeed combined in the Pinta (vision) to form a powerful yet ambivalent message? I believe this is probable since the incorporation of alterity, so promising as dangerous in this shamanic context, mirrors the engagement of the goods and technologies of modernity as both desirable and disruptive (West 1997). In this sense, one could argue that Aurelio's vision condenses explicitly the shamans' practicality to engage changing conditions of national and international contact, articulating such experiences' intrinsic fears and potentialities within the ethereal Yagé shamanic ground. This vision, following Marshall Sahlins (1997), is a reflection on how the limits of culture coexist with innovation and the exercise of creativity; in this interplay, cultural meanings are produced and recreated demonstrating the capacity of indigenous peoples to encompass and integrate global dynamics into their own worldview.

Alterity engagement thus, is an essential part of Yagé shamanism in Putumayo, which constantly creates intercultural contact zones in which diverse subjectivities interact establishing relationships or alliances, allowing Taitas -and people who ask for their services- to act upon the world in order to cure, obtain material or political benefits, assault or kill. However, these shamanic actions of the Taitas in Putumayo, for which to extend communication routes to alterity is an integral part of their social philosophy and shamanic experiences, are fraught with the perils of indeterminacy. Take for instance their ritual alliances or struggles with living or dead powerful Taitas who have the power to kill or make one stronger; or the fact

¹²⁸ Gringo is a term, mainly used in Central and South America, to refer to an English-speaking foreigner, especially white Americans.

that sucking the illness from the patient's body is the only way to further refine this technique, however, the Taita himself eventually would get sick; penetrating into the war murk through the pintas as outlined in chapter 12 is another form of acquiring power, but it is a very dangerous technique for the mental and physical health of the Taita. All these examples, as Greene (1998:651) explains, show how "The power source is raw, socially unformed, and thus ambivalent"; an aspect of the shamanism that has been clearly illustrated with ethnographic evidence from all over Amazonia revealing its complex and ambivalent nature (Goldman, 1963; Harner, 1972; Whitten, 1976; Taussig, 1987; Brown, 1989; Chaumeil, 1998)

Intercultural intimacy

Yagé ceremonies in Putumayo are not anymore an exclusively indigenous ritual. Hence it is common to see today not only people from the region but also national and even foreigners interested in drinking Yagé from the hands of 'rainforest's spiritual shamans' (for this same phenomenon in other Amazonian regions see Proctor 2000; Dobkin and Grob, 2005; Dobkin and Rumrill, 2008; Tupper 2008). To a great extent, these mystically endowed images of the Taitas (Yagé specialists-shamans), quite visible in the popular media in Colombia is the work of prominent musicians and TV people (see Uribe, 2008), and thus, the 'Indian wisdom' is sought today not only by Indians and poor colonist at the margins of the state, but also by a growing sector of "the urban middle classes around the globe" (Whitehead and Wright, 2004:1). However, what is subtler, yet forceful and eminently political is what these ceremonial experiences condense, this is, the powerful malleability of shamanic power, emerging from the Taitas' interaction with diverse subjectivities and worlds, especially the ones fraught with danger. During such ceremonies and with help of Yagé, Taitas lead the process of collision and enmeshing of a multiplicity of knowledges and versions of the world through their intimate contact with participants and patients. Intimacy is created within different forms of ritual contact zones along the night such as long conversations in which the ceremonial idioms of Yagé intersect with the idioms of rural poverty, violence, Catholicism, politics, sexuality, cocaine economy, fear and desire. Thus, you can see a Taita seating in his hammock talking for hours with an army general, a former guerrillero, a women from any city of Colombia suffering of cancer, or with the director of an important NGO. These conversations feed the middle ground between different people in which it is possible to see the intrinsic relation between ritual

performances and the circulation of shared images, symbols, expectations, desires and projections associated to globalization, modernity and capitalism.¹²⁹

The shaman's advice to their patients, laughing together, and very importantly, the *curación* (healing) ritual also opens other communication and intimate spaces of alterity contact. In these moments of communion, the Taita, 'as a maker of worlds' (Overing, 1990) explores in his *pintas* new intercultural realities, where he can capture power and knowledge from the interaction with different images, places, ideas and identities, thus, intersecting cultural narratives and versions of history. Here we find "an encounter of same with a difference"(Wade, 1999: 332), where hybridity emerges as a well delimited historical phenomenon resulting from the clash of two narratives or ways of understanding the world—labeled respectively tradition and modernity; a clash that is never quite resolved (Santos-Granero, 2009b).¹³⁰ In this regard, recall Aurelio's shamanic visions of fortune and the German NGO project, illustrating the Putumayo hybridity as an "in-between space" that comes into being through the blending of the traditions of the colonizers and the colonized (Taussig, 1987.). And finally, there is silence, perhaps the most powerful source of intimacy and ritual connection between participants, patients, and Taitas during the night. Silence, the element that encircles and binds this entire ritual contact zone, and where images of the Other, circulate in the dreams and visions of both Taitas and participant's, so ineffably way that ethnography is struggles to apprehend them.

Consubstantial Shamanism and Territory

In Amazonian indigenous societies, shamans have always been mediators par excellence, negotiating relations between human society and the spirit world (see chapter 6). Those skills, as I have attempted to show throughout this thesis, can move into other fields of interethnic contact as shamanic knowledge, perspectives, and imagery are being used in mediating relations with others such as missionaries, colonists, guerrillas, and the state (see Conklin, 2002: 1051). Accordingly, shamanism takes on a significance that must be understood in light of what colonial and postcolonial interactions have engendered in South America; a historically constituted intercultural, interethnic, and asymmetrical, contact zone. The significance is that Kofán and many other shamans in Amazonia, now appropriate

¹²⁹ This process of bridging and perhaps hybridizing diverse cultural perspectives through the moment of ritual has been noted in other shamanic acts and places. For instance in the Peruvian Amazon the works of Brown (1988) and Santos-Granero, (2004); but also in more distant regions such as in Cameroon (Geschiere, 1997), South Africa (Commaroff and Commaroff, 1999), and Zambia (Colson, 2000).

¹³⁰ I will continue with my argument about the interethnic ontology of shamanism before going further with the discussion on tradition and modernity for I shall discuss this point in more detail below.

much of their shamanic power from what are ultimately Western sources, including scientific medicine (Langdon, 1991, 2007b; Green, 1998), European magic (Taussig, 1987), capitalist forms of labour (Gow, 1994) and New Age tendencies (see a complete analysis of this in Graham, 2003). Despite the differences in all these processes, the underlying argument is that the acquisition of shamanic power and knowledge inevitably depends on the constant production of relationships with Others. According to this perspective therefore, the encounter and exchange with different peoples is vital for the epistemic production of shamanism in Putumayo. And this particular feature of shamanism in the Colombian piedmont is directly connected with how indigenous peoples such as the Kofán, construct and reformulate their territorial perceptions as part of long lasting intercultural processes of change, alliance and confrontation with different others. Let me now attempt to explain this connection.

The intercultural-dialogical character of Yagé shamanism is consubstantial to the relational and dialogical nature of the indigenous territory. As I have sustained along this work, the concept of *territorio*, or in Kofán language *pa'tssi ingi ande*, exists not only as a geographical and material space but rather as a wider set of complex and mutable historical relations, capable of absorbing, negotiating, or rejecting new alien forces, entities, discourses and practices. Both territory and the Yagé practices are born from the dynamic politics of history and thus, moulded in people's everyday life. And in circumstances of violence and havoc such as those prevailing in Putumayo, it is the flexibility and resilience of indigenous perceptions and uses of *pa'tssi ingi ande* and shamanism, I contend, that allows them to cope, resist, and culturally reappropriate the wide set of external forces intended to dominate, fix or homogenize their cultural and territorial perceptions. Accordingly, the compelling questions I would like now turn my attention to are what glues indigenous shamanism with the culture and expectancies of the Other in present-day Putumayo? What kind of territorial epistemology connects indigenous and non-indigenous peoples today, making possible my point about contact zones and how these shared territorial understandings have prompted new interethnic shamanic practices? I would like to propose that the most interesting and potentially insightful explanation of these cultural entanglements might lie in the observation of the shared creation, which I call mythologized landscapes, between indigenous and nonindigenous peoples of the piedmont

Mythologized landscapes

At the beginning of this thesis I mentioned the Spanish search for El Dorado during the 16th and 17th centuries as an interesting example of how the practice of

mythologizing Others and their landscapes was not exclusively indigenous. The Spaniards that conquered the new world extracted immense quantities of gold and silver while killing, torturing and terrorizing the native population. In parallel to this very real process of extractivism, the Spaniards created fantastic visions of the space derived from mediaeval and even older imaginaries about the savage others and their wealthy but very dangerous territories. After the nation's independence from Spain, ideas about the Other continued to be elaborated by diverse powers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries through intellectual, economic and political actions of the emergent creole elite. Ultimately, they produced exotic myths about wild tribes and pristine natures ready to be saved and civilized by capitalist extractivism and the integration into the new nation-state (Rappaport, 1992; Serje, 2005; Nygren, 2006; Wylie, 2010: 48).

For diverse reasons, indigenous populations appropriated and reinforced such myths creating mutually feed realities between colonizers and colonized, about humanity and their natural and social landscapes (see Greenblatt, 1992; Taussig, 1993; Whitehead, 1997). These processes have been occurring in other South American regions for centuries. Irene Silverblatt (1988) for instance, in her study of colonial Peru, examines indigenous socio-religious transformations under colonial rule. Indigenous peoples from the Andes fused Santiago, the Spanish saint of conquest against the Moors, with Illapa, the Andean god of lightning located in the mountainous landscape, creating new discourses of colonial power using religious symbols and language. Her work illustrates the kind of symbolic and territorial enmeshing of the perspectives of colonizer and colonized. As the effect of subsequent intercultural dynamics further, today, in many regions of the Andes, the mountain deities are represented as gringos wearing high leather boots with large spurs (Harris, 1995) or as noted by Earls (1969) there is also an entire indigenous Andean mythology that identifies mountain deities with lawyers, priests and policemen. Another more recent example of alterity and blending of cosmologies was provided by Michael Taussig in *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993). The author takes as his problem the presence of curing figurines among the Kuna Indians of San Blas, Panama, which resemble colonial Europeans. Why would figurines of such intrinsic importance to Kuna healing rites take the form of colonial Europeans? Following Walter Benjamin, Taussig provides a provisional answer. "The ability to mime, and mime well . . . is the capacity to Other" (19). Through this capacity what Taussig calls the "mimetic faculty," one is able to grasp that which is strange, other, through resemblances, through copies of it. The power of the mimetic faculty devolves from its fundamental sensuality: miming something entails contact, negotiation and the circulation of visions and expectations about the Other. In their analysis of the Awajun, Wampis, and Ashaninka people in contemporary Peru, Santos Granero and

Barclay (2011), gather diverse accounts about pishtacos and pelacaras. These are malign entities that look like gringos, who kill indigenous people to extract their fat or skin for a variety of purposes. The appearance of these hazardous beings is associated by locals with intercultural violent contacts, which in this work coincide with the indigenous experience at present of hard-line government policies promoting private investment, and the frenzied activities of extractive corporations eager to profit from the region's natural resources in eastern Peru (*Ibid*: 143). This research as well, shows how within contact zones under globalized conditions and modern capitalism, the circulation of ideas, fears and desires upon the other are fundamental part of how spatial and social perceptions are created by indigenous peoples. These works henceforth, among many others, support Pratt's (1992: 34) point, on how colonialism is a social space where cultures meet, penetrate, influence, shape and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power and violence.

Today, the shared interethnic construction of mythological territories and its peoples in places such as Putumayo are not that different. As the novelist Alejo Carpentier said, "Latin America is a long way away from exhausting the immense wealth of its mythologies"¹³¹. This region is thus an ideal place to illustrate Carpentier's point through what I call 'mythologized landscapes of wealth and richness'. These landscapes are the imagined, fictionalized, and fantastic but very tangible, articulation of numerous indigenous and non-indigenous cultural discourses and economic practices most of them revolving around the use of resources such as oil, gold, metals, and more recently cocaine and productive lands. However, as I have explored in previous chapters, political struggles over all these resources result not only in opposed and confronted relations but also in situations of alliance, collaboration, and partnership between indigenous peoples and powerful Others in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Accordingly, I shall focus my attention in how these shared imaginaries of promising territories have prompted new shamanic skills, practices and techniques. And consequently, how new ritual relations with the space aimed to reach those fantastic but also very real possibilities are created as part of the encounter of indigenous populations with modernity.

Resource extractivism and shamanism: intercultural productions of the territory

In a region close to the Inga reserves of *Yunguillo* and *Condagua*, Manuelito mentioned that around ten years ago he had been hired as a guide by ECOPETROL,

¹³¹ *About the Latin American Real Maravilloso* (1949). Alejo Carpentier. Commentary, Notes, and Translation by William Little (2008) <http://dept.sfcollege.edu/HFL/hum2461/pdfs/carpentieressay.pdf> 2013

the largest national oil company, to join a commission of young engineers from Bogota. His account, which follows, helps open the discussion about how the 'science of the western men' blends so well with the 'Indian cosmology' around territorial issues, remembering that even in the most scientific Western worlds, past, present and I would add, the space, will be mythologised:

"ECOPETROL was looking to start the sismica¹³² explorations. They wanted to find oil within the cordillera mountains that surround our lands but they could not come here like that, I mean, without asking permission. Not only because we have our own laws that the government cannot just step over but also because those territories are dangerous. A lot of us have in fact died for there are a lot of uncanny places with malign beings. I warned the company's employees that they had to talk with the community first and ask for permission but that was not enough; they had to be protected from those threats. The company's employees asked me: do you want to help us? We will pay you. During those days my boys were studying in Bogota so I accepted for I had to pay for their tuition fees. They said that I had to use my knowledge as a Taita to work an agreement with the community, but also, to show them (the company's workers) where would be possible to find oil under the ground; they also said that I had to go with my traditional attire there, not only to take some pictures of me with them, but also because they wanted me to deal with the hazard spirits we could find in the mountains".

According to Manuelito, the company hired him with a twofold intent. On the one hand it was political; the company needed a traditional leader on their side, not surprisingly they hired Manuelito for his charisma and leadership in the region. On the other hand, the company's workers desired his shamanic capacity to find specific places in the jungle since they were looking for new potential oil wells. Furthermore, the company's local workers were also afraid of the malign spirits of the jungle, since many indigenous people from the region had warned them about the uncanny perils hidden in this part of the cordillera between the Putumayo and Caquetá departments. This region, now partially and contentiously within the *Churumbelos* and *Fragua* natural parks, is sacred for the Inga people, and therefore, these are locations that must not be transgressed by strangers. The urban engineers that came from Bogota, the capital of the country, to direct the team of local workers, insisted that the old Yagé drinker, Manuelito, had to be dressed in his

¹³² The "sismica" is a hydrocarbon exploration tool that allows engineers to know approximately the subsurface formation, the composition of the layers of rock, the way in which they are located, their depth and dimensions. These are studies that run on a specific physical space and simulate the subsurface structure, allow the creation of maps showing these structures. With the seismic results geologists can identify if there are oil reservoirs in the area.

traditional attire, with his jaguar fang's necklaces, feather crown, and paraphernalia made of beads. Manuelito served, I would suggest, as a living talisman, and thus, as a form of protection from the intangible dangers of the forest, but also to find the very tangible 'oil treasures' embedded in it.

So here is precisely where we might see an intercultural contact zone emerging and providing the wide space for the circulation of symbolisms and expectancies revolving around alterity, shamanism and territorial conceptions. Here furthermore, we see the overlap of two different cosmographies and territorialities, which in frontier regions are not only the common driver of conflict between the extractivist model and native visions of the environment, but as this case illustrates, they are also the source of "Simultaneous situations of mutual influence, unilateral accommodation, and interpenetration (...) resulting in the continual transformation of cosmographies and territories" (Little, 2001:7). Accordingly, the Amazon piedmont has been transformed, I suggest, into a landscape, or we might say better, an underground landscape of imagined possibilities for both indigenous peoples and the national society, so powerful and promising as eminently conflictive. But this is not merely a material perception of the landscape as source of money; the dialectics between magic, healing, interculturality, capitalism, and violence are far more complex.

Interested thus by these relations between space, culture, war, and nature, I spent a great deal of my time in the field time trying to find and understand those modern entanglements between contemporary expressions of sorcery that are consequence of situations of contact and articulation with non-indigenous agents. These situations are interesting for they evince the type of enthralling shamanism that blatantly contradicts fetishized representations of Taitas as mystics disconnected from the convoluted and disrupted social, political, and economic world in which they live. And more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, they show how the way indigenous peoples perceive their territories currently cannot be detached from complex historical processes in which cultural differences are negotiated in a theater where the colonizer and colonized images of the other become interlocked. My aim is to highlight the complexities, dilemmas and daily contradictions facing ordinary members of small-scale societies and their shamans as they are incorporated into the capitalist economy and war dynamics, along with the kinds of new and fascinating territorial perceptions and creative practices that these processes often ensue. Let me present first the complete subterranean adventure of Taita Miguelito, where he and his family ended up embarked in a quest to find war treasures guided by a guerrillero. Secondly, I expose some relevant excerpts of diverse ethnographic stories collected throughout the middle Putumayo.

Guerrilla-Shamanic alliances and the underworld of riches in Putumayo

“I’m going to tell you something that we have been working on with my eldest son, the one that has grown to be a strong Taita” said Miguelito, almost whispering while we were drinking coffee in his house on a cloudy morning after a heavy overnight downpour. In front of us, the dogs were barking at the trucks that moved quickly across the highroad that had severed this Inga territory a few years ago. Miguelito cleared his throat and started to talk:

“As you already know, there is a lot of people coming to my son’s house looking for all kind of cures to every illness that god left amongst all of us. But some years ago, a black man arrived during the evening because he wanted to drink Yagé with my son. This guy looked fine and my son, who is very kind with every patient, allowed him to stay. The next morning they started to chat and became friends. This black man was stronger than a bull. Very tall with bulky muscles, so he asked my son to give him some temporary job, maybe help with the cattle we have. The guy resulted to be a very good worker, going from here to there, doing everything with good will, so eventually, my son ended up being very close to that morocho (dark skinned person). One day I was going to drink Yagé. I was walking alongside the river looking for some plants and my cellphone rang. It was my son asking me if the black men could go to my ‘casa de remedio’ (house of Yagé). No problem, I said. He arrived and I told him, ok morocho, you can drink here with me but I need you to help me with the Yagé preparation. We carried a big pot with river water and he started chopping some wood for the fire. I tell you, this man was like a chainsaw! Then, he prepared the fire and the rest of the arrangements. Around 9pm we drank the first cup and start talking. He said, “Taita Miguel, please don’t you be afraid but you must know that until a couple of weeks I was in the FARC as a field commander. What happened during the last big attack¹³³ we endured in the Ecuador border is that all my comrades left me wounded, and fighting alone all the heavy fire. I resisted the best I could, but at some point I had to escape alone through the river. I did not want to go back with those fuckers that abandoned me so I decided to become a ‘reinsertado’ (amnestied rebel) and travelled to the

¹³³ The attack, denominated “Operation Phoenix”, took place in the early morning of March 1, 2008; several squads of the Colombian armed forces shot down between 20 and 22 guerrilleros on the other side of the Colombian frontier, in a jungle area called Angostura near the Santa Rosa de Yanamaru settlement in the Ecuadorian province of Sucumbios. During the ambush the FARC commander Raúl Reyes, No. 2 in the command structure of the guerrilla was killed. After launching bombs from the “Arpia” and “Ghost” planes, the “Supertucanes” helicopters continued the attack of the camp; with heavy fire and infantry soldiers descending from helicopters, the Colombian Air Force completely destroyed the guerrilla’s camp (see Revista Semana “La verdad sobre el bombardeo” <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-verdad-del-bombardeo/110971-3>).

National Military Brigade in Cali. They sheltered me and then gave me a card that certifies that I am not a guerrillero anymore". We continued drinking Yagé with the black man that night, and I was curious about the fear all 'reinsertados' have about of being murdered by the AUC after they have decided to stop fighting. In the morning he said that he was here with me for one particular reason. Somebody had told him about my capacity to find places in the jungle and see the future with the Yagé power. He wanted to know if I could advise him about going back to the place where he was attacked, in the middle of the monte, because he was desperate to find some abandoned buried Caletas¹³⁴ filled with millions of dollars and big cocaine packages underground. The black man said that he wanted me to predict if he would be successful in this dangerous task of finding the buried treasure; he wanted me to "see" if he was going to survive, because this guy was not stupid and he had already contacted other FARC's deserters with some information about what had happened in the aftermath of the bombing. These other guerrilleros told him to stay away from there. That the place was plagued with landmines and guerrilleros looking for the same caletas, and they already knew about his decision to become a reinsertado, so they were going to hunt him. He asked me about what could I see. I told him that I was going to help him with that, but that I had to prepare a good Yagé first, and then see those places from here with the Yagecito during the night; I had to watch the situation of those territories. But I could not join him in the actual search of the caletas because I felt too old to go to those far-away places, especially if the situation was so dangerous. However, my son, the Taita apprentice said that he had no fear because he already knew the area given his long experience curing guerrilleros some years ago, precisely around the place of the bombing. So, they met in Puerto Asís a couple of days after. The black man and his girlfriend, who used to be in the FARC as well, my son, and the motorist, he is an Inga Indian from around here. They prepared everything to go to Ecuador. Firstly, they found the headwaters of a creek. That was exactly where FARC commandant Raul Reyes¹³⁵ died. The jungle was open, big holes in the land and fallen burned trees because of the rain of bombs; I had seen all these with the Yagé pinta (vision) but even better, in some corner I saw a massive tree. It was a Yarumo tree and its trunk was bended. Under the tree roots I was able to see the underground

¹³⁴ Underground hiding places used by the guerrillas and druglords to secure big amounts of money (pesos and dollars), weapons, military uniforms, ammunition, and drugs; given the high mobility of the FARC guerrilla within the jungle, it is a common practice to leave *caletas* (using 55 gallon metal drums) scattered around the walking routes in order to have permanent access to provisions. In Colombia there have been several cases of soldiers who seek and find buried FARC or Narcos' *caletas*. The most renowned case occurred in 2003 in the jungles of Caquetá department. In March 2013, one military judge issued conviction against 147 military (15 officers, 3 NCOs and 129 soldiers) involved in finding and keeping a "guaca" of the FARC in which have at least 40 billion of pesos.

¹³⁵ See footnote 5

caletas they were looking for. I could not say where exactly the tree was, but I do assured the black man that no one had touched the caletas so he would find them still buried in the camp. With sticks they dug holes in the ground near that immense tree. It was true! They first found a big hole filled with coca packages. But they agreed that that was not what they were looking for, but the money. So they continued digging with the sticks. Tac, Tac, Tac!!! There was the metal drum! Half of it was full of fifty thousand pesos bills, the rest were dollars. But the drum was too heavy to carry between only two people and the rest of the crew had remained in the boat watching. They decided to pack the dollars and leave the rest. If god allowed they will be back other day to get the rest and started to fill so many backpacks with just dollars that at the end they could barely carry them thought the wet and muddy earth. When they were ready to leave the place, the black man said that he was going to split the money bags right there; but my son had been able to see a little bit more than me with the Yagé and forecasted an attack at some point; he told his partner that they will distribute the money when they arrived to Puerto Asís. He felt the danger very close and did not wanted to stay longer there. As they left the forest to reach the boat, seven FARC guerrilleros were waiting for them, and not just soldiers but the kind of hard ones, other commanders like the black man. Fuck! said my son who was able to see them from the distance because he was a little further back from his partner. But the black man was already on the spot and there was nothing to do, they have already seen him. My son waited a little bit and then took a different way to reach the boat from a different exit. But the guerrilleros found him. Do you know this guy? They asked pointing at the black man. No sir, I don't know whom this guy is. I'm here because I'm trying to get to Buenavista. I am Taita, a traditional healer, so this guy offered to take me there so I can do my job and cure some sick people there. We stopped here because we wanted to fish for lunch and since he know these creeks better than me I followed him. But I don't know him. That is what my boy told those guerrilleros, he was prepared for this, and thus he only followed the black man's orders in case his former colleagues found them. While they were interrogated, the rest of the guerrilleros counted the money with calculators under a Guayabo tree shadow. My son heard the soldiers laughing and yielding that there was at least 5000 dollars and about 150 million pesos.

The black man was heavily questioned and beaten. They screamed at him saying that he was a coward, you fucking traitor! they barked in his face. But the black man was equally furious and brave, and responded saying that the cowards were them who abandoned him. And that he left the guerrilla wounded, alone, and without a peso in his pockets. But the soldiers were rather

more concerned about the rest of the caletas and how the fuck he had been able to find these ones if only commander Raul Reyes knew its exact location. And my poor Indian son right there, in silence when they asked this. But the black man insisted. This is mine, he yelled, this is what I deserve after all these years of getting rotten in the middle of this jungle. The soldiers nonetheless did not care and continued the interrogation. We know that if you were able to find these caletas is because you know where the rest are, so you are going to show us exactly the place. One of the commanders started to draw with a branch some sort of map in the earth. Here is a little path, here is the river and here is where you find these ones, so tell me or I will kill you negro, where are the rest? Meanwhile, my son was opening his eyes like a rabbit trying to see and memorize the map, and thinking, 'my dad and I are going to have a lot work more to find those caletas' in that map (laughter). Perhaps, thought my son, it would be better to come back again during the night, but we are going to need more people, and no motorboat to avoid the noise...but first, said my son, I'm going to drink more Yagé before the next search when these peoples release me"

So what happened with the black guy and your son? I asked Manuelito.

Well, my son was released with the other Indian. The girl I don't know what happened with her, but the black guy was really lucky. I did not know this but apparently, there is a rule in the guerrilla that if you are travelling on a boat they are not supposed to tie the person. Two guerrilleros were watching him on the back of the boat, but as I told you the black man is very strong and he was well trained to fight. In a careless moment of his guards, a fist flew in the face of one of them, then the other, and he quickly jumped into the waters of the Putumayo River. Flooop! He sank like a fish. Around midday, the black guy reached the cost of a chaparral. He waited a little bit and then walked into the forest. Then he waited in a tree until dark and walk again looking for somebody he may knew. Since he had been living in those forests for years he moved around with no problem so after half an hour he finally found a small shack surrounded with sugar cane and a little chagra. This was the house of an Indian that knew the black man since long ago. The Indian offered food and shelter for a few days. This is how my black man friend returned to Puerto Asís. But let me tell you what happened after. From Puerto Asís he called my son, which already knew that the black man was alive because during the time he was lost in the jungle my boy drank Yagé every night to see what happened to his partner, and he saw him escaping.

So now we continue with this. Sometimes people come here asking us to find something buried in the jungle soil and sometimes they ask us to go with them. And I tell you my friend; I will definitively go there if I was younger. I would join them on those boat trips looking for more caletas because I can see them from here, from my casa de Yagé. Yes, I would like to do what my son is doing, be there with him drinking Yagé in those riverbanks and jungles, the places where these things are grounded. Just following the directions of the Yagé because 'He' indicates where to look. And then, when you find them within your thoughts you can actually go there, to the jungle, in silence, slowly, with the right protection spells. The boat driver must wait silently in the dark but not in the same place you disembarked but the opposite. As my son says, you need to know how to do it; you must know in advance all the dangers, especially because every area of caletas is planted with landmines everywhere.

Miguelito's account is quite illustrative of how Yagé shamanism operates "as a dialogical category resulting from the interaction between actors with different origins, discourses, and interests, and not as a historically and politically disembedded philosophy, logic, or spiritual consciousness" (Langdon and Santana de Rose, 2012:37). Shamans experiencing new interethnic relationships and changing socioeconomic conditions in Putumayo have adapted and transformed their roles and practices beyond the medical field as Langdon (1991) has clearly shown, but also in other spaces of shamanic epistemic production related to the context of war, capitalism, and interculturality. For them, as I shall explore in more detail below, this implies the ongoing negotiation of modernity and tradition (Sahlins 1993:20). Like shamanism, the territory in Putumayo is constantly produced out of the contingent and changeable encounter of alterity, and so both shamanisms and territory might be better seen as individual and collective socio-spatial relationships and not as bounded knowledges and practices. And this is precisely why we find multinationals such as the British mining company Anglo American PLC, the Anglo Gold Ashanti or ECOPETROL in Putumayo, desperately exploring for oil, gold, and valued minerals embedded in geological underground realms with the magic of modern technology while including the shamans' powers and sorcery knowledge Manuelito's testimony bear witness of. Or contemporary alliances between ex guerrilleros and Taitas hired to dive into the underground so they can predict the chances of success of such a fantastic as real operation as it is the extraction the buried guerrilla's treasures. I would like to pose another ethnographic example of this relation between alterity, shamanism and territory, before continuing with the analysis.

Frustrated visions of subterranean treasures

On a different occasion I was talking with a Yagé apprentice called José. He was a middle age Indian, born in the outskirts of Mocoa. José told me that some years ago he used to travel around the region curing sick people from Puerto Leguizamo in the lowlands to the Sibundoy Valley in the Upper Putumayo. One night he was resting in the house of a peasant family in the Villalobos municipality when the guerrilla arrived. The rebels asked for shelter just for a couple of days arguing that they needed to leave some things in the forested area behind the house while they finish patrolling the area. The guerrilleros entered the house and began to organize many plastic bags filled with money; they divided the packages in small amounts, very well wrapped and marked, making several piles of them. The peasant, his wife and José just stood there watching the disconcerting scene. The rebels spent much of the night in this process and the next morning went to the nearby forest and started burying the packets under the wet rainforest soil. Unfortunately for the FARC guerrilleros, a small group of soldiers from the national army was closely following their track and surprised them in an open field at the moment they came out of the forest. José described the confrontation as brutal. Most of the FARC's 'mobile column' (small group of combatants) was killed and the few guerrilla survivors quickly scattered in the misty foothills of the Andes. Most of them died because of the wounds close to the town of Descanse, just a few kilometres away. Meanwhile the national army commander gave orders to collect the remaining money bags still inside the house, completely unaware that the guerrilleros had left most of the loot buried a couple of miles from the house. José and the other witnesses did not say a word to the soldiers about those other bags, just waited patiently until they left. With a threatening look, the commander said to my friend that it was best not to say anything about this operation and of course about the bags that they were retaining as "illegal material and evidence". The three of them did not care about the few bags grabbed by the army since they were focused on the rest of the buried money. Finally, when the pitch-dark night arrived, José and the rest went into the forest with flashlights. After several hours of unsuccessful search and worried about the possibility of a snakebite, they realized how difficult was to continue. José proposed that the only way to find the money was to drink Yagé so he could see the exact underground location of the packages. Because:

"When one takes a good Yagé, it is possible to walk anywhere because 'He' shows you the way clearly. If you take the remedio quietly, very concentrated, it enters into to you and you can see everything, even in things are under the ground, you know where they are. You just need to direct your vision at the site, the ground, the earth and you see inside very clearly. When you are drunk with Yagé you can make the darkness that blind you to go away and then, you see

the exact parts of the territory where things are hidden. (...) For example, if I drank remedio I can go far away, and if the people staying here start to talk bad things about me, behind my back, like 'that José Indian, he don't know anything, he don't know how to cure, t he is a charlatan' it does not matter that I am not present, I would be able to see and hear them very clear, from the distance. But to have that ability you must work hard and it is only possible thanks to Jesus Christ"

The next night, the three of them decided to drink and test if José was able to find the buried money. For three nights on a row José prepared strong Yagé with no luck, even to the point that he added some *borrachero* (*Brugmansia* sp. a traditional ritual and medicine plant in the Putumayo and some regions of the Amazon basin, known among indigenous peoples for his power to help in the search for missing persons or things). However, they never found the packages. During my conversation I could not help to notice how excited he was to talk about this. He was obsessed with finding another Taita with stronger visions that might help him find the money. At this point one gets the sense the search is not just about money, but the shamanic challenge of being able to find it.

In José's story I see another instance of intercultural blending of territorial constructions and expectations as a process intrinsic to the war contact zone. As in Miguelito's account, we find the same ritual relationship with the underground, a space in which shamanism is the quintessential tool to found war related fortunes. But more importantly for us, this is an interesting example to understand how indigenous peoples experience, grapple with, cope with, challenge and endure today the lived realities of violence, militarization and current colonialism in Putumayo. And how therefore, contemporary indigenous conceptions of their territories are largely the product of the articulation of different expectations, imaginaries and desires that unfold within the field of shamanism.

Shamanism and military intelligence

In a different occasion, Miguelito shared with me a story that serves to explore the coproduction of the territory between armed actors and Indians, and the role of shamanism in this process in Putumayo:

"This happened after the Mulato River avalanche. It was around 8pm, my son and the black man arrived, but the storm had not stopped. All that water and mud was coming down from those mountains directly to my house, destroying where I kept the chickens. My son went out to fix the roof and protect those

poor animals from the rain, but then he noticed something moving amidst some banana trees close to the house. It was the guerrilla. I don't know why but my son followed them until the bridge¹³⁶. He waited there, hidden in the midst and watching the guerrilleros working. They were fixing big amounts of dynamite to the bridge. At midnight my son decided to inform the army that the FARC was going to blow up the bridge, and thus, crawling through the mud and then running he went for help. The army arrived when the guerrilleros had gone but they were able to stop the bomb. In the morning they came looking for my son. 'Congratulations, you are a straight man' they said. And from that moment onwards, the lieutenant of the battalion trusted him so much that one day a soldier came looking for him for a special favor for the army. The lieutenant needed him urgently. You know what they wanted from my son? (laughs) They wanted him to drink Yagé and help them to track some FARC guerrilleros camping down the river. They did not know that my son had helped a few times those same guerrilleros to find other things (laughs). Ok he said. I'm going to help you my lieutenant. But the operation was bigger than we thought. Three commanders arrived each one with 20 to 30 soldiers on their charge, and my son, walking through the jungle with all those soldiers! Finally, they arrived to the place where they were going to analyse the situation. My son drank his Yagecito that night and the pinta was transparent, he saw easily the tracks of the guerrilleros close to a small creek and some peasant's farms, the same way you see the "rastros" (footprints) of the animal when you are hunting. In the morning, the militaries and my boy sat together and looked at the maps. 'Here they are', indicated my son, and pointing the map he said: 'They just went through this path and then walked along this riverbank'. With that information the army found the guerrilleros' trail, I think they found the carcass of a stolen cow that they had left behind, and following that lead they found them.

Curación guerrillera (Rebel's curing)

I found another example of the modern entanglements of shamanism and war in Francisco's accounts. He is a middle-aged Taita, with whom I had the opportunity to talk in the outskirts of Puerto Asís:

"I used to cure people from different places, even if I had to go on car, boat, bus, or whatever to find them, but I like to travel alone. And this is what happened

¹³⁶ Bridge over the Caquetá River that divides the Cauca Department from the Putumayo Department. This region belongs to the Inga ancestral territories.

to me after helping some patients down there in Cartagena del Chaira¹³⁷. That morning I was going on a truck and the FARC guerrilleros stopped me at some point of the road. They said I had to leave my bags and everything there and come with them. I just took my medicine's bag with me. We walked a lot, through muddy paths and forest, crossing rivers and finally taking a motorboat for I don't know how many hours. Finally we reached a small port in the riverbank amid the jungle. A young boy, around thirteen years old, asked me to follow him in silence. After walking for some time we reached the camp of the people that were in charge of protecting someone very important, someone belonging to the FARC's Secretariat¹³⁸. I was surprised seeing that place. The women were "armed to the teeth", boys carrying machineguns, and guerrilleros everywhere. They asked me to wait until a commandant, I guess, approached me and said: we called you because we know who you are and the quality of your work. You never get in trouble, always move alone and never bother anyone. We also know that you are a good and well-known traditional healer, that you know how to find lost things and that is why we need you here'. 'This is the problem' the commander continued: 'one of the Mono Jojoy's ¹³⁹ most important troops lost some important material after an ambush. Weapons mostly but boxes with medicines as well. We need you to help us find that material before the army gets it'. When he said that this was work for the Mono Jojoy I was truly scared. What if as it happens sometimes the remedio does not want to show me anything? I will end up in a ditch for sure, I thought. To get out of the problem without being killed I said to the commander that I could not find anything since we were so far from the places I know, so it was impossible for me to look around such a vast area, even with a powerful Yagé. However, since I did not want to disappoint him so I agreed instead to cure all the sick soldiers in that camp. Ok, said the commander, and I felt immediately as if somebody released my neck from the hanging rope. 'Have some rest and tomorrow do what you have to, tomorrow you will have a lot of work since many of my guys are wounded or sick'. That day I prepared a lot of Yagé honey, very strong. The next night, I gave to all those guerrilleros a good portion of honey. Suddenly most of them were wallowing on the floor as if they were about to die. I sang, and shake my cleaning fan on them. Then I proceed to cure them from so many illnesses. With herbal ointments I removed so many problems from those people's bodies. The next morning they were feeling much

¹³⁷ Cartagena del Chairá is a town and municipality in the Colombian Department of Caquetá, with high influence of the FARC guerrilla.

¹³⁸ The Secretariat of the Central High Command (*Secretariado del Estado Mayor Central*) is the superior organism of direction and command of the FARC-EP

¹³⁹ Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas (aka Jorge Briceño Suárez - aka Mono Jojoy) was the No. 2 leader and field marshal of the FARC. Jojoy died after two days of bombardments in September 22, 2010.

better and strong. The commander approached me again and thanked me for my help. He said that he was going to trust me from that day and gave me a good sum of money. I left that camp very happy. Within the next months I helped them a few times more. But mostly, I continued curing patients along the Putumayo River, in Bogota, Cali and other parts of Colombia. The last time I went to Cali a commander from the brigade called me. He said that the army needed me to find some guerrilleros who allegedly worked directly for the Mono Jojoy. Can you believe the coincidence? He asked me because at that moment I was already known for doing Yagé ceremonies nearby the region where those guys were supposed to be, but also because some of that commander's soldiers often visited me looking for luck charms. I cured them and prepared medicine to protect their bodies from possible shots. This is why they acknowledged me. Well, since that region where they wanted to hunt the guerrilleros is a dense forest, very difficult to go through, the army decided to travel by helicopter. I drank Yagé the night before but I could not see anything. There was nobody on those territories. The next morning they said that with or without the Yagé vision they were going to take me there. I prayed before getting into that helicopter, and then we were flying over the river but nothing, no trail, no sign of those peoples.

Did they ask you to work with them after that?

"Not anymore but if they ask me I will go without hesitating. I can work with the army, the SIJIN, the police, the guerrilla; I don't care, except with the Paras. With them is different. I work with the rest because seeing or curing with the Yagé is something in favor of the humanity. That is what the Yagé is for, so I do not make distinctions of any kind. If I can help you I will".

Amazonian shamanism, vertical journeys and modernity

Many anthropologists have argued that certain notions, techniques, and beliefs associated with contemporary shamanism provide interpretations on the meaning and importance of modernity as experienced in different cultural settings (Geschiere and Fisiy, 1994; Shaw, 2002; Sanders, 2003; Santos-Granero, 2004). Hence, "the relationship of modernity and ritual itself (...) is historically wrought. It is animated by men and women as they seek to make their worlds manageable and meaningful- giving vent in the process to their imaginings of the past, present, future" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxix). This is, I argue, the driver behind the fantastic construction of intercultural mythologized landscapes, in which indigenous shamans but also oil companies, FARC, and army soldiers dream, conceive and

actually find oil, buried *caletas*, money packages and hidden enemies and things in the forest, as part of a dialogical reformulation of the space and sorcery scope.

It is important to be clear that the modern entanglements of shamanism with the armed actors operating in Putumayo not be confused as a form of indigenous ideological affiliation with them. This is certainly not the case. Nor has it been my intention to argue that Taitas in Putumayo have recently developed new practices to find war treasures in the underground only to satisfy a modern appetite for money due to the commodification of the landscape, or simply to deceive/satisfy the diversity of vicious armed actors, or because they did not have any other option. It should be pointed out that while these practices emerge doubtlessly motivated by economic changes and the need to cope with poverty and intense military pressures, it was also the very nature of the Kofán and Inga shamanism, which prompted and guided the formation of such entanglements. In fact, ritual searching in subterranean geographies is part of a very long-standing Pan-Amazonian repertoire of shamanic practices and relations with the landscape.

Aimed to contribute to the obscure and problematic debate on tradition and modernity, I would like in what follows to explore this process of ongoing mutational forms of sorcery, in which 'traditional' indigenous Amazonian practices from the past act, or I would say, flow, in permanent accommodation to new 'modern' circumstances.

Within several Amazonian cosmologies journeys to worlds below are inherently sacred and have been vital part of peoples' constructions of history, identity, kinship, and social relations. For instance, Chaumeil's (2002) ethnographic exploration of the Yagua people's subaquatic channels and enchanted cities; Reichel Dolmatoff's (1996) work on the leveled-world cosmology of Tukano and Desana people; or Van der Hammen's ethnography on the Yucuna in Colombia, are among many other Amazonian ethnographies that make reference to the Amazonian wide spread practice of roaming under earth as a living landscape. In Putumayo, the same relation with the underground applies for the remaining Kofán Taitas who believe in hidden underground realms inhabited by entities and forces that hold the power and knowledge so necessary to inhabit the earth surface. As I have described in chapter 6, this is the case of the Kofán mythology about the *cuancuas*'. According to Califano and Angel (1995) in one of the very few ethnographic works on the Ecuadorian A'i Kofán people, the *cuancuas* are the owners of the wild pigs and keepers of the *barbasco*¹⁴⁰, the fishing poison. These beings dwell under the earth,

¹⁴⁰ Barbasco is obtained for the species: *Lonchocarpus nicou*; *Jacquinia spruce*; *Tephrosia toxicofera*.

and therefore, the Taitas that want to have access to them in order to negotiate the availability of animals or found new knowledges must go on a vertical journey:

“There is a part where there are large gaps in the earth... inside those holes went all the pigs. Then, the man went down and came out in a clarito (forest open patch), just like up here. There are all kinds of fruits, pigs, armadillos and several indigenous crops down there. The Owners of the pigs live there, the cuancuas, so the man stayed with them for a year. Then he asked the cuancuas what do you eat? We eat everything, fruits, game meat, wild pigs, and they went to bring some pigs, which they killed right there and offered to the man. Then after, the cuancuas brought clay to make pots, so the man could eat what they were cooking. Those Cuancuas are people- so they won't hurt you- and they live within the earth”. (1995:35)

“The Seña'mba (Barbasco) was shown to us (the Kofán people) by the cuancua. He said say he was going with a Kofán girl to barbasquear (fishing with this poison). But the cuancua forgot to take the barbasco with him, so the girl was thinking how is he going to catch the fish without it? Meanwhile, the cuancua went to a small creek and began to wash his penis in the water, and while he washed, all the little fish died. And so now we know how to barbasquear, just mashing the barbasco and its white milk will be released and wet all over. Then the fish will take that milk and die. That is how the cuancua, who is the owner of the barbasco, did it with his penis and this is how the Kofán people knew how to use it”. (*Ibid*: 35)

The stories of the *cuancuas* illustrate how Amazonian landscapes, as Bender asserts, “... operate on very different spatial scales, whether horizontally across the surface of the world, or vertically –up to heavens, down to depths. They will operate on very different temporal scales, engaging with the past and with the future in many different ways”(Bender, 1993: 2). Traditionally, all over Amazonia the art of shamanic search and seeing in the distance or the underground have been common practices for hunting and fishing purposes (see Brown, 1986; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1987; 1996, Descola, 2005; Rubenstein, 2012;). The ability to travel across psychic and cartographic boundaries, and fly over mountains, rivers, clouds and forests, employing diverse psychoactive substances are also crucial and paradigmatic techniques in the struggle with hazardous forces or just for surveillance of the territory (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975; Calavia, 2005). Furthermore, as I have frequently been told along the middle Putumayo, locating new fertile terrains for the chagras, defining the location of family houses, and establishing places for the “*casas de Yagé*”, are the kind of decisions that are preceded by shamanic searching and

seeing in the distance- techniques aimed to ensure future success and safety when penetrating uncharted territories.

Traditional and Modern subsoil shamanic practices

At first sight, it could be argued that the ethnographic works cited above together with the cuancuas' mythology about ancient subterranean landscapes of power represent the voice of 'tradition', in the sense they can be seen as ancestral forms of Amazonian shamanism, in contrast to more 'modern' indigenous shamanic techniques to explore subterranean landscapes filled with FARC and narcos' caletas. In this binary perspective, indigenous transformations of shamanic practices and territorial perceptions could be explained thus, as the immediate consequence of the tensions and disruptions between tradition and modernity, understood as divergent forces. This perspective, as García Canclini (1995) contends, is insufficient and in this case, misleading for binary constructions of tradition and modernity are incapable of grasping the fluid and mutable process through which indigenous peoples in Amazonia absorb and re-process the changing conditions of the world and themselves without conceiving these as necessarily involving a disruption between past and present (Hill, 1988; Bruce and Ramos, 2002; Hirsch and Stewart, 2005; Santos-Granero, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Uzendoski, 2010; Peluso, 2013). Take again for instance the Kofán story of Campa'náe (see chapter 6), a colonial place that disappeared around the 19th century but still emerges currently as a very real place in the Taita's shamanic cartography. This can be done only through the shaman's storytelling praxis and the power of Yagé. During ceremonies today, certain historical events, indeed notably political events of conquest and colonization such as this colonial settlement, where hundreds of Kofán were tyrannized by missionaries and forced to extract gold, are strategically employed by Taitas for shamanic purposes. Historical episodes become objectified, forming in turn the contemporary shamanic repertoire of magically empowered imagery capable of causing and relieving misfortune if used for healing patients or attacking enemies. Thus, as I discussed in detail in chapter 3, Amerindian transformations of historically imposed political, cultural and economic systems into meaningful key symbols (see Whitten 1978; Taussig 1980) suggests that indigenous historical understandings today are processes of simultaneously grasping "contingent happenings, developmental processes, and cultural forms, seen together as they move through time" (Rosaldo 1980: 19), rather than a simple ability to remember "what really happened" (Wright and Hill, 1986: 51).

As this might lead us to expect, Amerindian epistemic constructions of history are not a capricious way of rendering the past in the present, nor a simple effect of

multiple voices defining it at the same time. Rather, they constitute a mechanism of indigenization of modernity, through which “memory is shaped and employed to influence and make sense of sociopolitical contexts” (Peluso, 2013:16). What is clear from this process, as Whitten and Whitten (2011:170) indicate, is that among indigenous peoples of northern South America, historicity engages with spiritual forces, conjured during ritual situations, to conflate images from mythic times with past colonial and postcolonial encounters. The way Taitas have been “conflating” their ancestral shamanic constructions of the underground with threatening but also attractive modernizing influences related to the war and extractivism, such as seeing buried caletas during Yagé trances, suggest that the treatment of tradition/modernity as oppositional self-contained categories is not accurate. In this perspective there is no opposed times, no historical fracture points. Rather several continuous dialectical processes between past images, knowledges and practices which are flexible in its meaning and form since they can be adopted collectively or individually to be reprocessed, changed, neglected and constantly retold in the present (Fabian, 1983; Taussig, 1987; Buck-Morss, 1991; Pensky, 2001).

In the introductory essay of *Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia* (2007) Carlos Fausto and Michael Heckenberger conclude in this regard, that we can, indeed must, continue to explore this dynamic tension between history and myth in ways that “recognize that the indigenous systems of representation, still embodied today in the shamanic practices and the poetic evocations of a mythic and historical past, constitute a parallel and very sophisticated approach to the contradictions between nationalism and indigenous identities today” (19). And furthermore, as Hill (2009: 26) points out, “in the wake of this collective effort, it has become common wisdom in anthropology that such mytho-historical narratives must be given serious attention in any theoretical approach to the study of hybridity, syncretic social formations, ethnogenesis, or long-term historical processes of change”. Accordingly I argue, that there is not a divergence between myths in the form of traditional readings of the underground (e.g. the immaterial realm of the cuancuas) as opposed to history, materialized in contemporary-modern shamanic explorations of war related riches. Rather than being mutually exclusive, myth and history coexist as complementary modes of historical consciousness (Hugh-Jones, 1988:138). This argument therefore, is aimed to challenge opposed traditional and modern views of the territory, and support my point to observe it as an open dialectical framework in which both oppositional constructions are in fact mutually constitutive (García-Canclini, 1989).

For the purposes of this thesis, understanding this dissolution of tradition and modernity and the formation of multicultural contact zones is crucial since it points

to the idea that the way in which indigenous people understand and engage with their worlds will depend upon the interplay of their (already hybrid) cultural forms of territorialization with permanent other new arriving forces of transformation.

This is important moreover, for in the Colombian Amazon piedmont case, public policies, NGO's programs and indigenous political debates, tend to operate under the idea of differential indigenous geographies grounded on this binary notion of tradition against modernity (see chapter 1). According to this dichotomy, indigenous territorial visions are perceived and defended by policy makers and NGO's agents as 'closed' place-projects often involving the conceptual reduction of indigenous territories to images of discrete spaces where the moral and social values of what is regarded as the indigenous community-traditional lifestyle, unfold in opposition to the nation's social space (Herzfeld, 1997; Mitchell, 1999; Hunt, 2006; Linke, 2006). I am aware that this differential territorial construction is legitimate and absolutely necessary for 'cultural and historical recovery' projects and inherent rights demands. However, as Jackson and Warren (2005) have pointed out, "discourses based on cultural difference do not lead invariably to success everywhere" (565). And this is so especially in Putumayo, where as I have attempted to show throughout this thesis, such discursive struggle for differential indigenous geographies, structured upon traditionalist discourses, obscures the rather complex and ambiguous encounter of indigenous populations with the national society and the state.

Hence the necessity once again to suggest an anthropology of intercultural contact and colonialism as a 'historiography of the present' (Pels, 1997:177) that dissolves oppositional categories such as modernity/tradition and which produces a more complex and relational "ethnographies of decolonization, focusing on the continuity between present and past practices if we are ever going to be capable of disengaging anthropology from colonialism" (*Ibid*: 178). Modernity against tradition, like savagery versus civilization, or acculturated versus traditional Indians- are dichotomies that belong to a language in which Indians lose no matter how they play (Rubenstein, 2002:248). We therefore require ethnographic efforts that dismantle any conceptual residue of such binary language, which still function to facilitate coercive practices either in state or NGO developmental programs, or even for people like me involved in indigenous political struggles.

Ritual and Modernity

In Putumayo, the emergent ritual practice of finding buried caletas today, employing ancient shamanic techniques might be seen as the kind of process that Marshal

Sahlins refers to as the “indigenization of modernity” (1999:410); a ritual process through which indigenous peoples locate their own cultural space in the global scheme of things (*Ibid*: 410). Ritual, once seen as a force that insulates enchantments in the world, in this framework becomes vastly more integrated in creative and dynamic ways. This can be aligned further, with the argument presented by Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff’s at the introduction to *Modernity and Its Malcontents* (1993: xxx) aimed to explore the relation between ritual and modernity. It may be phrased as follows:

“Ritual, as an experimental technology intended to affect the flow of power in the universe, is an especially likely response to contradictions created and (literally) engendered by processes of social, material, and cultural transformation, processes re-presented, rationalized and authorized in the name of modernity and its various alibis (“civilization”, “social progress”, “economic development”, “conversion”, and the like)” (...) “It is in the fissure between the assertive rationalities and perceived magicalities that malcontent gathers, giving rise to ritual efforts to penetrate the impenetrable, to unscrew the inscrutable, to recapture the forces suspected of redirecting the flow of power in the world” (*Ibid*: xxx.).

The indigenous openness to the oil company’s employees and their fears of the forest; the ex-guerrilla soldier and its promises of buried treasures; or the FARC’s demands for shamanic medical services illustrate those ‘efforts’ identified by Commaroff and Commaroff, to rearrange intercultural power relations and cope with the changes brought by modernity. I believe therefore, that this contemporary proliferation of sorcery practices among Taitas Yageceros in Putumayo is anything other than part of a new understanding of the state of modernity in this region. That this flourish of new enchantments and ritual techniques represents thus a social diagnosis suggesting that Yagé shamanism operate as an active partner of capitalism and other aspects of modernity. Hence, as Raquel Romberg (2003) notes in her study of the brujos’ practices in Puerto Rico, where she suggests they actually reproduce the forces of modernity, blending material and spiritual worlds into a ‘spiritualized materialism’—then seeking a holistic treatment (2003: 25).

Here thus, we are back to the shape-shifting aspect of *territorio*. For if I am correct, the territory in the same way as contemporary shamanism in Putumayo, emerge as the outcome of indigenous’ processes of incorporating alterity and all its associated capitalist, warfare, and ultimately modern aspects, which might be simultaneously dangerous or beneficial. The outcomes of such dialogues are inevitably complex and uncertain, for there are always possible benefits or death in this cultural walking on

the edge as it explicitly appears in all the testimonies presented in this thesis about contact zones with colonial and postcolonial forces. From my perspective, this is exactly what is so interesting about the transcultural desire and fascination - even fetishisation- of subsoil resources (see Lesser, 1987; Biersack, 1999; Brady, 2005; Simonetti, 2013) as some sort of joining substance of indigenous and non-indigenous territorialities. The underground becomes another form of shared mythologized territory where diverse imaginaries about all kinds of riches, dangers, powers and possibilities collide and fuse for both Indian and non-Indians. Here, subterranean spaces such as the *caletas* -also called *guacas* -which is the word for the Indian tombs or funeral mounds since pre-colonial times- generates so much fascination for both parties given its symbolic value, but also for its many valuables lying underground.

But this process of mythologizing landscapes goes far beyond *guacas* and *caletas* and can be extended to the whole uncanny relation of Western capitalism with subsoil resources explained through the Marxian notion of 'commodity fetishism'. This term, broadly understood as the masking of the social relationships underlying the process of production (Marx, 1867), suggest also the "ideological illusion underpinning capitalist political economy, which involves attributing agency and subjectivity to inert objects detached from their social contexts and origins" (Walker, 2012: 155, see also Taussig, 1980). The process of commodities turning into fetishes can be seen in the exploration and extraction of subsoil elements, and the entire relation with underground-mythologized landscapes of wealth and riches in Putumayo. Here, the modern relationship with what apparently is just a commodity, such as oil or precious minerals, cannot be reduced to a technical engineering and economic procedure. There is a far more complex process of attributing values, fantasies, and beliefs to this particular society-nature relation under modern capitalism, and consequently, the objects of desire -and the geographies in which they lie- are transformed into fetishes. In the same fashion as Taussig defines gold and cocaine, underground commodities in Putumayo, "seem to be a good deal more than mineral or vegetable matter. They come across more like people than things, spiritual entities that are neither, and this is what gives them their strange beauty. As fetishes, (they) play subtle tricks upon human understanding" (2009: xviii). Hence the paradoxical situation of powerful Companies such as ECOPEPETROL desperately exploring for oil, gold, and valued minerals embedded in geological underground realms with the magic of modern technology, while hiring the shamans' powers as it was the case with Taita Manuelito, the shaman inside a helicopter, fully dressed in his traditional attire and indicating to the company's engineer where the oil might be. It is thus the very

space, but now filled with some sort of capitalist magicality what constitutes the intercultural joining substance between indigenous and non-indigenous actors.

This modern capitalist magicality of the landscape intrinsic to subsoil extractivism is but one of the new territorial perceptions born out the intercultural contact. I underscore one, since the shape shifting character of the territory emerge precisely from the coexistence of this particular dimension of the territory around the extraction of very tangible resources with other less tangible and yet very real subterranean dimensions of indigenous cosmologies; such as the Inga people's mythic underground tunnels connecting the upper Putumayo mountain peaks with the lowland rainforests, the Kofán people's *cuancuas* realm or the already mentioned Campa'náe, town and its sacred buried bell. The coexistence of all these many and changeable dimensions of the space in the forests and mountains of the Putumayo department, lead us to think that indigenous colonial and postcolonial experiences have brought together western and non-western underground imaginaries, which have not simply disappeared over time but which have actually reconfigured themselves around a new set of ideas, fantasies, and fears, shaped by the force of the capitalist desire and the violence of armed conflict. Such an understanding of space displaces approaches that tacitly designate territories as either indigenous and non-indigenous, state or non-state, traditional or modern, demonstrating that claims to territorial control must always be understood in the intercultural context of the contingent, contested, and negotiated claims for making space into place (Cons, 2005). Accordingly, processes of territory-making in this region do not conform to simple notions of territorial impositions and shattered local cosmographies. Rather, I would suggest indigenous conceptions of *territorio*, either physical and tangible, or immaterial and fantastic, are in fact co-produced within ongoing intercultural contact zones in which symbiotic, mimetic and negotiated meanings emerge in the course of colonial encounters.

The indecipherable part of this shamanic mytho-cartography nonetheless, is that there is no way to define where the spiritual geography finishes and the capitalist – materialist one starts; territorial perceptions move and change as kaleidoscope crystals, forming juxtaposed textures and colours, making the territory a shape-shifting creature, so real as the land that has been expropriated or polluted and yet immaterial and fantastic as the jungles where the invisible A'I ancestors still dwell today. These mutable and negotiated spatial meanings support my point that in Putumayo, the notion of territory might be better approached as a concept that comprises several spaces of circulating significances and interests, framed by contradiction and conflict where claims of territorial integrity, either indigenous or not, are anything but certain.

Chapter 16

Conclusions Reweaving the *Territorio*

In the course of Kofán history, violence and injustice have been central components of their social life. When the Spaniards conquered the Andean Amazon region, they resorted to a system of forced Indian labour and brutal violence in order to sustain an economic system based on the extraction of gold. In the lapse of only a few decades after the European invasion, the Kofán were almost annihilated because of the epidemic diseases brought by conquerors and missionaries. For their part, Jesuits, Franciscans, and later, Capuchins, were responsible for facilitating the conquest and enslavement of native peoples, the exploitation of their labour and natural resources and the erosion of complex cultural systems. After a short period of respite from these colonial dynamics, the A'I people continued to experience the postcolonial violence of the expanding frontier after Colombia's independence. The nascent Republic of the 19th century created its own narrative of the nation, strategically constructing ideas about Indians as either barbarians or noble savages living in pristine jungles ready to be enlightened by civilization and developed through the power capitalism. Drawing always on the same stereotyped binaries, the intrusion of the oil industry into Kofán territories in the 1960's completely opened the region to the forces of resource extractivism and state driven colonization. The Texas Petroleum Company, and later ECOPETROL, polluted Indian lands and caused great social distress. In the wake of the oil boom, massive waves of poor peasants from the highlands invaded Kofán lands changing completely the social network of relationships that formerly constituted the Kofán idea of territory or *pa'tssi ingi ande*. The A'I witnessed how their lands were stolen from them while the Colombian government played the ambiguous role of ally and enemy. While oil-based colonization during the 1970's generated confrontations between indigenous peoples and settlers around territorial issues, the sudden demographic increase and concentration during the 1980s spurred yet another more drastic decade of local conflicts and violence associated with the drug production and trade in Putumayo. During the 1990s confrontations between FARC, paramilitaries and the National Army transformed the Amazon piedmont into fragmented geographies of war where indigenous populations had to survive amidst constant threats, landmines, massacres and marginalization.

Anthropology of violent contacts and new territorialities

Notwithstanding these ongoing episodes of violence intrinsic to colonial and postcolonial situations of contact in Putumayo, my intention throughout this thesis has been to engage with anthropology of the multiple indigenous mechanisms to process, internalize and even subvert the colonizer's violent presence. Following Lubkemann (2010) I have attempted to present an ethnographic analysis focused on the:

“(…) culturally negotiated life projects of warscape inhabitants, rather than getting caught up in, or remaining mesmerized by, the more violent and uncertain medium in which such projects must be negotiated. The analytical imperative of warscape ethnography is the same as that for all ethnography: to identify (rather than presume) the specific array of social struggles that inform meaningful behaviour (...) and trace their dynamics in the terms that are meaningful to their protagonists” (330).

I have argued that Kofán forms of territorialization have been overlapped by other forms of territorialization, but that these they have neither been temporally superseded or spatially supplanted by them. Instead, I have attempted to show how these violent encounters of cultures and territorialities forming contact zones, impel diverse, mutable and very ambiguous dialectics between colonizer and colonized, which in spite the associated change, accommodation and reformulation of Kofán people's territorial conceptions, continue to express vital cosmographies with their own set of territorial claims. The dynamism of this process, consequently, has tended to make the encounter of a conclusive definition of indigenous territory a somewhat elusive task. Many attempts have been made, giving rise to a number of approaches, each with their own assumptions and emphases, depending on whether they come from diverse legislative instruments developed by intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, from indigenous national movements, or disciplines such as human geography, social anthropology and cultural studies.

I have not attempted to define the concept of *territorio*, nor have I tried to find 'the Kofán territorial perception' as an ethnic-collective unified response to their ingrained history of violence and imposition. That would a too one sided version of the complex colonial cross cultural interaction that shapes indigenous peoples' engagements of their worlds. Rather, I have strived to explore how Kofán individuals envision territories in multiple and changeable ways that might be fractured, polysemic, contradictory and multivocal, and how such changeability is predicated upon changes in their cultural and political forms of alterity incorporation. In other words, territories as identities are relational and hybrid. For the case of territories, this idea of hybridity refers to what Massey's asserts for

'places'; that is, as "spheres of juxtaposition, or co-existence, of distinct narratives, as the product of power-filled social relations", and thus, "they must be imagined "as open, porous, hybrid (...) where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—now to be disrupted by globalization—but by the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there" (Massey, 1999 :21–22).

From this perspective it is therefore impossible to sustain that a particular system of knowledge of an individual or indigenous collective is pure and authentic in terms of its origins, content, and methods of practical use. Accordingly, the concept of *territorio indígena* in Putumayo and the rest of the Colombian Amazon piedmont, like the native identities that produce it, are never bounded or finished. Instead, they are always in process, always in the flow of becoming, always changing in the service of particular intercultural projects. The war and resource extractivism in Putumayo has fuelled this process even more, by injecting new mutable territorial imaginaries and social actors. Hence, we find incredible stories evincing a strange cultural juxtaposition of time and space, whereby people constantly produce sites that exist bewilderingly as both fantastic and actual; places full of dangerous and beneficial powers such as the Kofán Campa'née town emerging through disordered layers of history to constitute contemporary shamanic cartographies; the sacred places where massacres occurred which have been ritually incorporated though silence into the current geography of war; the powerful Taita's grave beneath the army garrison causing illness to the national army soldiers; or the fascinating vertical landscapes of underground riches associated with the war and drug trafficking where shamans dive using the power of Yagé.

These examples of intercultural constructions of the territory in Putumayo indicate that hybridity rather than plain cultural difference is more the norm than the exception guiding spatial perceptions in this region. And hence, drawing on diverse critiques of binary oppositions for they conceal intertwined histories and engagements across dichotomies, I have suggested how we might more successfully read, interpret and understand contradictory and ambiguous relationships between oppressed and oppressor within contact zones, by dismantling domination/resistance analytical models. Illustrating this point is the simultaneous cooperation and rejection of missionaries' activities by the Kofán; their simultaneous struggle for land rights and their involvement in the sale of land; their participation in the coca and cocaine economy while rejecting its cultural and environmental damaging effects; their shared forms of political power between FARC and Taitas, and the entanglements between shamanism and war. These examples, in the form of contact zones, have shown that such practices are a

combination of hybridity, opportunism, enticement, and violence where knowledge systems from separated places have been contacting, communicating, and feeding each other. The 'shape-shifting' ontology of the Kofán territory reflects these dynamics, therefore indicating that as "globalization" spreads around the world, there will be fewer and fewer areas where the term 'Indigenous Territory' as a discrete socio-spatial concept is applicable in a clearly differentiated, bounded, and meaningful way. However, "The irony of these times", as Gupta and Ferguson stress, is that "as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient" (1992:10). Such 'irony' brings me back to the 'tension' which I used as departure point at the introduction of this thesis, and which I noticed during many indigenous congresses in Putumayo. This tension, I argued, is created by the dissonance between well-defined, 'purely Indian', and stable definitions of territory- which have often been articulated around politically motivated assertions of cultural, ethnic and territorial difference- and the day-to-day fragmented, hybrid, and meaning shifting versions I have described throughout this work.

Addressing the tension between local and official territorial perceptions

In his analysis of current anthropology of social movements, Peter Brosius (2001:164) contends that "with but a few exceptions, anthropologists have yet to address seriously the political implications of the difference between mapping the life of a village (...) and mapping the contours of a social movement". The implications suggested by Brosius however, are not only political but ethical as well. I am aware that exploring the tension between the ethnically and geographically bounded idea of territory -and its closely related concepts of tradition, communalism and custom conveyed by indigenous organizations (see Introduction) in political arenas, and the more unbounded, ambiguous, relational and overall, contradictory conception of the territory exhibited by indigenous peoples in the everyday life, is a most delicate task. This is so for the critical contrast of what is said in political arenas with what actually occurs in peoples' day to day lives regarding their use of natural resources or affiliation with one or another armed actor, for instance, may cast doubt and perhaps debilitate indigenous movements' arguments grounded on what some scholars call "essentialized identities" (Ramos 1994a, 1994b, Conklin and Graham 1995; Slater 1996; Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Graham, 2005; Hennessy 2008; Bolaños 2010). These are, indigenous strategic self-representations that put forward images of cultural isolation, stasis, ahistoricity, and internal homogeneity.

During the past thirty years, nonetheless, scholars and specially ethnographers are enjoined to challenge these essentialist conceptions, and thus, to treat 'culture' as dynamic processes, not as bounded objects frozen in time, while recognizing intra-cultural diversity and non-Western societies' engagement with global political, economic, and cultural processes (Said 1978; Wolf 1982; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, 1997; Hirsch and Stewart, 2005). Grounded on these understandings I have attempted to show that in spite of the potential negative effect for certain indigenous political discourses charged with essentializing arguments emphasizing radical difference, we may do better as Fontein (2011:273) contends, by "cultivating an acute sensitivity to the proximities, coexistences, and continuities that derive from people's shared material and historical engagements, as a way of writing against politicized differences rather than reasserting them on ever more abstract philosophical grounds" (*Ibid*: 273). This has been a source of motivation for examining not only indigenous resistance and rejection, but also connivance and even encouragement of oil, cocaine and armed actors' activities, together with their voluntary incorporation into the national society and its capitalistic system, as pivotal aspects that guide indigenous territorial and identity constructions in Putumayo.

I must insist, however, that underpinning these kinds of close intercultural dynamics between Kofán and Others is certainly not a synonym of acculturation. In other words, the formation of contact zones does not necessarily mean that within the context of capitalism and globalization, indigenous territories in Amazonia, as well as identities, are becoming dissolved in the flow of modernity as if they were totally uprooted of their ethnic and 'traditional' cultural features and values. The point rather is that even those systems striving to protect their sense of locality by resisting globalization cannot be understood outside the determinants of globalization and the penetration of capitalism (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992), even in isolated places of the Amazon (see Rubenstein, 2001, 2004; Dove, 2002; Fernando, 2003). In this regard anthropologists have overturned assumptions about phenomena previously understood solely in terms of acculturation or assimilation, demonstrating instead the agency of indigenous peoples in engaging positively with mestizo and white Others (Course, 2013: 773). And there certainly are many aspects of Kofán life which revolve around an attempt to engage positively with alterity, to create the Self through the incorporation of the Other and to reformulate constantly the idea of *pa'tssi ingi ande* in the course of encounters with alterity in order to endure and subvert unbalanced relations of power. It is thus in all these dialectics with Others where I suggest the kaleidoscopic nature of Kofán collective and individual identities are grounded, and given the dynamism of intercultural encounters in this region, the territory as reflection of such changeable identities

becomes also a shape-shifting construction. This is why that the understanding of cultural hybridity as Wade (2005:252) contends, implies the maintenance of enduring spaces for racial-cultural difference alongside spaces of sameness and homogeneity.

Accordingly, rather than considering 'tension' between discourses of indigenous spokespeople's grounded on tradition and cultural difference in opposition to people's daily practices rather close to the idea of modernity and cultural hybridity, I might better propose now that they are in fact complementary. Both are entwined ways of cultural struggle, which are necessarily combined to produce on the one hand, the kind of strategic indigenous discourses that feed western versions of indigenous peoples and their environments in an effort to legitimize their social existence within a national space that has excluded them ever since its formation (Albert, 2005: 217). And, on the other hand, we may regard all those contradictory practices and uses of the territory in the everyday reality that entail indigenous connivance and "illicit cohabitation" (Mbembe, 1992) with the very forces of oppression, as the actions of people striving to survive amidst conditions of poverty and violence while creating a territory, and moreover, a world around them, in ways that are intrinsically meaningful to them.

Such an understanding of the complementarity between two different subaltern's forms of discourse and action towards their territories and amidst violence and predatory resource extraction may indicate the ambivalences of the political economy of war, "where survival and war economies are closely intertwined (...) where 'greed' and 'opportunity', as well as 'grievances' and 'vulnerability', are not confined to either 'belligerents' or 'civilians'" (Korf, 2011:748). Recognizing the polysemic construction of identities and territories does not mean that indigenous discourses on cultural and territorial difference are merely discursive 'masquerades' to achieve practical goals within political grounds. For "Even if the violent annexations they have undergone compel aboriginal societies to reconstruct their identity and territorial references in line with the state's exo-definitions and development apparatus, they do so in terms of an autonomous social project and according to their own symbolic perspectives" (Albert, *op. cit.* 208). In this sense, it is a rather simpler matter to agree that anthropology does not revolve anymore around issues of ethnic authenticity or inauthenticity but that its purpose, rather, is more oriented towards the understanding of ambivalent, complex, and unsteady processes of cultural constant reformulation and production; and hence that the "continuity of indigenous cultures" as Fausto and Heckenberger stress "consist of the specific ways through which they transform themselves" (2007:5). This is why I am advocating for the contact zone perspective, since any meaningful

understanding of indigenous territorial symbolic perceptions and material practices today cannot be detached from historical contingent spaces of contention but also from the cultural, political and socioeconomic interpenetration with different others, either in the field of politics or in people's daily life.

This point takes me to the final discussion of this thesis, which is that even if we accept that people such as the Kofán have somehow managed to deal with all these colonial and neocolonial projects by incorporating them into their own forms territorial and cultural perception, weaving and reweaving the notion of *pa'tssi ingi ande*, we must also face the fact that we face a series of confronted cultural and social processes and violent disputes around the lands and resources of the Putumayo. Consequently, this is to address contact zones from the political ecology perspective, and from here further, to ask for what kind of anthropological project is necessary in Colombia today, in order to address situations of neocolonial contact, violence and resource extractivism.

The role of political ecology and anthropology in understanding contemporary indigenous territories in Colombia

Today, for many other indigenous peoples in Colombia besides de Kofán, the situation is critical. In 2009 the Constitutional Court identified 34 different indigenous groups: "at risk of physical and cultural extinction"¹⁴¹. This, combined with the 30 further groups identified by the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC) means that there are a total of 64 indigenous peoples facing extinction, not only as a result of the conflict and lack of state support, but also because of the presence of large-scale economic projects on indigenous lands¹⁴². Ironically, while these types of warnings continue being produced, the country is going through probably the most consistent peace process in its history. In August 2012, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos announced that exploratory peace talks with the FARC were underway in a bid to resolve a nearly 50-year internal armed conflict. The formal talks began in Oslo, Norway, in October 2012 and have moved to Havana, Cuba, where they continue.¹⁴³

With this worrying and yet promising situation in mind, it is plausible to say that anthropology in Colombia will have an important role for the sustained reflection on and extended ethnographic inquiries into violence within contexts of aggressive

¹⁴¹ Auto 004-2009; <http://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/autos/2009/a004-09.htm>

¹⁴² ABC Colombia, "Caught in the Conflict – Colombia's indigenous peoples" http://www.abcolombia.org.uk/downloads/Caught_in_the_Crossfire.pdf

¹⁴³ June S. Beittel. Congressional Research Service (2013) "Peace Talks in Colombia" Accessed January 14, 2014. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42982.pdf>

neoliberal policies, land disputes, and resource extractivism, which are the main drivers of social conflict and violence in Colombia (Molano, 1989b, 1994; Deas and Llorente, 1999; Fajardo, 2002; Reyes, 2008). However, I believe that anthropological research into violence at the moment yields limited understanding because it is too focused on the victim (see Krohn-Hansen, 1994). We need accordingly, more robust analysis of indigenous peoples inhabiting war zones, in which they are seen as something other than mere victims devoid of agency, or alternatively as “fully free actors,” but rather as tactical agents engaged in the difficult task of social navigation, as Utas (2005: 426) contends. According to this perspective, victims might be better seen as “social navigators”, and so our role in Colombia could be to better understand “their search for protection of self and families, and the role that “victimcy” can play in achieving these objectives, even as we can also better understand their participation in the war economy of looted goods, and even in actual combat itself” (*Ibid*: 426).

This same perspective on the colonized or victim, would be useful to strength not only anthropological analyses but political ecology as well. As mentioned in chapter 8, Latin American political ecology is responsible for many of the contemporary most accurate and sophisticated analysis (e.g. Leff, 1994, 2013; Porto-Gonçalves, 2001; Escobar, 2008, Blaser, 2009), unraveling how Amerindians, peasants and black communities have undergone for centuries the aggressive forms of territorialization of diverse colonial and postcolonial projects, including mines, dams, intensive logging, industrial cattle ranching and military and oil facilities located on lands righteously claimed by them. All this literature have the merit of recognizing the historic and current injustice against native peoples, but again, by focusing mainly on difference and conflict between power and powerless, perpetrator and victims, all these perspectives suffer from the same lack I am attempting to critique in Amazonian anthropology. This is, they pay insufficient attention to the complex contact zones emerging in colonial and postcolonial contexts prompting the formation, negotiation, and exchange of shared codes, languages and interests framed by power-laden relations.

In Putumayo – as throughout the Amazon- this polarization means that in spite of centuries of land expropriation, missionization, and repression suffered by indigenous peoples, the politics of nature and territory are not always as simple as Indians against the power. Delineating the borders of confronted groups is not always a clearly evident task since superimposed over indigenous territorial space are now many other spaces where alternative identities and symbolic ties have been built, where specific relationships-regulated by very different mechanisms and interests to those of indigenous peoples- have been woven (Surrallés and García

Hierro 2005:9). Consequently, this superimposition has opened channels for the intercultural circulation of new codes, practices and agreements regarding the space between indigenous and non-indigenous forces. Herein we understand the necessity of a combination of political ecology and Amazonian anthropology that discard binary terms that classify and divide Indian and white, inside and outside, collaborator and attacker or power and powerless. Take again all the contact zones described in this thesis that serve for transcending this opposition scopes.

Certainly these situations of hybridization, alliance, and interpenetration between Indians and external forces are the consequences of long lasting colonial and neocolonial regimes imposed on them, but indigenous peoples today have proven effective in many arenas of political struggle and resistance to all these processes. Hence, the fact that these situations are still occurring in places such as Putumayo has much to do with the fact that indigenous have voluntarily engaged in them. This point nevertheless must not be interpreted as an over-enthusiastic celebration of indigenous agencies and a downplaying of the structural constraints within which people's agencies must flow. My point rather is that at this moment, indigenous peoples must be indeed recognized as the legitimate owners of territories and resources, and this is a calling for a renewal of governments' commitment to improve socioeconomic conditions within indigenous regions. But such acknowledgement requires further a deeper and responsible enquiry process to understand why, as Steven Rubenstein points out, "struggles occur in indigenous communities hand-in-hand with indigenous complicity in desiring and supporting western mechanisms that undermine the very livelihood of these communities" (2004: 133).

Hence we need an anthropology-political ecology project that help us to delineate not only a question of delineating the "struggle over geographic space" - following Paul Little's definition of political ecology- into well-defined and opposed poles (the state, the indigenous, the mining companies, and so on), rather a big and more complicated question about the level of imbrication of different cultural-territorial interests and agendas in places such as the Amazon Piedmont today. To address this big and more complicated question, the relationship between anthropology and particularly ethnography, with political ecology I am proposing for the upcoming years of post-war Colombia, seems to be rather urgent to expose and reformulate obsolete but persistent "binaries—especially nature/culture and its proxies (such as savage or primitive/civilized and traditional/modern)—that often colour our understanding of both indigenous peoples and the environments in which they live"(Rubenstein, 2004:132). Accordingly, it might address resource conflicts by understanding the complex systems of power circulation generated at the margins

of the state as this work has attempted to show through concepts such as contact zones. This is, to identify and advocate against the always present asymmetrical relations of power between diverse forces and indigenous peoples and the intrinsic injustice and violence in these dynamics, but also to construct analytical frameworks aimed to understand how resource predation serves indigenous projects and interests, and furthermore, how it becomes an idiom for indigenous doing politics (Korf, 2011:747).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the subaltern's simultaneous resistance and voluntary involvement in resource extractivism and violence (Goodhand et al., 2000; Collinson, 2003; Nordstrom, 2004; Richards, 2005; Bohle, 2007), suggesting that we must reevaluate binary models of contact and neocolonialism that does not capture how subalterns enduring poverty and violence may "develop their own 'weapons of the weak' – to borrow a famous term from James Scott (1985) – and make use of opportunities for economic gains where they find these; or display strategies to keep belligerents at arm's length in order to survive, to safeguard precarious livelihoods or to actively engage in clientele networks" (Korf, 2011:748). Attention to such work is particularly timely in the Colombian context of war and disputes over resources in order to deconstruct still enduring images of indigenous territories and its peoples as opposed to the modern society. Such dual model of underscored difference works only on the political sphere of indigenous resistance, but within communities is ill equipped to portray and understand the micropolitics that conditions peoples relations with power and the space.

Grounded on this perspective, instead of striving to arrive at a clear, precise definition of a *Kofán territorio indígena*, it would be far more productive, as this work has been committed to do so, to view the indigenous territories as a social phenomenon emerging from contingent cultural, economic, and political alterity encounters. From here, I believe it is possible to build more realistic and effective understandings of the mutable essence of identity and territorialities in these kinds of mobile and very unstable settings. Especially important among those more closely dealing with the uncomfortable and growing disillusionment involved in working with indigenous policies of self-determination and the disappointing results when such processes are hampered by indigenous peoples themselves (see Cowlshaw, 2003:104). This has been the case of many private and public initiatives working in the Colombian Amazon piedmont with indigenous communities, for which not only the state's lack of political will and the war circumstances have prevented indigenous peoples for securing their territorial rights, but also their own internal confrontations and divisions, leaders' corruption, internal violence and

contradictory economic and cultural interests. Consequently, NGO's and state agencies have abandoned indigenous peoples in their righteous struggle when they do not meet the stereotyped expectations of what constitute the proper *indianess*, a situation not only happening in Putumayo but the rest of the Amazon.

Considering this background, our work ought to proceed from and lead to a greater awareness of the complexities of our most basic presuppositions-in this case, the very concept of 'indigenous territory'. As a start, I am arguing thus for politics and epistemologies of such concept that help us to clarify the complexities, nuances and contradictions intrinsic to the circulation of power, and the dynamics of cultural reproduction under situations of coercion as it is the case today; and hence of the multiple possibilities that local actors, not merely as victims, deploy to adapt and reprocesses in their own terms such conditions. This project of active commitment between anthropology and political ecology in the near Colombian circumstances of social and political reconstruction as the country may reach a landmark peace accord, is thus a call to restate the responsibility of these disciplines for the translations and solidarities linking the polysemic and multiple indigenous visions of their territories with the different projects and intentions of the national society and the nation-state. Hence the necessity that anthropological, and specially, ethnographic endeavour must be translated into the field of politically effective criticism and action in Colombian national debates and programs. In these arenas, doubtlessly, the territory issue will be at the very center of the debate in following years of Colombia's pacification process, and anthropologists must struggle to be part of this moment beyond the walls of the academy inasmuch the discipline is probably the best equipped to facilitate broader audiences to comprehend the complexities of indigenous life.

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