

DOCUMENTS, FORESTS AND ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENTAL PROJECTS IN
THE MARGINS OF THE STATE:
A CASE STUDY FROM AMPIYACU BASIN, PERUVIAN AMAZONIA

by

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(Under the Direction of J. Peter Brosius)

ABSTRACT

In this study I offer an ethnographic and historical account on how indigenous engagements with writing technologies, State governmental projects and extractive markets produce new forms of political imagination and practice in the margins of the contemporary Peruvian State. I explore these issues by focusing on the *Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Ampiyacu* (FECONA), an indigenous organization in Peruvian Amazonia that over the last three decades has developed a set of rules and procedures for regulating logging activities in Ampiyacu basin. I find that FECONA's regulatory activities emerge out of the convergence of several histories of territorial and ecological anxiety; engagements with extractive activities; and political fascination with documentary production. Ultimately, I show the critical role of documents and other State material forms in supporting FECONA's regulatory activities, and use these ethnographic disquisitions to think about how indigenous political practices both subvert and reaffirm State power in contemporary Peruvian Amazonia.

INDEX WORDS: Peruvian Amazonia; Ampiyacu basin; indigenous politics; documents; forest governance; State power; margins of the State.

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DEDICATION

Para mi madre

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This work is about how writing technologies, indigenous peoples and emerging regulatory anxieties interact for generating new governmental projects in the contemporary margins of the Peruvian State. Specifically, it is about the long-term history of indigenous engagements with forests, extractive markets, the State and various forms of political imagination in Ampiyacu basin, an important tributary of the Amazon River, in the Peruvian Amazonia. I first arrived in the Ampiyacu basin as part of my undergraduate thesis research. During that time, I was very interested in understanding how conservation initiatives collided with indigenous environmental practices in Peruvian Amazonia. In 2010, several conservation organizations and State bureaus were debating the possibility of creating a conservation area in the headwaters of Ampiyacu basin, a process that I considered perfect for advancing my research interests. One of my big (naïve) assumptions before departing to the field was that conservation initiatives represented the arrival of new State forms of governmental power that were radically different from the way local indigenous people were used to thinking about forests. Without noticing it, I was adopting a perspective that has been widely criticized in contemporary political ecology discussions: to treat “local” rationalities and State forms of power as two separate entities that were mingling for the first time in the scene created by my ethnographic practice.

What I found during my time in Ampiyacu was, however, something entirely different. Local indigenous communities were not only intimately familiarized with the State and its practices, but they had actually created a local Federation that seemed to work under

principles that very much resembled those of a bureaucratic apparatus. The Federation, whose full name was the *Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Ampiyacu (FECONA)*, had been created decades before with the explicit goal of defending local forests from foreign loggers and other threats. In order to do so, its representatives had developed over the years a series of norms and rules that regulated logging activities in the upstream forests. These norms and rules informed a system of authorizations, family quotas, surveillance practices and confiscation procedures that counted with a high legitimacy among the indigenous population of the basin. However, what struck me the most about this system was not the fact that people had been able to achieve such an outstanding level of complexity in their endeavors to protect their forests (a fact that by itself was quite impressive and remarkable). Rather, I was mostly shocked by the way in which an indigenous population that largely considered itself as illiterate, whose interactions with State institutions were precarious and at the very best occasional, and that was seen by external NGO and State actors as profoundly traditional and “ethnic”, had engaged in such a consistent way with writing technologies that clearly evoked State forms of bureaucratic imagination.

My encounter with these unexpected forms of political practice radically changed my research interests over time. When I came back to Ampiyacu basin in subsequent years, my ethnographic attention was directed towards the social lives of the State-like creatures that had born out of these local forms of bureaucratic imagination. My previous intuitions about the lack of presence of the Peruvian State in rural Amazonian landscapes became deeply troubled by the presence of seals, signatures, minutes, written authorizations and other material forms that populated local conversations about logging regulation in Ampiyacu basin. What I came to perceive during my fieldwork was the coexistence of different histories in the basin that dynamically connect landscape, everyday practices and

subjectivities, and local engagements with foreign agents. On the one hand, I found a long-term history of indigenous engagements with extractive markets, of which logging was just the most recent stage, that went well back into the 19th Century. This history was responsible for the arrival of local indigenous people to the basin, but also for the reproduction of racialized forms of extractive labor and persistent social anxieties among indigenous peoples about the safeguard of their territories. On the other hand, I found a more recent but very complex history of indigenous engagements with writing technologies taking place over the second half of the 20th Century, a time when new forms of political imagination linked to the modern State and its political practices began to emerge in local conversations. This study is about the convergence of these two histories at a time when ecological anxieties around forests took hold in Ampiyacu basin.

My goal here is to shed light on the various ways in which Ampiyacu basin and other contemporary Amazonian landscapes can be seen as sites saturated by State power and its political forms of imagination. As Arjun Appadurai has suggested before, *imagination* can be understood as a form of practice that “moves the glacial force of the habitus into the quickened beat of improvisation” (1996:6). Although imagination is far from being a new phenomenon in human social life, Appadurai argues that the recent irruption of mass media and other globalized forces into peoples’ everyday lives has placed imagination at the core of contemporary cultural politics. Hence, questions of identity and everyday practice come to be increasingly defined through dynamic, unstable and potentially subversive flows of images, information, technologies and ideas. Appadurai’s work shows how the political productivity of imagination continuously informs new forms of practice and discourse that undermine localized notions of tradition and stability. In contrast to fantasy, which “carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions (...),

imagination (...) has a projective sense about it, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression” (1996:7). In this study, I intend to grasp the way in which indigenous engagements with writing technologies and State material forms have gradually set these forms of imagination at the center of local conversations about forest regulation, and how the political productivity of imagination is fundamentally connected to the emergence of FECONA and its regulatory project.

Methodologically, I base my analysis in several ethnographic experiences in Ampiyacu basin spanning over the last five years (2010 – 2014), over which period I have visited most of the native communities of the basin and dwelled in one of them for a cumulative period of more than six months. However, for the purposes of the elaboration of this thesis, I have only included information produced before my arrival to the University of Georgia in 2013. In Chapter 1, I set the theoretical foundations for approaching these new forms of indigenous regulations over forests and for capturing the way they both subvert and transform State forms of authority. In Chapter 2, I outline a general history of the relationship between the Peruvian State and indigenous peoples of Amazonia, and explore the notion of “gubernamentalization of Amazonia” for throwing light into how the State has gradually come to permeate indigenous political life. In Chapter 3, I present the case of Ampiyacu basin, and introduce some ethnographic evidence for showing the complex processes that have informed FECONA’s governmental project and its relations with the Peruvian State. Finally, I offer some preliminary conclusions on both the theoretical implications of this work and its possible practical resonances.

As it will soon be clear, Ampiyacu basin exhibits particularly interesting characteristics for conducting this kind of research. The basin is located at the left margin of the Amazon River, approximately 93 miles from Iquitos city, the capital of the Loreto

region, in Peruvian Amazonia (See Figure 1). It begins out of a watershed with the Algodon River to the north, and from that point runs across 115 miles until its estuary at the Amazon River. The Ampiyacu is not connected to main roads or pathways, and the only way of entering and going through the basin is by means of stream navigation. The landscape of the basin is dominated by elevated forestlands and low hills, in addition to some patchy seasonally flooded terraces (De la Rosa Tincopa 2009). Ampiyacu basin also comprises a large biological corridor located between the Amazon and Putumayo rivers. These two large bodies of water act as natural boundaries for creating a highly endemic and biologically diverse tropical area spread throughout the basins of the Ampiyacu, Apayacu, Algodón, Yaguas and Putumayo rivers. According to recent biological studies, the area hosts over 15,000 species of vertebrates and 3,500 species of plants, besides having one of the largest aquatic tropical faunas in the world and an important stock of timber resources (Pitman et al. 2004). Due to its ecological richness, the region has also been included as one of the prioritized areas for environmental conservation in the Peruvian State's official workplans (SERNANP 2009:96).

The basin's demographic composition is largely dominated by *Bora*, *Huitoto* and *Ocaina* indigenous peoples. With the exception of Pebas, a small *mestizo* town located at the estuary of the Ampiyacu river, the basin's population is almost entirely composed by approximately a thousand indigenous households distributed in sixteen towns and native communities across the low and middle sections of the river's course (Instituto del Bien Comun 2010). With the exception of some schools and healthcare centers, all the State bureaus and public services are concentrated in Pebas, a situation that makes indigenous interactions with State institutions a fairly occasional exception. Indigenous peoples also hold legal ownership over a significant portion of the basin's lands, while the remote

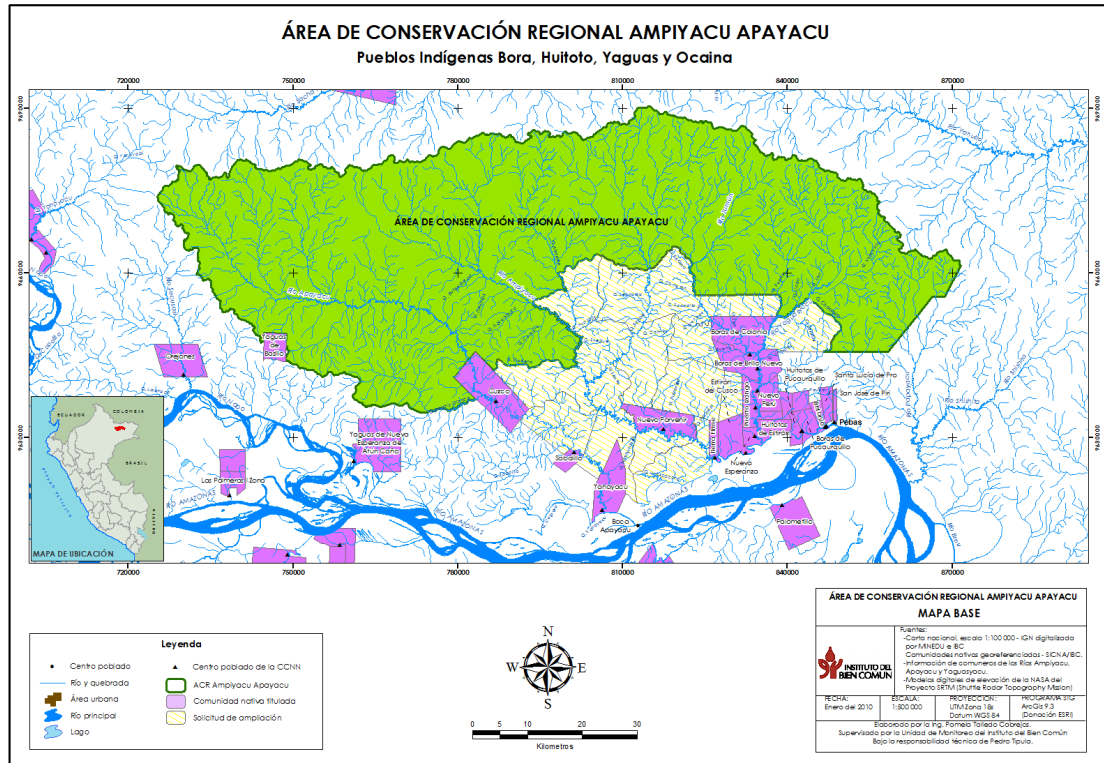


Figure 1: Map of Ampiyacu basin (taken from the database of the *Instituto del Bien Común*).
Blue: Rivers and streams / *Violet*: Native communities of Ampiyacu basin / *Green*: Regional conservation area Ampiyacu Apayacu.

upstream forests are mostly State-owned areas. However, in everyday practice, indigenous peoples make a regular use of forests beyond their legal ownership, including State-owned areas in the far-off headwaters located at a two-to-three-days distance from their main dwellings. Hence, despite its geographical proximity to Iquitos and its long-term history of connections with regional markets, extractive capitals and State power, Ampiyacu basin is an area almost entirely controlled by indigenous populations with very complex forms of social and political organization.

As a final word before moving forward, I would like to clarify my personal motives for conducting this study. In the (northern) summer of 2014, I visited for the last time Ampiyacu basin for meeting some friends and knowing first hand how people were experiencing the recent creation of a regional conservation area in the headwaters of the basin. As I already explained, this was an initiative that began to take hold when I first visited Ampiyacu in 2010. From that time onwards, however, the regional government had installed its own guard posts and it substantially incremented its presence along the Ampiyacu River, by means of constant visits to the native communities by State officers and park rangers. In this new context, I was shocked to know that FECONA officers had committed to not conduct “illegal” interventions and confiscations on unauthorized loggers, and to simply act as “good citizens” and timely notify the State authorities when they happened to witness illegal acts in their territories. For me, this was a clear example of how demobilizing the modern State could be when seeking to desperately affirm its authority in its margins. And this became a particularly dramatic matter when one was suddenly confronted with the lack of resources (material and symbolic) that local State officers had for sustaining the fictional idea of a panoptic State in Ampiyacu basin. If any practical utility at all, I hope that this study can help to shed light onto the enormous political possibilities that could be derived from

taking these indigenous political experiments seriously, and not as residual incidents that shall be overcome by the expansion of the “real” State over its margins. I do not know if what I saw in 2014 marks the end of FECONA’s governmental project as I knew it, but I hope this study can help to affirm the idea that the State as a practice is a much more fertile terrain for popular imagination than what we normally think.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Despite their significant proliferation in the past few decades, indigenous forms of regulation over forests in Amazonia have been largely underexplored and undertheorized by researchers. Theorists of institution-building and environmental governance have been particularly effective in advocating for the need to empowering local communities when it comes to defining institutional strategies for forest conservation in general (Borrini-Feyerabend 2004; Camill et al 2013) and particularly in Peruvian Amazonia (Smith and Pinedo 2002; García and Almeyda 2002). Contra Garrett Hardin and his famous “tragedy of the commons” (1968), this tradition has been inspired by the work of Elinor Ostrom and other theorists of common property systems, who have argued that common property regimes cannot be reduced to open access systems, that is, the total absence of property rights. Instead, common property systems encompass a wide array of possible institutional arrangements based on various degrees of excludability and subtractability, where open access systems are understood only as a specific kind of arrangement (Feeny et al. 1990). Ostrom and others have focused particularly on the sustainability conditions of common-pool resources managed by well-defined communities of users, including indigenous peoples and other kinds of rural populations (Gibson et al 2000; Ostrom 2009; Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975; Dietz 2003). Their work has served for sustaining theoretically and empirically that under certain conditions, specific institutional arrangements for managing resources in a collective manner might be sustainable in time.

The work of Ostrom and her intellectual descendants has proved largely influential in shaping forest conservation policies worldwide. International organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Enters et al 2000) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN 2004), and instances such as the 7th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), have acknowledged the critical role of *communities* in managing and deciding upon natural resources, hence advocating for more democratic and less authoritarian models of forest conservation (Brockington 2002). However, the tensions between community and State power, on the one hand, and poverty alleviation and conservation goals, on the other hand, have remained as a relatively unresolved and problematic issue in this body of literature. Some studies have also found that community-based approaches seem to be much more successful in fulfilling socioeconomic objectives, rather than in accomplishing biodiversity protection goals (Kellert et al 2000), while others have maintained that community-based conservation initiatives are based on flawed assumptions and have produced no evidence for measuring their own outcomes (Tacconi 2007; Barrett et al. 2001:498). Thus, despite its relative success in influencing conservation policy-making at various scales, research emphasizing institution-building and common property systems has normally been unable to capture the nuanced and ambiguous relations between “communities” and States, and has tended to encapsulate itself in its own set of assumptions about what conservation goals, governance and local livelihoods are all about.

Before moving forward, it is useful to consider some additional flaws associated with this body of literature when taken in the context of Peruvian Amazonia. First, studies drawing on the concept of sustainability normally presuppose economic activities organized through productive cycles with certain continuity in time, a model eminently associated with

the ideal functioning of modern industrial production. However, historical evidence in Peruvian Amazonia suggests a landscape historically dominated by irregular, discontinuous and relatively short cycles of demand for forest products (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000), non-intensive forms of forest exploitation, and a lack of productive control in labor forms of organization (Coomes and Barham 1994). The question therefore arises whether the quest for sustainability properly describes what is at stake when local populations seek to enact regulatory practices on the access to valuable forest resources. This question is linked to the inability of some studies to problematize the actual roles of forests in peoples' livelihoods, a critique that has already been raised by other authors (Tacconi 2007:343). By this token, some studies have produced an archetypical version of what rural livelihoods should look like, hence overemphasizing the relative importance of forests in peoples' lives, or overlooking the fact that peoples' uses of the forests might be more variable and less subject to conservationists' calculations of their livelihood "needs" (Barrett et al. 2001:500).

Second, by examining institutions in terms of designs formed by an optimal number of users, extraction quotas and means of accountability, some studies can soon make us forget that institutions are fundamentally performative entities, and its unfolding is therefore subject to local histories, affective relationships and everyday politics. In this sense, talking about indigenous forms of regulation only in terms of institutional arrangements fails to capture their political potential as innovative ways of producing political identities, public rationalities and collective governmental projects. This is particularly true regarding forms of local regulation that explicitly defy State authority over forests, a case where an exclusive focus on institutional design can actually be seen as way of depoliticizing forms of regulation with a very complex relation to State forms of authority. Additionally, this fact forces us to politically consider how these forms of regulation relate to issues of transparency,

participation, citizenship and accountability, notions that are normally considered crucial in the context of forest decentralization processes (See Ribot 2004).

Having these critiques in mind, I argue that ethnographic examination opens a productive space for considering how the ambiguous politics inscribed in indigenous forms of regulation over forests can be interpreted in a new light, both conceptually and politically. In the rest of this chapter, I will critically discuss different bodies of literature that will allow me grasp these forms of regulation as alternative governmental projects emerging in the margins of the State in Peruvian Amazonia.

Environmentality, biopolitics and governmental projects

Since the late seventies, Michel Foucault's notions of biopolitics and governmentality have been at the core of theoretical discussions tracing the connections between State practice and the dynamics of social and economic life. In the Volume 1 of his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault distinguished for the first time between two basic forms of power co-evolving in a productive tension since the seventeenth century. On the one hand, he identifies an "anatomy-politics of the human body (...) centered on the body as a machine", a style of power aimed at intervening into individual bodies through surgical processes of discipline, efficiency and control (1978:139). On the other hand, he identifies "a series of interventions and regulatory controls" over life aimed at intervening at the level of human populations as a whole (1978:139). Foucault calls *biopolitics* to this latter form of political rationale concerned with producing "a proper disposition of things" (Foucault et al. 2007:96) by intervening in different dimensions of human life.

In his 1978 course at the Collège de France, Foucault expanded his ideas about biopolitics through the notion of governmentality, a concept by which he sought to grasp a

general technology of power inscribed in modern States (Foucault et al. 2007:120; see also Burchell et al 1991). In its more general sense, the concept of governmentality refers to “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1982:237), a mode of political and ethical reasoning aimed at shaping the actions, behaviors and thoughts of others. More specifically, Foucault uses this term to refer to a technology of power that can be traced back into early Christian ideas about pastoral power, a modality of influence that is “exercised on a multiplicity rather than on a territory” (Foucault 2007:129), and that intervenes simultaneously at the level of the individual and the collective. Foucault notices the fundamental role of pastoral conceptions of power in the formation of the political discourses that permeate modern States. With the spread and development of the modern bureaucratic State, this government of populations became a technology of power inscribed in an ever-increasing “number of mechanisms of inscription, recording and calculation” (Miller and Rose 1990:12). Thus, governmentality operates through technical interventions in the abstract and elusive realm of the population. In contrast to disciplinary power, which works by directly constraining and apprehending the body, governmentality works through indirect interventions based on the calculation of risks, probabilities and frequencies inscribed in the population. In other words, governmentality produces new forms of subjectivity by manipulating the medium in which subjects live, rather than directly imposing specific parameters of thought and behavior.

Although heavily associated with modern State practices, governmentality is a general technology of power that has rapidly disseminated into new realms of action and political practice throughout time, a process that both subverts and complements the political authority of modern States. As Tania Li has noted, governmentality is a process fueled by the “will to improve” (2007), a general principle that seeks to ameliorate the conditions of existence of the population. In contemporary times, this teleological compulsion is widely

shared by a growing number of institutions beyond States. International institutions have become key sites where ideas about poverty alleviation and development are produced, while NGO (Fisher 1997; Li 2007) and private companies (Hibou 2004) exercise a growing mediation in how State power is materialized in specific sites and contexts. While this absence of monopoly over governmental practice indeed undermines the archetypical notion of the State as an almighty political entity, it also shows the ubiquity of State practices and forms of reasoning in spaces and contexts normally considered as Stateless, a point to which I will return in the following sections.

While researchers have shown the dispersion of technologies of government in various realms of social and economic life, environmental politics and conservation have played a privileged role in shaping how the concepts of governmentality and biopolitics have been discussed in recent times. Applications of the notion of governmentality to environmental politics can be tracked back into the ideas of Timothy Luke and Eric Darier, whose work advanced the idea that modern Nature has become a realm in which “environmentalized places become sites of supervision, where environmentalists see from above and from without through the enveloping designs of administratively delimited systems” (Luke 1995:65; See Darier 1999). Here, the notion of environmentality refers to the process by which Nature can be deployed as *environment* (Luke 1995:60) through processes of selective delimitation and inscription in scientific circuits of control, calculation and surveillance. However, the concept of environmentality would later be amplified to cover as well the shifting relationship between technologies of government, Nature and human subjectivities. In his oft-cited study on forest politics in Kumaon, India, Arun Agrawal popularized the concept of environmentality by using it to question “why, when, how, and in what measure people come to develop an environmentally oriented subject

position” (Agrawal 2005a:2). He uses the concept for capturing the process by which a series of governmental innovations in forest government have fostered local engagements with forest care over the last sixty years. Agrawal argues that these innovations have transformed several Kumaonis previously unconcerned with their local forested environments into peoples that have “come to care about, act in relation to, and think about their actions in terms of something they identify as ‘the environment’” (Agrawal 2005b:162). According to Agrawal’s argument, direct involvement in regulatory practices mobilizes the production of new beliefs and dispositions towards forests, a process that is mediated by what he calls intimate government, the dynamic process by which the everyday life of the community comes to be permeated by regulation and surveillance.

Agrawal’s argument is based on a Foucauldian understanding of the relationship between government and subjecthood that assumes a particular perspective on how hegemony and resistance take hold within subjects when particular technologies of power are set into place. His position has provoked reactions from other authors, some of which have criticized the notion of governmentality/environmentality as a transcendental power with ontological consistency and an (almost) unlimited capacity to shape its subjects. In his ethnography of a conservation project among the Cofán people of Ecuador, Michael Cepek has observed for instance that although this initiative “is a regulatory regime par excellence, it does not succeed in remaking the beliefs, desires, values, and identities of Cofán participants. In other words, although (...) [this initiative] entails the performance of novel institutions and actions, it does not transform the Cofán into ‘environmental subjects’” (2011:502). Rather, Cepek notes that Cofán people relate to conservation practices through strategic negotiations that allow them to take advantage of conservation while maintaining a critical perspective on its practices and outcomes. Thus, in contrast to Agrawal, Cepek

acknowledges the existence of “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1985) through which subjects actively subvert dominant forms of environmentality and refuse the imposition upon them of its ideological constructs.

In addition to Cepek’s critical take on the supposed efficacy of environmentality, other authors have also problematized the alleged transcendence and consistency of governmentality and biopolitics as technologies of power, particularly in relation to post-colonial States. Akhil Gupta and other authors have argued that States are not stable entities that can easily be tracked across time and space. Rather, they move and mutate throughout the multiple practices, sites and contexts through which they are enacted. It is in these instances that “States (...) are (...) culturally represented and understood in particular ways” (Gupta 2012:43; See also Jessop 1999:379), ways that are not necessarily free from inconsistencies and contradictions. By conceiving the State as a kind of “cultural artifact” that is always in the making (Gupta and Sharma 2006:278), one can consider the “enormous amount of cultural work that goes into efforts to represent ‘the State’, its legitimacy, and its authority” (Gupta and Sharma 2006:281). In other words, representing the State as the coherent, unitary and intentional entity its subjects imagine it to be requires the set into place of forms of practice and imagination without which its unstable foundations would be exposed to the public. The large amounts of human and nonhuman labor required to stabilize the State reveals its fundamental lack of unity and internal consistency. As Gupta puts it, “the State consists of congeries of institutions with diversified levels, agencies or bureaus, agendas, functions, and locations” (2012: 62), many of which possess divergent agendas and strive against each other in everyday practice. In the same sense, Wendy Brown states that “despite the almost unavoidable tendency to speak of the State as an ‘it’ the domain we call the State is not a thing, system or subject, but a significantly unbounded

terrain of powers and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices cohabiting in limiting, tension ridden, often contradictory relation to each other” (1995:174, cited in Aretxaga 2003).

Acknowledging the State’s fragmented condition demands a reconsideration of the notions of biopolitics and governmentality. Since a classical interpretation of biopolitical regimes presupposes a knowledge of the dynamics of the population that can only be achieved through the calculatory efficacy of a coherent, singular State, one can indeed question how the concept can endure once the State is conceived of as a dissonant and centrifugal mosaic. In his ethnography of the Indian State in Uttar Pradesh, Akhil Gupta has demonstrated how “one needs to reflect critically on the assumption of universality implicit in theories of biopolitics and sovereignty” (Gupta 2012:43) by attending to their historical specificity and the entropy that the multiple branches of the State constantly produce. In doing so, Gupta’s notion of biopolitics stops referring to the transcendental machineries of a fully intentional State for starting alluding to forms of relatively arbitrary regulation that emerge from the gaps, contradictions, and (occasional) coherences of situated State practices. Here, technologies of government do not constitute transcendental entities, but diffuse *projects* of regulatory practice that may or may not be consistent with one another.

The picture that emerges from this discussion is one in which the State as a unity is more a laborious rarity than a spontaneous reality, where the outputs of State practices are neither fully predictable nor free from arbitrariness, and where governmental actions are precarious and atomized attempts to mobilize forms of imagination and practice rather than fully effective enterprises. The notion of *project* plays a significant role in this conceptual reconfiguration. In contrast to a product, a project is an open-ended process fully subject to the contingencies of its changing environments. It is adaptable in relation to the shifting

realities it tries to address, and its lack of ultimate objectivation makes it subject to various forms of interpretation and dispute. It is, in Philip Abrams' words, an *ideological project* (Abrams 1988:76). Having in sight what remains of the State when one defines it in such a way, it is valid to ask what is that which pulls together the governmental project(s) inscribed in the everyday practices of the State. I will come back to this point in the following sections.

Finally, this vision of the State's governmental projects allows one to gain appreciation for the multiple spaces in which these political projects are subject to cracks, inconsistencies and contradictions. If the State is not the transcendental and coherent entity that it is supposed to be, but an unstable aggregate of localized practices striving for unity and coherence, then the fissures of these practices open up the possibility for the emergence of alternative governmental projects, that is, spaces of biopolitical production that are not easily articulated with the juridico-political foundations of modern States. Here, it is important to appreciate the difference between forms of governmental practice that are complementary to the shifting regulatory realities of modern States – NGO, transnational corporations, international institutions, and the like - and governmental projects that actively compete with the State in order to subvert its authority. In the next section, I will discuss these notions of competitive statecraft and alternative governmental projects and their relation to State forms of authority.

State material forms, alternative governmental projects and the margins of the State

In recent decades, numerous scholars have been keen to argue that modern States are becoming less capable of producing the conditions of political and economic life emerging from their administered territories and populations. According to many of these authors, identities are being increasingly deployed through the formation of deterritorialized

diasporic political spheres (Appadurai 1996) on which the ideological State apparatuses have few or no control, while the modernist centrality of the State as a political project gives way to multiple globalist projects that take the global as the new critical scale of political and economic action (Tsing 2000; Kearney 1995). The general diagnosis is therefore that globalization seems to be weakening and withering away the representational and administrative efficacy that modern States supposedly held in the past (Abélès 2008). In a world signed by the instability of the flow of ideas, peoples and objects, the territorial and bureaucratic fixity of the State seem to be incapable of coping with the new challenges posed by economic and political globalization.

However, other authors have shown that despite the fact that modern States are being forced to coexist with other biopolitical powers, State forms of authority are actually proliferating rather than diminishing as instances of political practice. In Begoña Aretxaga's words, "globalization is not only compatible with statehood; it has actually fueled the desire for it, whether to have access to resources and powers experienced, imagined, or glimpsed or to defend an ethnic group against the violence of another state" (2003:395). In this way, other emerging globalizing powers, such as transnational institutions, corporations, NGO and activist networks, paramilitary and guerrilla organizations, criminal organizations, social movements, and the like, seem to be taking some of the biopolitical functions of the State across the world, and in doing this, they enact particular forms of imagination and practice that resemble the bureaucratic and regulatory agencies associated with modern States. This fact leads Aretxaga to conclude that "in fact, there is not a deficit of State but an excess of statehood practices: too many actors competing to perform as State" (2003:396).

The dissolution of statehood in a competing field of various networks and organizations implies an acknowledgement of the power inscribed in the State's *forms* rather

than merely in what these forms mobilize as content. Here, it is important to distinguish the formal aspects of the State from the functional capacities that are usually associated with its practice. In centering the analytics of the State in its functional machineries, scholarship has traditionally emphasized how the State organization accomplishes certain goals and functions. Kregg Hetherington, for instance, documents the way in which cybernetic thought – the promise of a centrally designed system in which information could circulate coherently – has been deeply entrenched in the ways land reform initiatives have been displayed in Paraguay (2012). James Scott, for his part, has placed at the core of State power its capacity to achieve a representational practice capable of rendering intelligible the phenomena that it seeks to govern (1998). However insightful and influential these accounts might be, they do not cast light on the important role played by *form* in achieving these power effects. If several entities seek to mimic the State for mobilizing their biopolitical projects, then there must be something peculiar about the *forms* that the State adopts for exercising its power, for producing its materialities, and for establishing appropriate ways of regulating subjects that are in themselves politically meaningful.

This is not to argue that form and content can be separate in everyday practice, but that certain aspects of how the State materializes as form are powerful in themselves, a power that is relatively independent from the informational and epistemological contents that these forms convey and manufacture. In this regard, Aretxaga has proposed the idea of State form “to emphasize the notion of a powerful State devoid of content, which then serves as a screen for a variety of identifications and as a performative mask (...) for a variety of power discourses and practices” (Aretxaga 2003:395). The form of the State is therefore not an inert vehicle of information, representations and practices. Papers, bureaus, ledgers, seals and bureaucratic jargons, all of them are charged with the conspicuous authority of the

State; they possess the performative ability to establish juridical (and other kinds of) truths, to validate claims and prompt human beings to action, and in some cases they even rule over lives and deaths. The formal efficacy of the State form works to elevate specific claims of authority to higher ethical and political grounds, that is, to transform situated regulatory claims into the kinds of universalizing and transcendental statements on which any governmental project is based upon. Form therefore erases the particular circumstances that motivate particular claims and introduces in them a moral power that they would not have otherwise. In this sense, as Abrams puts it, “the State is (...) in every sense of the term a triumph of concealment. It conceals the real history and relations of subjection behind an a-historical mask of legitimating illusion; contrives to deny the existence of connections and conflicts which would if recognized be incompatible with the claimed autonomy and integration of the State” (1988:77).

Acknowledging the power inscribed in the State form is crucial for visualizing, as Gupta put it, the enormous amounts of human and nonhuman labor necessary to bring the State together as a transcendental unity. And yet, by dispossessing the State from any necessary content, it becomes also evident how various non-State entities can claim statehood while at the same time remaining, in several cases, at odds with the juridico-political foundations of the State. Material forms, therefore, are powerful means by which various networks and organizations are able not necessarily to “see” like a State, but to “talk” like one. In other words, through the performative appropriation of these material forms, non-State entities can (and do) introduce State’s forms of authority in their regulatory claims without necessarily acquiring the functional capacities associated with State practice. No production of intelligibility or cybernetic efficiency is needed for setting into place the political deployments of authority that one normally links to the State. However, the material

production of a State-like infrastructure does set the conditions for the emergence of alternative governmental projects capable of competing with the State.

A necessary question emerging from this perspective is where this encounter between State materialities and non-State entities can indeed produce alternative governmental projects. Modern States are based on the putative monopoly of both legitimate violence and the representation of the common good, an idea that necessarily entails the exclusion of competitive governmental projects within their territories. And yet, across the territories (virtually) controlled by modern States, there are specific geographical and political spaces in which States are either unable to proscribe alternative biopolitical practices or actually depend on their proliferation for mobilizing their own purposes. Deborah Poole and Veena Das have coined the notion of *margins of the State* for talking about these spaces of ambiguity, where the boundaries between the legal and the extralegal, the private and the public, and the political and the economic are particularly unstable and porous (Das and Poole 2004). The idea of *margin* refers to a relative position in a geographical and/or political space where the distance between the ideal imagery of the State and its empirical deployment is untenable. It alludes to coordinates in which what the State should be according to itself is morally and functionally incompatible with the way sovereignty, violence and administration are actually set into place.

Das and Poole gain inspiration from Giorgio Agamben's reflections on States of exception. For Agamben, States of exception deal with a "suspension of the juridical order" in which certain individuals lose their status as biopolitical subjects entitled to be protected and taken care of (Agamben 1998). By acknowledging States of exception as the secret power of modern States, Poole and Das are able to address the fact that spaces of legal and political indeterminacy are not historical remnants to be overcome, but *constitutive* parts of

every State formation. Yet, margins are never entirely disentangled from the State formations that make them what they are. Rather, as I expect to show further in my case study, State material forms are as capable of circulating and deploying their power effects in these fields of political indeterminacy as in the “core” spaces saturated by State power. This exposes the ubiquitous character of the State: while being a fragmented, fragile and striving entity, even when one subverts it, its own forms of imagination and practice are set into motion.

It is in these ambiguous margins that alternative governmental projects can find a space to flourish. Drug cartels, guerrilla organizations, customary powers, and the like, normally find their biopolitical projects more likely to thrive in these spaces of political indeterminacy. Here, the possibility of subverting/appropriating the material dimensions of the State plays a key role as a means of moving these projects forward. Richard Kernaghan, for example, has shown how crucial it was for Shining Path, a Peruvian terrorist organization having its apogee during the 1980s, to alter the materialities of the State in its margins as a way of asserting and subverting particular territorial claims. In his work, he shows how the way in which Shining Path terrorists materially transformed the *surface* of the *Carretera Marginal* (Marginal Highway) in Peruvian Amazonia had fundamental implications for the way claims and counter-claims on the Peruvian State sovereignty in the area were formulated (2012:507).

Nevertheless, margins are not only the spaces in which alternative governmental projects get to compete with the State, but also where States can find themselves depending on illicit entities and practices for reinforcing their powers. Understanding the mutuality of State power and illicit entities in the margins exposes the critical role of Agamben’s States of exception in modern political life. This definition is close to what some authors have pointed out as the “empirical State”, meaning the practical deployment of the State through situated

bureaucracies and offices, which emphasizes the existence of “messy politics that often involve illicit alliances” (Heyman 1999:12). For instance, in her ethnography of governance transformations in Colombia, Leslie Gill shows how paramilitary forces, a “third force” emerged out of the conflict between revolutionary guerrillas and the Colombian State, embody many administrative functions of the State through clientelist networks of exchange with poor peri-urban populations (Gill 2009). In a similar way, Andres Guerrero has emphasized how crucial it was for the Ecuadorian State to “privatize” ethnic administration during the mid-19th by placing in the hands of local powers the responsibility of supervising and controlling indigenous populations. In this way, Guerrero identifies a critical moment in the history of Ecuador in which the State’s administration of indigenous populations depended entirely on its alliance with regional landholders and *hacendados*, that is, an alliance with a form of social domination that directly contradicted the liberal postulates upon which Latin American democracies were supposedly based on (Muratorio et al 1994:201).

The picture that emerges from this discussion is one in which the modern State has not just been dispossessed from its transcendental and internally coherent nature, but also from its monopoly over statehood itself. From this perspective, it is not that globalization weakens State power in favor of new global political formations, but that the material forms of the State have proliferated to the extent that they stop being a monopoly of the State itself. As they get deeply entrenched in myriad forms of political imagination and practice, some of which actually seek to subvert State authority, they introduce State’s forms of authority in claims whose nature is not necessarily compatible with the ideal juridico-political foundations of the State. By dissolving statehood in this plural force field, to distinguish what can be considered legal or illegal becomes a highly problematic subject of inquiry.

As I expect to have shown, statehood is a kind of political performance that reaches well beyond the official boundaries of modern States. In throwing light into this fact, scholarship has focused primarily in understanding how statehood permeates illicit organizations that lie at the boundaries between legality and illegality. Less attention has been given to understanding the powerful effects of State material forms in shaping alternative governmental projects led by indigenous organizations on their claimed territories, a form of political action whose ethical and political goals can be more easily articulated with official conservation and environmental discourses. In the next section, I will discuss the critical role of writing in creating the material forms that mobilize State authority in the context of alternative governmental projects.

Writing in the margins of the State: the ubiquity of bureaucratic imagination

In his historical study about the Cuna of Panama, James Howe finalizes his introductory chapter by transcribing an English-written letter sent by a group of 19th Century Cuna leaders to Queen Victoria of England, asking her to intervene on their behalf against the Colombians (1998:20). The letter, beautifully written and full of formal idioms and courtesies, serves as Howe's starting point to explore the long-term intimate relations that the Cuna people have intertwined with "Western" technologies and ideas and, in particular, with the written word. While the Cuna example seems to be an extreme case of indigenous entanglements with writing technologies, the power of the written word has been a fundamental motif in the colonial history of ethnic politics in Latin America and beyond. For example, the power of the written word has been a crucial element in shaping the relations between indigenous populations and the State in the Andean region, since from the early 16th Century it was used as a vehicle for introducing the spectral force of Christian

religion, and at the same time as a powerful technology of colonial control that made possible myriad flows between Colonies and Metropolis. Other authors have also examined how writing emerged as a field of political negotiations between Andean indigenous leaders and the State both during the Colonial and Republican periods, a process by which indigenous leaders learnt to “talk” through the bureaucratic and formalistic languages embodied in official documents (Guerrero 2010; Thurner 2006). More recently, authors like Olivier Allard have shown how written documents serve as a way of producing clientelist networks that link indigenous peoples and State benefactors in complex relations of patronage and gift exchange (Allard 2012). In this sense, writing has not only been a vehicle for conveying information between the State and its subjects, but a field of political and stylistic imagination that various marginalized groups had to learn to tame and master over time.

Anthropological studies on written documents and their social lives have significantly proliferated in recent times (Riles 2006; Hull 2012). However, early anthropological reflections on the social dimensions of writing are directly related to the work of Jack Goody. Goody sets his discussion about writing in the context of the development of complex forms of social organization in different times and settings. For him, writing is intimately linked to the emergence of new needs in societies as they became “critically dependent (...) on the capacity to communicate at a distance, to store information, and lend to depersonalize interaction” (1986:90). Writing introduces the possibility of overcoming distances by fixating discourse in a permanent register, hence creating a gap between the dialectically open nature of dialogue and the relatively obscure exegesis of the written word (See Messick 1993). The broader scales of communication promoted by writing also produce particular forms of abstraction that work for bringing different contexts and elements under

an homogeneous nomenclature, hence setting the foundations for bureaucratic ways of reasoning. In this regard, Goody notes that “the language employed in book-keeping and accounts is much further removed from speech, being largely composed of lexemes that are lifted from context” (1986:94).

However, this combination of abstraction and exegetic obscurity is not politically naïve. The mystification of the written word by means of its estrangement from the realities it refers to has fundamental political consequences. By linking the development and stabilization of writing technologies to the emergence of bureaucratic and merchant rationalities inscribed in book-keeping and property registers, Goody shows how “the introduction of a written title into a society where rights and duties were held orally had a far-reaching effect which was particularly devastating for those without access to new media” (1986:81). It was through written registers and the forms of authority that they embodied that dominant classes – “landlords, ecclesiastical as well as secular” – were able to formulate authoritative claims that effectively dispossessed lower (illiterate) classes from their assets. A similar history of dispossession can be found in E.P. Thompson’s oft-cited study about the Black Act in 18th Century England (1975). In this study, Thompson shows how the Black Act cannot be seen only as an extreme legal response to the increase in poaching and robbery, but also as a way through which the ruling Whigs sought to legitimize their exclusive domain over forests that had been traditionally used by English peasants. Here, it is once again the monopoly over the critical powers of writing that allows an emerging class to naturalize their control at the expense of illiterate classes.

A complementary view in this respect comes from the work of James Howe, who reflects on the organizational effects of writing from the perspective of the colonial situation lived by the Cuna of Panama. Howe documents the process by which writing comes to

permeate different realms of the Cuna's social life such as ritual learning, community government and singing gatherings. In contrast to the "civilizational" powers normally attributed to writing (its alleged utility for assimilating indigenous peoples into national modern life), Howe finds that the introduction of writing has made "the Cuna no more like Panama or Colombia than they were before" (1979:12). In this sense, writing has "even increased differences with the national culture" by giving the substrate upon which new projects of Cuna self-government have expanded and transformed. However, Howe notes that while the Cuna did not start resembling their *criollo* neighbors because of the introduction of writing, they did start to develop some of the "generic aspects of political evolution and organizational complexity" that Goody and others have associated with writing (1979:13), such as bureaucratic differentiation, large-scale coordination, procedural formalization, etc.

These accounts reveal a fundamental aspect about writing and its associated powers. They show how the appropriation of literacy allow marginalized populations to actively contest the actions of dominant groups who seek to legitimize their dispossession and exercise political control over them. Writing is important not so much for what it conveys (national culture, law, knowledge, and the like) but for what it *does* and allows doing. This point is close to what Gupta sought to emphasize when he said that "writing matters to the poor through its forms and practices, not just through its content" (2012:142). The appropriation of writing by historically illiterate populations enables certain forms of agency that were not available to them beforehand. As in the case of the Cuna, writing does not necessarily lead to the embrace of the national or to the reduction of differences; on the contrary, it can actually activate forms of political practice that accentuate differences and make possible new political projects.

But there is another, more critical implication in this way of understanding writing. The incision that the act of writing creates between the open dialogue and the fixed text inflicts on the written form a vocation for universality from which its authority ultimately emanates. By being artifacts that exist independently from its producers and with a relative autonomy from the contexts that gave them origin, written texts produce a fascination that intimately connects them to the production of “truths”, that is, they take their authority from their aspiration to legitimize certain claims about reality. For texts, it is critical to achieve this status of truthfulness and legitimization. This is why, turning to E.P. Thompson’s work once again, the written law cannot be just an ideological formation that actualizes the power of the ruling class, but it needs to express itself as a legitimate discourse that produces a fiction of equality and universality where, sometimes, the poor can indeed win at the expense of the wealthy (1975). In this way, writing tends to produce legitimacy, and through legitimacy it constitutes “truths” with deep political and material ramifications. The “truths” inscribed in texts are crucial for understanding how writing produce its political effects. In her study of a relocation camp in contemporary New Delhi, Emma Tarlo coins the notion of “paper truths” for referring to the precarious and fragile “truths” that are produced through written texts. In speaking about the ledgers she finds at an office in charge of managing relocations and evictions, Tarlo notes that “paper truths’, despite their flimsiness and elasticity, despite their potential to be forged and destroyed, nonetheless have authority” (2003:75). For Tarlo, even when papers have a fragile materiality that makes them vulnerable to mimicry, destruction and alteration, they do cause powerful effects on the “real world”: they are capable of causing massive evictions, inflicting devastation and dispossession, and even death.

Writing's ability to produce "truths" explains why it becomes so crucial for marginalized populations to apprehend the material and practical means for producing documentation. And yet, it is important to note that these "truths" do not form a coherent and coordinated field of representation. Different textual enunciations can indeed make claims about reality that are incompatible with each other, and their enactment in different context can actually have disparate political effects. This is something that Tarlo notes in her description of how documents are used in negotiations on housing allocation in New Delhi. She claims that in this context "the status of the documents seemed (...) ambiguous. The power of attorney papers, for example, seemed to function simultaneously as a proof that an illegal purchase had taken place and as evidence of the purchaser's right to become officially recognized as an 'unauthorized occupant'" (2003:74). The fact that the same document conforms to conflicted perspectives on a subject reveal an interesting property about "paper truths": they are effective not because they fix a 'proper' representation of reality, but because of the powerful evocations that they can mobilize in the world they supposedly describe. Kregg Hetherington makes a similar point in his analysis of the role of paper documents in land reform initiatives in Paraguay. In examining the developmental discourse of these initiatives, he states that what is "rarely acknowledged in most conversations about information for development, (is) that the objects being represented are in large part constituted by the representational practices themselves. Indeed, what is most interesting about (the) claim that information is something more than 'just paper' is how completely paper-focused the activities and concerns of bureaucrats actually are" (2012:7). What is at stake in Hetherington's analysis is the situated materiality of written documents (See also Hull 2008). Information is not something "out there", which would amount to say that the quality of a document is contingent upon its ability to represent reality. Claims about reality

dwell in documents themselves, and their efficacy is contingent upon how documents are mobilized in everyday political life.

The fact that written “truths” have no necessity for mutual conformity or general coherence makes the power of writing a peculiarly unstable political practice in contemporary times. While Goody and others have shown how writing has been monopolized by ruling classes in almost every historical context, the advance of mass media, public instruction and local bureaucracies across the world has set the conditions for the proliferation of various writing practices among previously illiterate sectors of society. What is crucial to note here is that along with the expansion of the mechanical and cognitive capacity to write, an emerging form of political practice intimately linked with the development of the modern bureaucratic State starts permeating new social worlds as well. Writing is a critical way by which marginalized sectors of society can enact the material forms of the State in their political practice. It is a technology by which peoples can introduce new forms of authority and regulation in their political projects. It is, in sum, a means for evoking State power.

Evoking the State through writing draws attention to the power of State material forms rather than to the particular contents that States are supposed to mobilize. In relation to this point, Akhil Gupta notices that “writing is constitutive of the State; (which means that) it is not a substitute for action but is itself a form of action. Interpreting bureaucratic writing in functional terms as being instrumental toward another end is fundamentally mistaken because the vast majority of such writing is not read by anyone” (2012:36). If writing cannot be reduced to a means by which State and State-like entities apprehend reality, then the ability of apprehending State material forms through writing is meaningful in itself. This is perhaps what Veena Das expresses when she claims that the State “as a form of

regulation (...) oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being” (Das and Poole 2004:225). In one sense, the State is indeed the visualizing and regulatory technology that James Scott and others have argued it to be. But in another sense, State practices do not need to be a function of anything to be powerful. Writing can be in itself a practice that evokes the authority of the State and introduces its “magical” powers in particular claims and actions.

It is precisely this spectral aspect of the State what allows it to be a ubiquitous presence in contemporary politics. Veena Das notes that “once the State institutes forms of governance through technologies of writing, it simultaneously institutes the possibility of forgery, imitation, and the mimetic performances of its power” (Das and Poole 2004:227). In a similar fashion, Emma Tarlo shows how “the State's demand for paper proofs generates the popular production of paper truths as people mimic the very writing technologies that ensnare them” (Tarlo 2003:10). The fact that in the contemporary world writing practices are able to flourish among previously illiterate subjects does not amount to a success of national modernization or cultural homogenization; but it certainly entails the proliferation of a particular kind of political imagination and practice intimately linked to State practices. Hence, even when writing might allow for the proliferation of political projects that seek to subvert the State’s authority, “it is precisely because the documents can be forged and used out of context (...) that the State can penetrate the life of the community and yet remain fully elusive” (Das and Poole 2004: 245).

That written documents become powerful not because the information they convey but because of their capacity to evoke forms of authority embodied in State material forms exposes their fundamental affective properties. Despite the fact that written documents and other artifacts of modernity are normally thought of as rationalizing instruments, modernity

“is and has always been structurally affective” (Mazarella 2009:298). This means that the efficacy of these artifacts supposes their capacity to affect other entities at a presubjective level, where rational deliberation and discourse has not yet taken place. Here, affect theory has raised important questions regarding the dependency of governmental and political projects on “a terrain that is presubjective without being presocial” (Mazarella, 2009:291). The notion of affect seeks to explore this presubjective realm by taking “humans (as) corporeal creatures with important subliminal affective intensities and resonances that are decisive in the way we form opinions and beliefs” (Martin 2013:153). In this sense, written documents are politically effective not because they are able to convey bits of information that are somehow distinguishable from their material existences. They are effective because they are capable of motivating emotions and affecting *through* their materialities, as they prompt certain reactions and set the terrain for particular forms of desire. What is at stake here is the mobilizing capacity of State material forms. It is precisely because the aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions of written documentation – seals, signatures, ID numbers, and the like – have the ability *in themselves* to affect their human interlocutors that they can index State power and evoke its particular forms of authority in contexts and situations that transcend the official State itself. Here, the affective properties of written documentation also collapse the modernist separation of bureaucratic formality and affective relationality; for while bureaucratic practice is indeed intended to depersonalize and abstract personal interactions (Weber 1978), it is unavoidably grounded in affective relationships from where the political efficacy of documents partially emerges.

CHAPTER 3. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, THE PERUVIAN STATE AND THE GOVERNMENTALIZATION OF AMAZONIA

Since the very inception of the colonial era in South America, early Spanish settlers and adventurers conceived of the Amazon lowlands as imaginary sites of both promise and fear, a place where legends of wealthy empires and temples coexisted with the antagonism of cannibal tribes of semi-humans. At the same time, though, Amazonia quickly became an object of thorough and systematic legal and political debate, which included a deep reflection about the nature of its inhabitants and the best way of dealing with its unpredictable and harsh nature. In this chapter, I will explore the relationships between indigenous peoples of Amazonia, their forests and what I would like to call the governmentalization of Amazonia (Burchell et al 1991:103), a process by which I refer to the way in which Amazonian forests come to be understood through the epistemological and pragmatic principles of modern governmentality inscribed by, but not limited to, the Peruvian State. My goal is to show how entrenched governmental thinking is in the history of Amazonia, and how the complexity of current forms of political and ecological life in Amazonia cannot be understood without taking into account how the State comes to be experienced historically by both indigenous peoples and their forests.

Early conceptualizations of Amazonia in colonial Peru

After the installment of the early colonial Spanish regime in South America, European scholars were confronted with a complex philosophical and juridical debate: what

was the existential status of the Indians that populate the New World? Spanish medieval thought was based on an intimate association between blood, custom and religion in which social practices were seen as outcomes of inherent spiritual dispositions inscribed in blood (Manrique 1999). The “human” status of Indians was not a point of quarrel between jurists though. What constituted a matter of intense debate was the position occupied by Indians within the hierarchical and steady cosmology of Medieval juridical thought (Manero Salvador 2009). This question was the main point at stake in the widely known Valladolid Debate, a philosophical and juridical controversy that confronted two well respect 16th Century Spanish jurists: Bartolomé De Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. De Las Casas, then Bishop of Chiapas, argued for the redemption of the capacity of Indians through their conversion to Catholicism. This position amounted to a consideration of Indians as subjects that potentially could be holders of rights and duties under the Spanish Crown. On the other hand, Ginés de Sepúlveda advocated for the fundamental spiritual and moral inferiority of Indians, and the necessity of their reduction to slaves and forced labor (Dumont 2009). The victory of De Las Casas contributed to the juridical and moral creation of a Colonial political regime based on “Two Republics”: an Aristotelian social model based on hierarchical differences between Indians and Spanish, that nevertheless acknowledged the humanness of Indians and the value of Indian nobility within the Spanish Empire (Turner 1997).

The debate between De Las Casas and De Sepulveda inaugurated a form of juridical reflection that proved crucial for how Amazonian forests and their dwellers were conceptualized through notions of otherness and inferiority throughout history. Even when De Las Casas and Sepúlveda disagreed in crucial aspects, the constitutive inferiority of Indians and the necessity to “govern” their souls and attitudes was not a matter of discussion. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge which “Indians” these jurists were

talking about in the context of 16th Century juridical debates. While the Andean Indians were strongly associated with forms of nobility and social complexity that the Europeans valorized and understood, *la Montaña*, or as it would come to be known, Amazonia, was seen as a frontier without government. This vision is clear in the typology proposed by José De Acosta in his *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias* (De Acosta [1589]1954) for classifying “barbaric peoples”. According to De Acosta, barbaric people possess different levels of government and moral development. There are the peoples who do not distance themselves so much from reason and letters, such as the Chinese and the Japanese. There are also those such as the Aztecs and the Inkas who, even when not mastering the written word, are capable of creating proper forms of government and settlement. Finally, Acosta mentions a third category of barbaric peoples, who constitute the lower form of moral development and government. In this category he places the wild men who “resemble beasts and barely have any human sentiments” (1954: 67).

There are very interesting aspects of José De Acosta’s early ethnological taxonomy. First of all, it is interesting that he chooses both writing and government as two major criteria to inform his classification, directly linking them to the moral and existential status of certain peoples. Second, it is meaningful that both writing and government are seen as unfolding together, that is, as two aspects of the same process of moral and political development of which Europe would be the major exponent. Finally, it is notable how Amazonian peoples are perceived as an inferior limit of human development that can be barely distinguished from bestiality. It is also important to note how this characterization of Amazonia is related to the absence of both writing and government amongst people that is seen as nomadic, ungoverned and uncivilized. In this way, both De Acosta and others decisively contributed to a portrayal of Amazonia as a space still to be tamed by civilization,

and as a site defined by the absence of government and of the cult of reason made possible by literacy. By being excluded from writing, government and other motors of civilization, Amazonia remained an external object of both fascination and fear during most of the Colonial era (Figures 2 and 3).

However, the “conquest” of Amazonia had indeed been an important enterprise for the Spanish Crown since the 16th Century. Numerous expeditions led by well-known adventurers such as Francisco de Orellana explored and described the riverine indigenous towns that populated the margins of the Amazon River (Gaspar de Carbajal 1955). They also helped to nurture a specific form of imagination linking Amazonia to cannibals, mythical female warriors and golden temples such as El Dorado. During the first centuries of the Colonial era, complex networks of exchange and trade also linked Amazonian indigenous peoples with missionary settlements in the Andean piedmont and European merchants in the Caribbean coasts (Santos Granero 1992). However, it was the missionary system commanded by Franciscans and Jesuits that played a primary role in expanding the range of governmental and economic practices of the Colony into the Amazon lowlands, a process heavily mediated by violence, revolt and exploitation, but also by the introduction of new habits and technologies in indigenous societies (García Jordán 2001).

Michel Foucault has considered the important governmental effects of the missionary system in the lives of indigenous peoples of Amazonia. In his lectures at the *Collège de France*, he notes that missions in Amazonia “were (...) disciplinary microcosms in which there was a hierarchical system to which the Jesuits held the keys; (...) individuals and communities received an absolutely statutory schema of behavior indicating their working hours, mealtimes, time allowed for rest, and the fixed time when they were woken up to make love and produce children. It therefore involved a full employment of time” (Foucault



Figure 2: A drawing of the Captain Otorongo Achachi, Conqueror of the Antisuyu (Inka's word for Amazonia)

Taken from Guaman Poma de Ayala's *Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno* (1600 – 1615)

(Note the half human, half feline creature that emerges from the forest)



Figure 3: The Tupinambá (an indigenous people that still exists today) according to German adventurer Hans Staden (1557)

Taken from Hans Staden's *Verdadera Historia y Descripción de un País de Salvajes, Desnudos, Ferozes y Caníbales situado en el Nuevo Mundo, América*

2006:69). In this quote, Foucault identifies a form of discipline exercised upon indigenous time and behavior that resembles that of other emblematic disciplinary sites of modernity, such as the factory and the penal system. However, while the missionary system certainly produced a series of effects in the ways some indigenous peoples lived and thought their lives, its deployment in Amazonian territories was a fragmented and erratic process. Most interfluvial indigenous groups – those inhabiting remote inland areas not easily accessible from the main river courses – had limited interactions with missionaries, while other groups previously “reduced” by missionaries came back to their previous forms of life after revolts or mission relocations.

In 1767, the expulsion of the Jesuits by the Spanish Crown weakened even more the missionary system. As Barclay has noted, even when the Crown sought to replace Jesuits with other kinds of congregations, “these religious groups were not able to rearticulate the missionary space that had spread over the Napo, Marañón-Amazonas, Pastaza and Huallaga basins” (Barclay 2009:37). At the turn of the 19th Century and the first years of the Republican era, the political and geographical landscape of Peruvian Amazonia was therefore dominated by “a series of scattered riverine villages, in which a few families of catechized Indians and *mestizos* dwelled” (Barclay 2009:33).

The early governmentalization of Amazonia

Peru emerged as an independent Republic in 1821. During the early years of the Peruvian Republic, Amazonia kept on being a region in which the State exercised a limited to nonexistent regulatory power. The Asháninka rebellion led by Juan Santos Atahualpa in 1742 had freed the lower Tambo and Ene rivers, one of the few Amazonian territories where the Colonial State had exercised a direct influence in a semi-permanent way (Lienhard

2010). In such a context, Amazonian limits between Peru and its neighboring countries were set according to imaginary calculations based on official maps (Torralba 1978:2; Peru and Brasil 1909); even when the territories encompassed within such boundaries were not known by any State bureaucrat. Amazonia therefore emerged in the new Peruvian Republic as an internal boundary to be tamed and conquered, a process that coincided with the rise of the liberal projects of modernization and nation-making of the emerging white Peruvian elites (Hobsbawm 1992).

Thus, the 19th Century witnessed the growing production of images that represented Amazonia and its dwellers as a burden to be overcome through their assimilation into the political and economic life of the Nation. An image of *El Perú Ilustrado*, a late 19th Century journal led by leaders of the Peruvian liberal wing, is particularly dramatic in terms of this forms of representation. In the image, the viewer can appreciate two opposing sets of elements. In the middle frame, a train symbolizing the penetration of modernity successfully overcomes the Andean mountains. On the lower frame, a semi-naked Indian bearing a crown of feathers and surrounded by indigenous motifs is about to shoot an arrow towards the train (Figure 4). The image clearly evokes the coordinates in which Amazonia was imagined in relation to the Peruvian Nation: a tribesman, representing backwardness and savage violence, attacks the most visible symbol of modernity and industrial expansion in the 19th Century, a train overcoming a difficult geography.

Liberal ideas about progress, cultural homogenization and modernization worked to bring the incorporation of Amazonia to the fore of the Peruvian national agenda. In contrast to colonial forms of occupation based on military and ecclesiastical actions, Republican liberal occupation was based on the expansion of markets and the production of a racially defined “civilized” society. By the decade of 1850s, the Peruvian State led several attempts

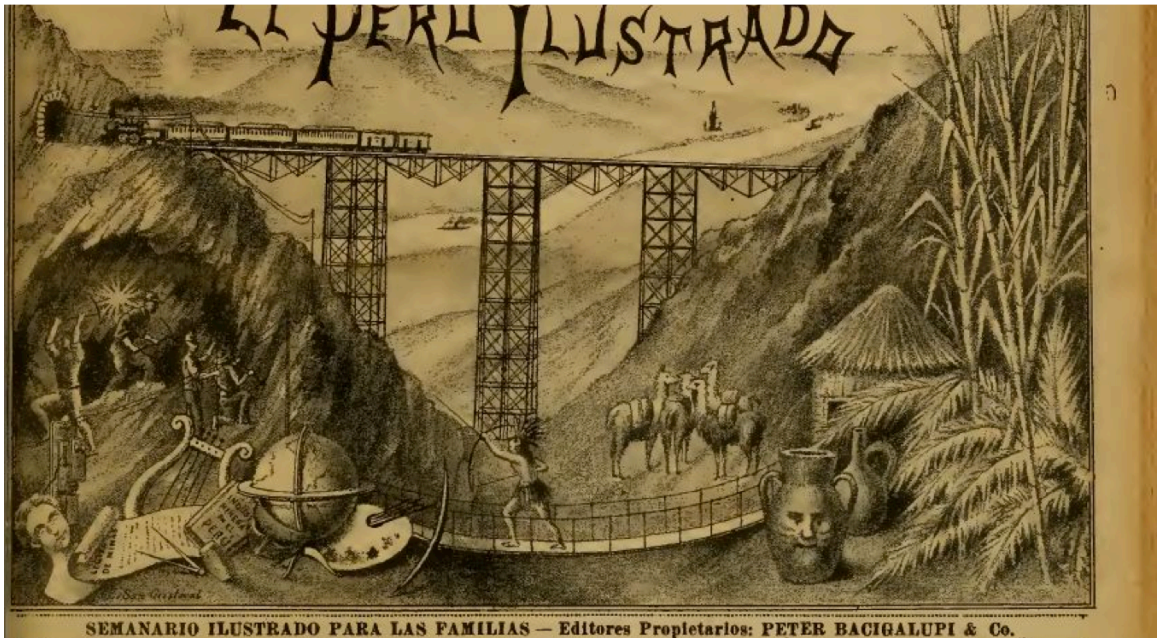


Figure 4: An Indian attacks modernization.

Taken from the Journal *El Perú Ilustrado* (1887)

to promote the colonization of the Andean tropical piedmont by groups of poor European settlers (Santos-Granero and Barclay 1998), a strategy explicitly aimed at “improving the racial profile” of the region and installing European values of entrepreneurship and righteousness. A few years later, in 1851, the Peruvian State signed a treaty with its Brazilian counterpart for promoting trade in Amazonia by turning the Amazon river into a commerce route between the two countries (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:12). This treaty entailed the opening of Amazonia to global extractive markets, and included the creation of an Amazonian naval station, the hiring of a company in charge of fluvial transportation services and the migration of new officials and businessmen to the newly created villages of the Amazon route.

Additionally, after the creation of this treaty, the Peruvian State used its new naval presence in Amazonian territories for mapping out the main rivers and streams of the region. This process entailed the arrival of State officials to areas of Amazonia that up to that point had been invisible to the State, and allowed for the development of early cartographies documenting the geography of the region, a process by which Amazonia began to be intelligible for national bureaucrats in Lima, the capital, and elsewhere. In this way, as Barclay and Santos Granero have argued, “thanks to government intervention Loreto (Amazonia) was transformed from a backwater into a new, promising frontier economy”, which set the terrain for the upcoming development of the so-called *rubber boom* (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:21). By 1870, the European and North American development of the automobile industry set a pressure without precedent over the rubber resources of tropical forests in Amazonia and Africa. In 1884, rubber exportation in Peru had multiplied tenfold in comparison to the rates of 1853, hence turning rubber extraction in the main economic activity in Peruvian Amazonia (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000: 21). The

increasing circulation of rubber, money, people and manufactures within the region prompted the State to increment their “presence” in Amazonia and exercise more systematic forms of government in the region. In particular, tax collection became the subject of numerous conflicts throughout between the central State and regional bourgeoisies (Barclay 2009).

However, the State’s attempts to govern the Amazon lowlands for political and economic purposes did not include a systematic project of governmentalization of indigenous peoples. Beyond the semi-urban dynamic of emergent villages and cities, indigenous peoples of Amazonia were not the target of any massive plan of educational or behavioral transformation, a picture that largely differs from what was taking place in the Peruvian Andes at the turn of the 20th Century (Contreras 1996). In contrast, regional elites saw indigenous populations not as the seed of an upcoming regional society, but as the terrain upon which new sources of cheap labor could be extracted for sustaining their extractive endeavors (Santos Granero and Barclay 2000: 35). It was because of these reasons that rubberlords sought to expand their sources of labor by disciplining “uncivilized” indigenous groups, an endeavor that they conducted through a combination of seduction and violence. In particular, *correrías*, planned assault on indigenous groups, were systematically set into place in order to capture indigenous children, who later were gradually made dependent on manufactured goods and persuaded to work in extraction camps.

During the first two decades of the 20th Century, the opening of rubber plantations in Southeast Asia gradually crushed the rubber economy in Amazonia (Warren 1987). By the time the *rubber boom* had reached its end, most of indigenous peoples in Amazonia had developed systematic relations with market agents and depended to some degree on a regular provision of manufactured goods. However, they did not constitute a positive object of

government that could be subject to State action and regulation. While in the Andes the State created nationwide plans of rural education and legally acknowledge indigenous lands in the 1920 National Constitution (Abanto 2011), indigenous peoples from Amazonia kept on being a relatively obscure domain of governmental action from the standpoint of the Peruvian State. Up to this point, indigenous engagements with State practices, writing technologies and ideologies of modernization were significantly limited. This is something that gradually changed during the second half of the 20th Century.

Indigenous lands, education and representation in the second half of the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 1940s, rural Peruvian Amazonia remained a landscape dominated by scattered agroextractive *fundos* that traded a variety of forest products and occasionally interacted with indigenous peoples in order to take advantage of their labor (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000: 139). However, in 1946, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an organization dedicated to translate the Bible and indoctrinate indigenous peoples throughout the world, reached an agreement with the Peruvian Ministry of Education in order to promote education in Amazonia through the establishment of rural schools and the training of indigenous teachers who could spread the word of God and of the State using their own native languages (Stoll 1985:158). This project meant the first regionwide program of alphabetization in rural Peruvian Amazonia, a process that for the first time exposed several indigenous leaders to the written word and its political secrets. During the following decades, the social and political effects of this campaign were radical. Along with the progressive catechization and alphabetization of large numbers of indigenous men, the construction of schools encouraged the adoption of nucleated forms of indigenous

settlement along main rivers and streams (Warren 1992), and the development of an intimate relation of indigenous ways of living with writing technologies.

In 1974, the Peruvian State promulgated the Native Communities and Agrarian Promotion for the Jungle Regions Act (DL 20.653), a mechanism for legally acknowledging indigenous lands in Amazonia through the creation of *native communities*. This legal innovation arrived 54 years after indigenous lands in the Andes were similarly recognized. Prior to this Act, the Peruvian State only acknowledged indigenous lands in Amazonia through a transitional figure that did not guaranteed property, but that protected the “habitat” of indigenous tribes until they “could be assimilated to civilization” (Chirif and García 2007:156). With the 1974 Act, the Peruvian State established a form of communitarian title allocation inspired by the forms of social organization of agricultural societies in the Andes. In Amazonia, where indigenous groups were traditionally hunter-gatherers, fishers and horticulturalists, the implementation of the Act produced various results. In some cases, it promoted the formation of nucleated settlement patterns based on a communitarian form of social organization. In other cases, it formalized processes of demographic concentration that were already taking place on account of the proliferation of the school system, roads, market labor and missions (Chirif and García 2007:148).

In any case, the 1974 Act radically altered the relationships between the Peruvian State’s forms of government and indigenous peoples of Amazonia. First, the Act introduced a series of legal requirements regulating the creation and internal governance of native communities that were supervised by the State. In doing so, the creation of native communities surreptitiously introduced forms of bureaucratic regulation into the daily life of indigenous peoples, as the celebration of communal assemblies, the creation of community registers and the constant production of community acts became part of indigenous

everyday politics. Second, the implementation of the Act gradually produced a cadastral system in Amazonia that made indigenous territories “visible” to the Peruvian State. While the process of community land titling in Peruvian Amazonia is even today an incomplete and fragmented process (Hierro et al. 1998), it has produced particular forms of legal recognition, categorization and demarcation of indigenous lands that can be read and visualized at a distance by State bureaucrats. Third, and partially as a consequence of the previous point, the 1974 Act created a political terrain in which indigenous leaders could strive for land recognition and other collective entitlements. Here, teachers and other literate indigenous leaders played a significant role in interacting with State officers and bureaus in order to have their communities titled.

More recently, the Peruvian State has also subscribed to various international agreements that safeguard indigenous rights, including rights to territorial protection, education, healthcare and citizenship. In 1995, the Peruvian State adopted the Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, an internationally binding instrument that acknowledges the right of indigenous peoples to have their lands and traditions protected, and to be consulted if any legal or administrative action could affect their collective rights. In 2007, the United Nations also issued its Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), a soft law document that asserts the duty of all State members to seek the consent of indigenous peoples when State measures affect their rights. These and other laws, treaties and conventions have strengthened the position of indigenous peoples to voice their concerns and acquire better legal and political grounds to counteract the actions of State and market agents within their claimed territories.

While advances in terms of indigenous recognition have been significant in the second half of the 20th Century, during this same period Amazonia became the target of

aggressive processes of colonization and natural resource extraction. Historians have consistently documented the critical role of the State in building highways, incentivizing colonization, and promoting extractive activities in several parts of Peruvian Amazonia (Barclay et al 1991; Chirif and García 2007; Douroujeanni et al 2010). These processes openly conflicted with the territorial claims of indigenous peoples, who in most cases perceive these modernization attempts as threats to their rights to land and self-determination. Moreover, the way these projects were advanced shows the significant continuities between the old Colonial and early Republican discourses of conquest and taming, and late modernization projects conducted by recent governments in Amazonia. The most notorious example of this trend is Fernando Belaunde Terry, president of Peru during the periods of 1963–1968 and 1980–1985, who under mottos such as “A land without people for people without land” and “the conquest of Peru by the Peruvians” led an aggressive process of colonization in which the existence of indigenous peoples in Amazonia was completely overlooked.

The second half of the 20th Century was therefore a period in which two emergent processes coincided in Amazonia. On the one hand, an aggressive process of assimilation replicated the old colonial imaginaries of backwardness and savagery under a new veil of State modernization and legalism. On the other hand, indigenous peoples emerged during this period as objects of governmental intervention, as they became targets of educational, territorial and other kinds of policy reforms. The progressive “legibility” of indigenous peoples in Amazonia from the standpoint of the State allowed some indigenous leaders to gradually develop a critical engagement with the bureaucratic languages and practices of the State. Amidst these two processes, new political subjectivities were being produced among indigenous leaders that, while being strongly critical of the State and its modernization, were

heavily permeated by writing technologies, bureaucratic forms of imagination, and Western institutional forms of organization.

Indigenous organizations in contemporary Peru

In 1964, during the first presidential term of Fernando Belaunde Terry, an official delegation was sent to the westernmost region of Peruvian Amazonia in order to explore the viability of some infrastructure innovations that the government had planned. Without noticing it, the delegation got into Mayoruna territory, the land of an indigenous people whose remote location at the Brazilian border had allowed them to stay away from the reach of the State and markets. Once the Mayoruna noticed the presence of foreigners in their lands, they rapidly attacked the delegation and wounded several of its members, forcing them to retreat. The Peruvian State's reaction was radical. As Stefano Varese recounts, "Belaunde (...) personally ordered the Peruvian Air Force to bomb and machine-gun the villages of three of the four clans of Mayoruna (Matsés) of the Yaquerana River. (...) The bombing of defenseless Matsés men, women and children was presented by the national press as an act of heroism on the part of Peruvian air force pilots fighting against the brutal savages who were opposing the country's progress. The truth behind the media propaganda was that the Mayoruna were in the way of a few national and transnational timber companies" (Varese 2006:29; See also Espinosa 2009:212).

This passage exemplifies two things. On the one hand, it demonstrates the persistence of colonial idealizations of Amazonia that legitimated State and market forms of violence through national mass media and official discourses (See Espinosa 2009b). On the other hand, it highlights the inability of indigenous peoples to defend their claimed territories by using previously useful forms of physical violence. Hence, during the last three decades of

the 20th Century, an important transition in the way indigenous politics were experienced took place in Peruvian Amazonia. As Shane Greene has noted for the case of Aguaruna activists, indigenous “activists see conflict as something that is constant, existing at multiple scales from the community micro to the international macro. And the weapons that they wield are less and less spears and shotguns and more and more pens and papers” (Greene 2009:73). Greene’s quote reveals something critical about the emergence of a new form of political imagination at the interface of indigenous resistance, writing and bureaucratic practices, and State and market pressures in Amazonia. The gradual emergence of indigenous leaders that were fluent in Spanish, capable of reading and writing, and knowledgeable of how to deal with local State bureaucracies, progressively led to the development of a new form of indigenous politics based on the power of papers, laws and formal institutions.

Modern indigenous organizations emerged out of this context. As Richard Chase Smith notes, “in 1960 most of the indigenous population of the Basin lived within a traditional kin-based subsistence economy with only sporadic contact with local *patrones* or local landlords” (1994:4). However, over subsequent decades several local indigenous organizations began to appear in Peruvian Amazonia. The first was the Amuesha Council, founded in 1969. Over the next few months, other indigenous organizations were formed throughout Amazonia, such as the Awajún people’s *Chapi Shivag Ijumbau*, Achuar people’s *Achuarti Ijúmdramu*, and the Ashaninka people’s *Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central (CECONCEC)* (Espinosa 2009a:212). With the support of international NGO and through their encounters in the bureaus and hallways of State institutions, indigenous representatives from local organizations of Amazonia rapidly began to develop a sense of shared interest and strategy. In 1979, the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana*

(*AIDSESEP*), a nationwide indigenous federation, was legally established, an event that accentuated even more the interest of indigenous leaders in adopting a federative model for creating their own local organizations (Chase Smith 1994:12).

After the creation of *AIDSESEP*, at least three other dozens of indigenous organizations were formed in Amazonia (1994:12), and by the mid-1990s, around 70% of indigenous peoples in Amazonia were affiliated with some type of representative organization (1994:5), a number that has most likely increased ever since. In every case, indigenous organizations emerged as responses to new pressures over indigenous territories. In the case of *AIDSESEP*, for instance, the leaders promoting its formation came from three indigenous groups facing different kinds of political and economic challenges: the Asháninka, who were struggling against massive *mestizo* colonization in their lands; the Shipibo, who were reclaiming control over their local lakes for fishing; and the Awajún, who sought support to expel German moviemaker Werner Herzog out of their lands (Chirif 2014:13). In every case, the formation of indigenous federations was the result of a gradual process of indigenous domestication of bureaucratic procedures, writing technologies, and political interactions with the State.

Another significant feature of this new period in indigenous politics is the prominent regularity of the models adopted for organizing indigenous organizations. According to Chase Smith, the formation of indigenous organizations in Peruvian Amazonia was based on three main principles: representation, autonomy and identity (Chase Smith 2011:2). Local indigenous organizations are normally constituted on the basis of territorial or ethnic identities that affiliate a number of legally acknowledged indigenous communities within a particular area. At broader scales, these local organizations join together in order to constitute regional and national organizations, hence forming a complex institutional tissue

of multi-scale representation and accountability. This organizing model is intimately connected to State forms of legibility. As Espinosa argues, “the form that these new organizations acquired did not derive from traditional indigenous practices but, rather, from the guidelines provided by the State in order to have their existence legally acknowledged” (Espinosa 2009a:212). Hence, the parameters of State legibility and practices have intimately permeated the early constitution and functioning of indigenous organizations throughout Peruvian Amazonia.

While some early indigenous organizations initially vindicated a class-based identity, indigenous organizations in Amazonia have progressively evolved a political discourse based on their cultural affirmation and the acknowledgement of their difference. However, even when indigenous organizations actively demand to participate in State policies dealing with intercultural bilingual education, intercultural healthcare and other culture-based initiatives, governance and territorial rights lay at the core of their political demands. Hence, as Chase Smith argues, indigenous organizations claim “territorial rights and demarcation, rights to self-determination, and (...) an equitable and autonomous process of local development” (Chase Smith 1994:5; also see Espinosa 2009b). Hence, territorial defense and governance lay at the core of indigenous political concerns, and both have been privileged objects of indigenous new forms of bureaucratic and political imagination.

In sum, the relation between the Peruvian State and indigenous peoples in the 21st Century is constituted through a complex array of historical processes. First, indigenous peoples and their forests continue to be imagined through the colonial notions of savagery and backwardness, but this time in accordance to the new governmental and economic forms of imagination inscribed in the practices of the modern Peruvian State. Second, since the 1940s onwards, indigenous peoples have become targets of several governmental actions

aimed at making them legible to State authorities and incorporating them into the Nation through education and public services. Finally, the gradual approach of the State to indigenous political and economic life has heavily permeated indigenous politics. As indigenous peoples experienced new threats over their lives in the form of extractive markets and State projects, they became more intimately connected with new forms of political imagination and action that allowed them to formulate innovative projects of their own. One very extended kind of project in contemporary indigenous politics is the attempt of various organizations to self-regulate access to forest resources and territories.

CHAPTER 4. AMPIYACU BASIN: DOCUMENTS, FORESTS AND GOVERNMENTAL PROJECTS IN THE MARGINS OF THE STATE

The making of contemporary Ampiyacu basin

Despite the fact that Amazonia has been constantly imagined throughout history as a timeless and pristine environment, several studies have shown the fully anthropogenic and historical nature of Amazonian landscapes (Balée 2013; Raffles and WinklerPrins 2003; Heckenberger et al. 2003; Denevan 1992). These studies have exposed Amazonian landscapes as sites where the botanical, geochemical and demographic traces of pre-colonial societies encounter the most recent effects of extractive capital and State initiatives. In this sense, there is nothing timeless or untouched about Amazonia; rather, the Amazon lowlands are a complex mosaic of temporalities and socionatural associations that actively participate in the fragmented modernities of the modern Peruvian State.

Ampiyacu basin is not an exception in this regard. In many ways, contemporary Ampiyacu basin has not only been transformed by the modernities brought about by extractive industries and the Peruvian State, but it has actually been constituted by them. The contemporary *Bora*, *Huitoto* and *Ocaina* inhabitants of Ampiyacu basin are mostly the descendants of several hundred indigenous individuals that originally lived in the Igaraparaná River, a Colombian tributary of the Putumayo River. These families were originally members of several clans that began to provide labor to the foremen of the *Casa Arana* during the late 19th Century (Gasché 2009), a London-based company that constituted one of the most extreme examples of the cruelty and brutality that was exercised over indigenous peoples

during the so-called rubber boom in Amazonia (Casement 2012). At this point in time, indigenous engagements with extractive capital were conducted through the mediation of prominent headmen (Gow 1991:41). These individuals worked as brokers between their groups of influence and rubber *patrones*, and they were also responsible for organizing labor and distributing manufactured goods that the group received in compensation. According to Santos-Granero and Barclay, “a local *patrón* would outfit an important headman, providing him with goods in exchange for a certain amount of rubber. The chief distributed part of these goods among his followers, retaining the rest as a sort of commission. He then led his men in a rubber-gathering expedition that could last up to six months” (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:43). In the case of the *Bora* of the Igaraparaná River, these forms of exchange seem to have existed since at least the early 19th Century, when the first interactions between *Bora* riverine headmen and Brazilian exploratory delegations took place in the Putumayo river (Razon 1984:4).

During the early decades of the 20th Century, when the rubber boom in Amazonia was already in a steady decline, Peru and Colombia engaged in a territorial conflict over their Amazonian borders. The conflict ended with Peru losing legal domain over a large part of its Amazonian territories and the city of Leticia, which forced Peruvian *patrones* in the then-Colombian area to abandon their operations and return to Peruvian territory (Gasché 2009). Don Miguel Loayza, a former foreman of the *Casa Arana* who held the camp of *El Encanto*, was part of this group of evicted *patrones*. Despite his obligation to abandon Colombian territories, Loayza was not willing to lose control over the indigenous groups he had come to co-opt over the previous years. Because of this, Loayza, his brother Carlos, and his *mestizo* assistants forced the displacement of more than 6,000 indigenous men and women from the Colombian Igaraparaná-Caquetá region into the Peruvian Ampiyacu basin, a territory

traditionally held by the Yagua people where the Loayza family held an official land concession (Benavides et al. 1996; Razon 1984:83). According to Razon, the massive exodus through rivers and military roads took seven years (1924-1930), and more than half of the displaced group perished before reaching their final destination (Razon 1984:204). In this way, the contemporary presence of *Bora*, *Huitoto* and *Ocaina* populations in Ampiyacu basin is in itself an outcome of the violence exercised by extractive capital upon indigenous peoples of Amazonia.

After their arrival in the Ampiyacu basin, the surviving indigenous men and women continued to intertwine intimate relationships with extractive markets and *patrones*. The different clans recently arrived from Igaraparaná settled in different riparian areas of the basin, hence building their own *malocas* (large houses) and opening gardens for their subsistence. Each clan remained under the administration of a former *patrón* of the *Casa Arana*, all of them now under the orders of Don Miguel Loayza: the *Ocaina* settled in *Puerto Izango* with Manuel Vasquez, the *Huitoto* with Carlos Loayza at Pucaurquillo, and so on along the basin (Razon 1984:17). As Jean Patrick Razon argues with respect to this new situation, “the *patrón* became the protector and maintained ‘his Indians’ in a complex network of relations of dependence impregnated of paternalism” (Razon 1984:212). Elders in contemporary Ampiyacu recall this epoch by clearly associating landscape, *patrones* and people in a spatial logic that will remain crucial for how the Ampiyacu landscape developed in subsequent years.

“(Miguel Loayza) sent Don Pedro Rubio, my Bora countryman, to live into the headwaters along with his people (...) Don Gonzalo Loayza arrived to Puerto Izango, and his son Don Miguel (...), along with Carlos and Manuel Galvez arrived to the Zumún (River) with another group of Ocainas. Before that time, a lot of Ocainas already lived in that area with

their own patrón, but after their patrón Vasquez died all of them came down here (...) and they began to work directly for Miguel Loayza”(Elder from Boras of Pucaurquillo native community).

As in most of the Amazon lowlands, over the next few decades Ampiyacu basin gradually evolved into a *fundo* economy in which the forms of exchange and labor appropriation that took place during the rubber boom continued to proliferate. The Loayza family legally owned the only *fundo* within the basin and over the first half of the 20th Century they used this advantageous position for pursuing various agroextractive activities in the area. Alberto Chirif has insightfully discussed the significance of the *fundo* economy in this context. Since the notion of *fundo* implies some form of stable productivity associated with regular activities such as cattle ranching and agriculture, a feature that the Loayza *fundo* clearly lacked, Chirif argues that Amazonian *fundos* in this period can be more accurately defined as extractive posts (Chirif 2012:32). In this context, the intimate association between landscapes, *patrones* and people was strategically used by the Loayza family for putting themselves at the center of a hierarchical network of exchanges that extended over large, discontinuous areas of the basin.

Over the next few decades, international and national cycles of demand for forest products led to a wide array of economic booms in Peruvian Amazonia (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:140). These discontinuous and overlapping *booms* oriented the economic profile of Amazonian *fundos*, including the Loayza *fundo* in Ampiyacu basin. While these booms did not have either the intensity or the duration of the 19th Century rubber boom, they constituted a scenario where contemporary forms of exchange between indigenous peoples and extractive capital would emerge. As Razon describes it, “the decline of rubber extraction entailed the transformation of the monoproduktive character of the Amazon forest: in

contrast to the previous period, now economic activities were diversified and extraction was conducted over products with more ephemeral demand and lesser economic importance” (Razon 1984:211). Elders in Ampiyacu portray this period as one in which extractive activities were conducted simultaneously over a large number of products, including animal skins, *Chambira* (a thread made out of a tree cortex), timber and *leche de caspi* (a tree sap used for industrial purposes).

As Santos-Granero and Barclay have keenly argued, the *fundo* economy of the first half of the 20th Century was also a transitional phase in which 19th Century models of indigenous engagement with markets gradually took their contemporary form (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:120). In particular, *habilitación*, an old economic institution that had bound mestizo businessmen and indigenous groups since the early 19th Century, gradually transformed in the context of these successive economic booms. In a general sense, the *habilitación* system consists of a verbal agreement by which *mestizo* businessmen extend some form of credit to indigenous men in exchange for resources located in remote areas of the forest. After a given period of time, the indigenous worker gives the final load of resources to the businessman, and the businessman pays off the remaining value of the given load to the indigenous worker. In the context of the 19th Century rubber boom, *habilitación* relations were sustained through a complex combination of seduction and brutality, a strategy that was particularly intense in the areas where the *Bora*, *Huitoto* and *Ocaina* come from (Taussig 1986). Some scholars have noted that *habilitación* became, in the context of a generalized lack of disciplined labor in the region, a way by which extractive capital learned to coopt for its own purposes the forms of sociality that dominated indigenous economic life (Killick 2008; Walker 2012). Others have noted that *habilitación* allowed businessmen to deal with the unpredictable and discontinuous distribution of forest resources as these

hampered the development of a factory-based model of labor appropriation in Amazonia (Coomes and Barham 1994). In any case, *habilitación* relations were not exempt from the exercise of physical violence, coercion and deceit, all forms of brutality that even today express themselves through the marks inflicted by *patrones* in the skin of some of the elders I met in Ampiyacu.

Several changes taking place in the basin and the entire region over the following decades conspired to alter the way *habilitación* relations were enacted and experienced. One of the most important political and economic changes in this regard was the introduction and dissemination of formal education in the basin. In the early 1950s, Wesley Thiesen, a missionary and linguist affiliated to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (ILV), moved to the Ampiyacu basin along with his wife. Thiesen's goal was concordant to that of the ILV: to document the local indigenous languages and use them to catechize indigenous peoples in ILV's protestant credo (Stoll 1985). In 1954, the two missionaries inaugurated a bilingual school around which today's native community of *Brillo Nuevo* began to form (Razon 1984:215), and over the following years, various other schools started to appear all along the basin. The Thiesens' presence in the basin also allowed for the emergence of a first generation of indigenous teachers, who were trained in the ILV's Headquarters in the far distant Yarinacocha Lake, a success with deep political and social ramifications.

The increased literacy of a part of the population both in their indigenous languages and in Spanish coincided with the gradual monetization of the basin's economy. Today's elders in Ampiyacu recall this time as one in which new and now fundamental economic artifacts started to appear in local economic life. In contrast to the early *fundo* economy, where "the Indian, the last link of the commercial chain, (...) received at best a small quantity of objects (machetes, work tools, maybe a shotgun or food) in advance for his next

production of rubber” (Razon 1984:135), now curious and more powerful objects started to circulate within the basin. As the monopoly of Miguel Loayza and his *patrones* over indigenous labor weakened, and new businessmen opened trade posts in the basin’s surroundings, money, motorboats and other precious commodities radically changed indigenous ways of life, allowing people greater mobility both in a geographic and an economic sense.

Education mediated these changes through the computational capabilities it made possible among people. Up to that point, *habilitación* was based on a type of value exchange whose equivalence was calculated exclusively by *patrones* at the expense of indigenous workers. *Patrones* normally underestimated the value of forest products delivered by their indigenous counterparts and inflated the prices of the goods they gave in exchange (See Bedoya and Bedoya 2005). Education made possible wider access to information and disseminated calculatory abilities that allowed people to negotiate better conditions for them. While education did not eliminate unequal exchanges – even now, for instance, people still complain constantly about their unawareness of “real” market prices – it did give indigenous workers a better ground to contest foreigners’ abuses and modify detrimental economic arrangements. Politically, indigenous teachers and schools were crucial in this process. As Razon argues, “the Indians saw in the missionaries an occasion to free themselves from the power of the *patrones*” (Razon 1984:215). The Thiesens fiercely struggled against the Loayza brothers, and demanded from the government the allocation of a new land concession controlled by them and the ‘Indians’. In this way, at some point during the late 1960s, the Loayza family abandoned their possessions in Ampiyacu basin and departed permanently to Iquitos, the regional capital (Razon 1984:219).

Over the next few decades, the interactions between the indigenous peoples of Ampiyacu and the Peruvian State accelerated. In 1975, when the Act allowing the creation of native communities had already been enforced, the *Sistema Nacional de Movilización Social* (SINAMOS) arrived in the basin. SINAMOS was a State institution created by the anti-oligarchical regime of President Juan Velasco Alvarado in order to promote social and economic organization in Peru. SINAMOS officers assisted indigenous leaders in the process of getting their lands titled, and most of the native communities existing today in the basin were constituted during the late 1970s. Additionally, SINAMOS, whose actions were informed by the agrarian collectivism of Velasco Alvarado, also bestowed loans, supported the organization of indigenous cooperatives (mostly unsuccessful) and gave commercial advice to local “peasants” in Ampiyacu (Razon 1984:227). SINAMOS’ lifespan was short, but its legacy materialized in the wide mosaic of titled indigenous lands that cover today’s middle course of the Ampiyacu basin. In subsequent years, other State and market entities also arrived in the basin, such as the *Banco Agrario* (Agrarian Bank) that provided loans and incentives for promoting local agriculture, private banks that extended credits to native communities, and trading companies that started to exert pressure over new and old forest resources.

Today, Ampiyacu constitutes one of the few basins in Peruvian Amazonia where virtually every village and dweller claims an indigenous identity. The successful eviction of different waves of colonizers by the FECONA (a point that I will discuss later on) has also turned Ampiyacu into one of the Amazonian basins where the ratio of indigenous dweller per land unit is the highest (Andrés Treneman, personal communication). The existence of several native communities settled all along the Ampiyacu River, particularly in its lower and middle courses, also thwarts the possibility of foreign persons getting access to the upstream

forests without being noticed, a factor that allows local communities to have a great deal of control over the basin's resources. As is the case in most of Amazonia, one can notice several historical processes informing this landscape configuration. On the one hand, the geographic disposition of native communities along the basin evokes the spatial logic that bound *patrones*, extraction camps and peoples during the *fundo* economy of the first half of the 20th Century. On the other hand, this landscape is also saturated with the effects of the Peruvian State, which through its actions has directly and indirectly introduced a series of writing technologies, land entitlements and political imaginations in the everyday life of the Ampiyacu basin.

The social and economic life of logging and the historical emergence of FECONA

In Ampiyacu, as in most of Amazonia, timber extraction has been a relatively common activity since the early 20th Century. Yet, the logging industry acquired a much larger dimension during the 1960s, when several companies settled in different parts of the Amazon lowlands. Although registers show that commercial timber extraction has been conducted in Peruvian Amazonia since at least 1912, the timber industry during the first half of the 20th Century was dominated by a very small number of sawmills and *fundos* (landholdings) located in the axis of the Amazon River (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:157). This leads Santos-Granero and Barclay to maintain that “unlike other contemporaneous export cycles, that of fine timber (...) never attained a dominant position within the region's export economy”, “[since] the production of hardwoods was extremely erratic, depending on such factors as the discovery of unexploited, accessible areas and the height of annual river flood tides” (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:158-59). This scenario gradually changed by the late 1960s, when the industrial and demographic colonization of

Amazonia became a primary goal in the administration of former President Fernando Belaunde Terry (Belaunde Terry 1959). Belaunde aggressively promoted colonization and industrial activities in the Amazon lowlands (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:214), and his policies had profound repercussions in the agroextractive economy of Peruvian Amazonia.

The new waves of colonizers and extractive capital promoted by the Belaunde administration significantly altered the traditional dynamic of the regional timber industry in Amazonia. In 1962, timber extraction represented around 4% of the value of Peruvian Amazonia's exports, but by 1974, it accounted for 58%, and in 1981, it reached out the outstanding percentage of 83%, hence becoming the region's main export commodity (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:229). During the 1970s and the 1980s, a compact network of wealthy families related to the logging business also emerged in Amazonia. Despite its lack of modern sense of entrepreneurship and legal compliance, this precarious elite rapidly developed certain habits normally associated with regional bourgeoisies, such as endogamy and a fierce corporative identity (Lucila Pautrat, personal communication). Logging families kept on using the *habilitación* system in an extensive way. By extending *habilitación* relations across several scales and locations, these families were able to create complex exchange networks that connected them to remote parts of the rainforest through various intermediaries (*habilitadores, sub-habilitadores, etc.*). In this context, indigenous labor and *habilitación* relationships kept on being as crucial for extractive capital as they were during the *fundo* economy of the first half of the 20th Century.

During the 1980s, the participation of the timber industry in the formal economy of Peruvian Amazonia decreased. Between 1981 and 1986, Santos-Granero and Barclay report that the relative importance of timber extraction in the regional economy fell from 83% to 67%, a process that responded to a "decreasing demand, scarcity of raw materials, increasing

costs of production, and stationary prices” (Santos-Granero and Barclay 2000:229). While it is very likely that this is a fair portrait of the situation of Peruvian Amazonia at that time, it is important to consider that Santos-Granero and Barclay estimate this percentage on the basis of official exportation records, a source that can heavily underestimate the actual vigor of the timber industry at different points in the last four decades. Since at least during the last three decades logging has been an activity characterized by its widespread informality, it is likely that informal loggers used a variety of means for not declaring their activities, for instance, through the illegal transport of fine woods to the Brazilian border, a practice that many contemporary loggers told me was still viable as recently as in 2006.

In any case, the early 1980s was a particularly dynamic moment in the history of Ampiyacu basin, and timber extraction played a fundamental role in this process. As the basin’s valuable timber resources became the target of various foreign traders and businessmen, the town of Pebas, the only *mestizo* settlement in the basin, turned into a vigorous commercial center. Here, several *habilitadores* with connections to the regional *barones de la madera* (timber barons) established their headquarters and developed personal relations with indigenous men that dwelled in the basin’s native communities. They used these relationships to organize expeditions into the upstream forests of the basin with the purpose of extracting several species of fine woods. Along with these extractive endeavors, an additional pressure emerging in this period was colonization. With the arrival of new businesses, several groups of colonizers, mostly impoverished peasants from the Andes, started to arrive in the basin and its proximities in order to build new settlements and clearing land for cattle ranching and agriculture. According to some testimonies, these organized groups of migrants used different strategies for gaining access to indigenous lands

in the basin. Some of them married with local indigenous persons, while others sought to buy collective lands through private arrangements with individual dwellers.

As a response, indigenous people from Ampiyacu gradually developed a collective anxiety rooted in the new pressures operating upon their claimed territories. This anxiety rapidly translated into collective evictions, marriage prohibitions with foreigners and land purchase prohibitions in some of the native communities of the basin. Additionally, some indigenous people started to collect “contributions” from foreign loggers who ventured into the upstream forests. In this context, schoolteachers played a fundamental role in channeling these uncoordinated reactions into more structured deliberations. By using their status as literate educators with knowledge about State bureaucracies and the urban world, schoolteachers rapidly promoted a series of meetings between leaders from the different native communities of Ampiyacu in order to take measures against the new challenges that the local indigenous population was facing. The figure of Leonidas Lopez Chicaje, then a schoolteacher in the native community of *Brillo Nuevo*, stands out in the accounts of several people who I talked to about this time period in Ampiyacu. In the early and mid 1980s, Lopez Chicaje and his fellow teachers sought to set the foundations for an organization that would defend the interests of local indigenous peoples in the basin.

During the 1980s, logging also became a fundamental part of the indigenous ways of life in the basin, a role that continued until the first decade of the 21st Century and beyond. *Habilitación* relations were not only a means by which indigenous peoples could gain access to large amounts of money in relatively small periods of time, but also, as a dweller of Pucaurquillo put it, they worked as “an insurance” against unexpected tragedies or necessities. Since *habilitadores* usually maintained moral relationships with their eventual *habilitados* – they godfathered their children or patronized their families - *habilitados* felt the

moral right to turn to them for *adelantos* (payments in advance) or loans in case an unexpected event such as an accident or an illness took place. Furthermore, *habilitadores* normally provided with several hundred soles to indigenous workers during a single campaign, which turned *habilitación* into one of the few means by which local indigenous peoples could access such amounts of money for their expenses. In my experience in Ampiyacu, virtually every person that I talked to, despite their reluctance to engage in *habilitación* due to the physical risks of working in the forest or the abusive treatment of the *habilitadores*, admitted to have logged for local *habilitadores* for different reasons in the past.

“We harvested timber about three years ago. We decided to do it because we did not have any other way to educate our children. Logging gave us the chance to work and therefore to educate them. That time we talked with a *habilitador* that he gave us some stuff (money and goods) to start working. (...) That time we got around eighty logs, between cedar and cumala” (Dweller from Pucaurquillo Bora, a Bora native community)

“I have provided for my child for four years straight while she studied at Iquitos' public University (main University of the region). Each year, I went to see a man in Pebas for receiving *habilitación*. By doing this, I got the chance of having a little something to help her out. Only by working in the forest I have been able to help my child. If not, what else could I have done? (Dweller from Pucaurquillo Huitoto, a Huitoto native community)

Most of the indigenous dwellers whom I talked to also perceived the logging economy that consolidated in the early 1980s as a very unfair and exploitative industry. Elsewhere, I have shown how *habilitación* has systematically promoted an unequal process of value appropriation in the context of the logging economy in Ampiyacu (Romero Dianderas 2014). By examining a large archive of documents manufactured by the indigenous leaders of Ampiyacu (a topic I will explore later on), I calculated that during 2006, 1,491,759 board feet

of four different commercial species were extracted from Ampiyacu basin. While this number refers to a much more recent moment in time, it does shed some light on the forms of inequality that began to form during the 1980s. I then calculated the average value that was retained by indigenous workers, their *habilitadores* and timber businessmen by comparing the prices paid for each species in the informal agreements made in Ampiyacu, in the main sawmills of Iquitos, and in the official export prices reported to the Peruvian State. According to my estimation, *habilitadores* in Ampiyacu could have retained a monetary value between 29.6% and 110% higher than the indigenous extractors they worked with, and timber businessmen with the capacity to export these fine woods could have retained a monetary value between 4,233.3% and 5,656% higher. These estimates are consistent with Eduardo Bedoya's general estimations for Peruvian Amazonia, where he points that the amount paid for a board foot in the United States can be approximately 2,660 higher than the amount paid to the indigenous worker who extracted that timber in the first place (Bedoya and Bedoya 2005).

What can be derived from this account is that during the 1980s the logging economy gradually became enmeshed with the social and economic life of Ampiyacu basin. Logging and timber resources became subjects of concern and constant quarrels among indigenous people, who began to consider resource scarcity, foreign land grabbing and timber depletion as possible futures that they learned to reject and fear. These discussions coincided with a broader regional and national process: the consolidation of the national indigenous movement in Peru (Espinosa 2009b; Chase Smith 2011). In the mid-1980s, several indigenous communities in Ampiyacu basin were visited by national leaders of AIDSESP, such as Evaristo Nugkuag and Miqueas Mishari. The visit of these leaders aimed at promoting the organization of indigenous settlements of Ampiyacu in a context where most

indigenous peoples in Amazonia were suffering intense pressures over their lands and forests. The contact with AIDSESEP also allowed Leonidas Lopez Chicaje and other emerging leaders of Ampiyacu to participate in national assemblies where indigenous leaders from different parts of the country discussed and shared their experiences.

In 1987, a long series of meetings and negotiations among representatives from different native communities of Ampiyacu finally crystalized in the creation of the Federation of Native Communities of Ampiyacu Basin (FECONA). FECONA's foundation Act states the three main goals of the Federation: first, to protect the natural resources of the basin; second, to defend indigenous territories from foreign invasions; and three, to look out for development projects that could ameliorate peoples' lives in the native communities. During the following years, FECONA leaders rapidly identified the increasing attempts of foreign *mestizo* loggers to gain access to the basin's forests as a main threat to their interests. In response, they proposed a set of surveillance procedures aimed at prohibiting foreign trespassing into the basin's upstream forests. Surveillance was conducted informally from the port of every native community of the basin. If somebody spotted a foreign trespasser traveling upstream without FECONA's authorization, people needed to warn FECONA's main office, located in the native community of *Pucaurquillo*. Additionally, FECONA opened an official surveillance post in Boras de Pucaurquillo, which was occupied by paid local watchmen during the night (Figure 5).

Later, FECONA also developed a series of mechanisms for regulating the extractive practices of local indigenous dwellers. Although local indigenous people were entitled to use and extract local resources according to FECONA's foundation Act, it was soon evident that measures needed to be taken in this respect. Local indigenous workers rarely financed their own extractive endeavors nor took themselves their own shipments to



Figure 5: View from FECONA's main surveillance post, Boras de Pucaurquillo native community, Ampiyacu River.

The picture shows an unidentified group of people taking provisions into the upstream forests (photo by author).

Iquitos. In this regard, they depended on the economic intermediation of *habilitadores* in the basin. The economic and social implications of *habilitación* allowed foreign businessmen to gain access to the upstream forests by means of their engagements with local indigenous peoples, a fact that quickly resulted in greater pressures over the timber resources of the basin. In this context, FECONA implemented a series of requirements and limitations for gaining authorization to log in the basin. First, local indigenous workers needed to request the approval of the assembly of their native communities in the form of a written act; once this act was acquired, they needed to issue a permit request to FECONA's main office detailing the reasons for their desire to log and attaching a sketch map of the area where they planned to carry their operations. Finally, FECONA issued a permit that authorized each logger to extract a certain number of logs, an official number that oscillated throughout time but that has never surpassed a hundred logs per family.

In the late 1990s, the international prices of several species of fine timber such as Mahogany and Cedar reached historical peaks, a scenario that accelerated even more the pressures exercised by foreign loggers and colonizers over the upstream forests of Ampiyacu basin. Between 1997 and 2005, legal timber exports in Peru more than tripled, and an undetermined number of illegal shipments of fine timber left the country through the Colombian and Brazilian borders as well (Figure 6). This context gave origin to what people in several parts of Amazonia still refer to as the *boom de la Caoba* (the Mahogany boom), a context where the regional timber industry expanded and intensified in unexpected and dramatic ways. In some parts of Peruvian Amazonia, the *boom de la Caoba* transformed remote regions that in previous years were at the peripheries of extractive economies into vibrant and dynamic centers of commerce and extraction. In the case of the *Río Las Piedras*, where I have conducted research as well, this economic *boom* encouraged the construction of

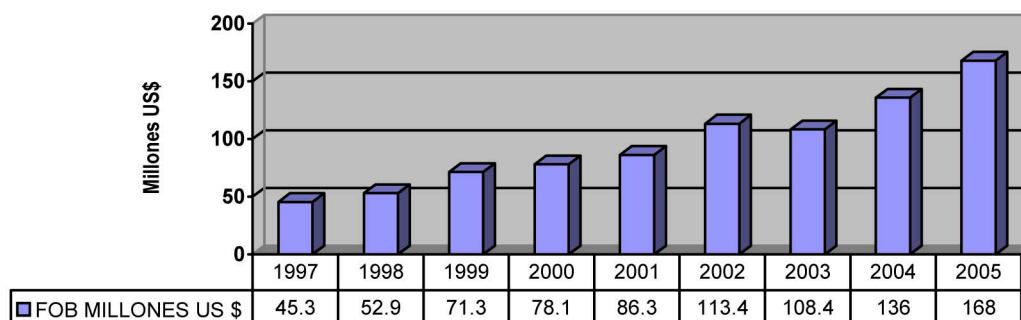


Figure 6: Fine timber exports in Peru between 1997 and 2005 (in millions of US dollars)

Taken from: Pautrat, Lucila, and Ivan Lucich (2006) *Análisis Preliminar sobre Gobernabilidad Y Cumplimiento de la Legislación Forestal del Sector Forestal En El Perú:*

Resumen Ejecutivo. Banco Mundial, pp. 32

hotels, brothels and commerce houses that created an urban atmosphere that radically changed the landscape of the river (See Schulte-Herbruggen and Rossiter 2003). In Ampiyacu, local State officials stationed in Pebas remember this time as one where they became passive witnesses of an aggressive process of depredation upon which State representatives did not have any kind of control. One official described himself at that time as constantly being at the riverbank, without gas for operating his boat nor communication equipment or reinforcements, powerlessly watching thousands of logs travel downstream into the mouth of the Ampiyacu River, where boats waited for their timber shipments for transporting them to Iquitos and elsewhere.

When I first arrived to Ampiyacu basin in 2010, local conversations were still heavily permeated by the ecological and regulatory anxieties produced by the *boom de la Caoba*. While the scale of logging operations in Ampiyacu basin had diminished in previous years, the traces of the *boom* could still be found in the presence of foreign loggers and businessmen married to local indigenous women, in the motorboat sounds of loggers trying to sneak out of the basin during the night, and in the constant debates between people and FECONA officers about the threats posed by the logging economy to the people and forests of the basin. The local climate produced by the intensification of logging in the basin was correlated with another form of intensification: the rapid proliferation of logging authorizations, sketch maps, permit requests and other kinds of documents aimed at regulating timber extraction. As anxieties about logging and its consequences grow in the everyday conversations of the basin, FECONA became a site where such anxieties were channeled through the particular forms of political imagination inscribed in bureaucratic practices.

The lives of documents in FECONA's governmental project

Even though indigenous politics are not normally imagined through the lens of document production, documents play a fundamental role in shaping contemporary forms of indigenous political practice in Peruvian Amazonia. Ever since they first irrupted in the indigenous settlements of Ampiyacu basin during the 1950s, they were intimately linked to the formation of a new group of leaders whose power emanated from their intellectual training and their capacity to interact with the State, rather than from “traditional” forms of political organization. As I showed in a previous chapter, the proliferation of documents was also linked to the emergence of a new form of political imagination that conceived papers and writing practices as more powerful agents of struggle than spears and arrows. It was this bureaucratic form of political reasoning that partially explains the enormous success of the federative model in contemporary indigenous politics of Peruvian Amazonia and elsewhere. For indigenous leaders, understanding the political plasticity and power of documents for mobilizing their interests against the State became a crucial aspect of how this new kind of political practice was set into place.

During my fieldwork in Ampiyacu basin, documents seemed to have a public life that was at the same time ubiquitous and restricted. They were produced at various instances of local decision-making and political representation, they piled up in the drawers and shelves of various State and non-State offices, and they circulated and interacted with various peoples and settings throughout the basin. According to what several former and current leaders of FECONA told me, by the time that I arrived to Ampiyacu basin the Federation had been permanently producing documents for about twenty years, which had created a very large (and fragmented) archive scattered among several houses and offices along the basin. Additionally, most people also held private documents in their houses and found great

value in them, since documents allowed them to trace connections with State bureaucracies and markets, and helped them to guarantee property rights, commercial commitments, etc. All of this made documents a very salient part of the everyday life of the native communities that I visited during my time in Ampiyacu. And yet, from another standpoint, documents were also extremely obscure objects for most of the indigenous population of Ampiyacu. Despite the fact that formal instruction had taken place in the basin for over sixty years, a very large part of the population, especially women and elders, did not consider themselves literate, and the most usual forms of everyday sociality and labor among people were totally disassociated from writing and reading practices.

How, then, did documents achieve such a fundamental position in the everyday politics of Ampiyacu basin? When I began interviewing former and current leaders of FECONA in 2010, I rapidly noted the absence in their discourse of a clear theory about why documents were produced and why they were made part of FECONA's actions in the first place. One of the founding leaders of FECONA did tell me, however, that the adoption of documents aimed at "providing the organization with a way of promoting proper indigenous self-government". This implicit association between written documentation and government is interesting in the light of the shift in indigenous politics that took place in the last three decades of the 20th Century. Even when a large part of people in Ampiyacu could not use documents to exercise some form of public accountability, and despite the difficulties of producing documentation in a context where access to ink, pencils, papers and seals was difficult, documents somehow possessed certain qualities that made them powerful tools in FECONA's attempt to build a governmental project in Ampiyacu basin.

I began to consider these qualities ethnographically once I directed my attention to how documents were manufactured and "read" by indigenous leaders of FECONA and by

other individuals. A first aspect of documents that struck me immediately was the salient formality of their fabrication. With some minor variations, most of the hundreds of permit requests and logging authorizations that I encountered during my fieldwork followed the same kind of general formatting. The stylistic rules for the elaboration of permit requests included a series of elements with clear evocations of the State's rhetoric (See Figure 7 and 9). These requests made use of a letterhead format that indicated the "official year name" decreed by the Peruvian State at that time (for instance, *Año de la Unión Nacional de la Crisis Externa* [sic]), a trait that curiously changed over the years and was congruent with the official changes issued by the Peruvian State. Over their body texts, the permits indicated the emitter and the subject of the request, making extensive use of a classical bureaucratic jargon that combined overly gentle expressions and the careful enunciation of the request's purpose. Finally, the emitter signed the permit request, sometimes also indicating her national identification number, and in some cases even sealing it with the seal of her native community or her own.

Another salient feature of documents was how they tended to be read and treated by FECONA leaders. During my fieldwork in Ampiyacu basin, I had the occasion to spend several afternoons in FECONA's main office over the months when some indigenous families began to transport their log shipments from the upstream forests of the basin to the mouth of the river. During some of these afternoons, indigenous men eventually arrived at FECONA's main office in order to "regularize" their situation and coordinate with FECONA officers the future transport of their shipments. Normally, indigenous loggers would present to the officers a sketch map indicating the area where they were working and the documents issued by their native communities showing the validity of their extractive operations. The goal of indigenous loggers was to acquire FECONA's written authorization

"AÑO DE LA UNION NACIONAL FRENTE A LA CRISIS EXTERNA"

Pucaurquillo 10 de octubre de 2009.

ACTA DE ASAMBLEA COMUNAL:

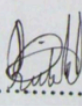
En la comunidad nativa poras de pucaurquillo, siendo las 09.30.a.m del día sábado 10 de octubre se reunieron los moradores de esta comunidad para tratar varios de sus Agendas, la misma que pertenece al distrito de pebas, prov.mcal.ramon castilla, region Loreto.


Uno de las Agenda a tratar fue sobre el trabajo de madera, en donde a través del acuerdo comunal se QUEDO APROBADO para que los comuneros puedan trabajar considerablemente, para el sostenimiento de sus hogares, y siempre respetando los principios y acuerdos establecido en el trabajo de la madera, reforestando, y NO DEPREDANDO; Los recursos naturales, QUEDAN advertidos.

Y el documento otorgado solo tendrá vigencia en este año 2009 y en diciembre se caducará, la misma queda para poder ser renovado siempre y cuando trabajen al margen de la ley, y acuerdos establecidos. sobre la madera.

Y no aviendo mas puntos que tratar se dio por levantado la sesión siendo las 12.30. del mismo día, en la comunidad nativa poras de pucaurquillo.

--- para mayor valides y constancia, firman las Autoridades de la Comunidad Nativa poras de pucaurquillo.


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D.N.I. [REDACTED]


SECRET. COMUNAL
D.N.I. [REDACTED]

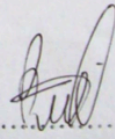

VICE. psdete COMUNAL
D.N.I. [REDACTED]

Figure 7: An *acta de asamblea* (photo by author)

in order to avoid the possibility of being detained and having their shipments confiscated once they tried to transport their log rafts downstream. What was interesting about these interactions, though, is that discussions about permit requests and other documents did not revolve around the content of the text itself, or around the consistency between what the text said and some external reality. Rather, the objections and comments of FECONA officers center around stylistic features such as the absence of a seal or a signature. It was the presence of these material forms what was observed by FECONA officers as crucial for making these documents meaningful for their regulatory actions.

Hence, FECONA officers found great value in the seals, signatures and other formatting features expressed within the documents they dealt with. They cared about the properness of a series of aesthetic and rhetorical devices such as letterheads and seals, and they attended to the “synchronization” of these elements with the Peruvian State’s official commandments (such as the “official year name” at a particular given time and the national identity number of a logging permit requester). What all these material elements had in common was their intimate association with the State and its bureaucratic forms of writing. However, while these State symbols were carefully crafted and monitored by FECONA officers, it is necessary to note that FECONA itself did not have any organic relationship with the Peruvian State. From the standpoint of legal orthodoxy, FECONA was actually usurping State functions when it claimed the right to enforce rules and norms over logging activities in Ampiyacu basin. Furthermore, according to some State officers who I talked to in Iquitos, FECONA’s confiscation activities could actually constitute felonies if brought to the attention of the criminal justice system. This is something that FECONA leaders acknowledged in ambiguous ways when I questioned them about the matter. On the one hand, they were perfectly aware of the official legal status of their actions; but on the other

hand, they also claimed the right to look after their forests and did not note any practical incompatibility between their activities and those of local State officers. State representatives stationed in Pebas agreed with this latter intuition. While FECONA's confiscation activities were labeled as clearly illegal acts when I asked these officers about them, these very officers also noted that these activities were actually supportive of the State goal of stopping forest degradation in the basin, and one of them even admitted to have participated in assemblies and workshops hosted by FECONA in the past. This flexible perspective was fueled by the deep frustration caused by the logistical precariousness in which they were forced to operate daily. Since regional and national administrations did not provide them the basic means for carrying out their operations (motorboats, gas, computers, etc.), State officers found in FECONA's initiatives some of the few ways of actually diminishing the amount of forest depredation taking place in the basin.

This ambiguous relationship with the Peruvian State did not hamper, however, the creation of a thriving political economy of documents in the native communities of Ampiyacu basin. Documents with State-like formatting were produced in several instances of the political life of communities, something that was usually tied to the petition of a local indigenous family intending to log in the basin's forests. This process was structured according to FECONA's directives, and in theory was strictly complied by all of the native communities of the basin. Once an indigenous family identified lucrative tree species in the upstream forest, and secured the support of a local *habilitador*, they first needed to address a petition to their *asamblea comunal* (communal assembly), the maximum government organ of every native community. A family representative, normally a middle-age male, described to the *asamblea* the motivations of his family to log, an exposition that was recorded in the *libro de actas* (minute book) of the community. Once that the petition was approved by the

asamblea, the family was given an *acta de asamblea* (assembly agreement) signed by the president of the community, where several specifics of the petition were registered, including the date, the number of trees to be logged, and the stream where these trees were located. Finally, the indigenous family was asked to make a “contribution” to the community treasury by paying a certain amount of money (See De la Rosa Tincopa 2009:66).

Once the family secured a permit issued by their native community, they sub-contracted a small *cuadrilla* (team of workers) and travelled upstream in order to log the trees they had chosen. This process could take months and on some occasions proved extremely dangerous. During my stay in Ampiyacu, I was told about several accidents and deaths resulting from logging activities in the upstream forests. Normally, the whole process of preparing the field, logging the trees, cutting them in chunks and transporting them to the nearer streams could take from two to three months. Once the logs were tied together and turned into log rafts for their fluvial transportation, one or two representatives of the *cuadrilla* travelled downstream in order to negotiate their right to pass through the river in FECONA’s main office. In order to get a logging authorization, indigenous families needed to present to FECONA three set of documents: first, a permit request, whose main features I have already discussed above; second, the *acta de asamblea* where a native community approves their logging activities (See Figure 7); and third, a sketch map indicating the location of the stream where they are conducting their operations (see Figure 8). Additionally, they needed to make a “contribution” to FECONA, whose changing value was of fifty *soles* by the time that I conducted fieldwork in the basin. Once that all of these requirements were in place, FECONA officers issued a *pase* (logging authorization) that entitled the family to transport up to fifty logs of fine woods through the river.



Figure 8: A sketch map indicating the location of one family's logging activities
(photo by author)

The elaboration of the sketch maps followed a particularly interesting pattern. According to the formal normativity of FECONA, the identification of an extraction location in the sketch map secured exclusive rights to a given family that had previously chosen a stream based on the availability of commercially valuable trees on its surroundings. Maps were produced following some cartographic conventions such as the drawing of a Compass Rose and the writing of referential names of primary and secondary streams in the area. The name of the streams were based on local conventions, given that most of the small streams in which logging normally occurred were not registered in the official cartographies of the Peruvian State. Although the sketch maps were considered a formal requirement by FECONA under the assumption that different *cuadrillas* should not log in the same areas, FECONA officers did not really conducted any supervision on the veracity of the maps. Several former FECONA officers and local families told me that *cuadrillas* did not necessarily log just in the location they stated in the maps, and that conflicts about who logged what and where emerged constantly during the extraction season. In any case, the identification of exclusive streams did matter, at least nominally, since FECONA officers saved a register where the name of the streams were carefully matched with that of each permit holder in order to avoid overlapping, a practice where the lack of correspondence between the register and reality was clearly not at stake.

Through this archetypical description, one can see how the production of documents mediates several regulatory actions both at the level of FECONA and its member communities. Petitions, authorizations and communal and federative registers are set in place through rhetorical and material forms associated with the Peruvian State. Hence, both the production and circulation of documents in the native communities of Ampiyacu resemble the kinds of administrative lives that documents are usually imagined to have in the modern

bureaucratic apparatuses of modern National States. Once one considers the ultimate destiny of these documents, though, this similarity falls apart. In the case of FECONA, even when documents are accumulated and stored, their conservation has not been a goal of any of FECONA's administration over the years. Several former leaders of FECONA claim that after leaving office they did not really know what to do with the documents, and some of them just took them to their houses and eventually lost them or destroyed them along with garbage. Furthermore, FECONA's internal norms do not state any particular procedure for defining the ultimate destiny of the documents, or for assigning them any utilitarian purpose whatsoever. In this sense, the production of documents does not aim to produce an *intelligible* representation of reality that renders their governmental practices possible, a practice that James Scott and others have seen as central to modern States (See Scott 1998). As documents are dispersed, lost or simply consumed by fungus and dust, the existence of a centralized form of management and information also fades away. Therefore, rather than fulfilling a *functional* role in FECONA's endeavors, the production of documents can be seen as fulfilling an *evocative* role, to the extent that they index State forms of authority into the regulatory claims of FECONA's governmental project.

The evocative force of documents becomes salient in the way FECONA officers took care of certain material forms that resemble those of the Peruvian State. It is the force inscribed in these forms what makes documents such important tools for introducing authority into FECONA's regulatory project. Through the set into place of these material forms, FECONA officers were able to produce what Arun Agrawal has called an *intimate government* (Agrawal 2005a; Agrawal 2005b). According to Agrawal, *intimate government* refers to a governmental practice that unfolds through the very contingent and everyday forms of interaction that inform a given community. In contrast to *government at a distance*, which is

based on centralized loci of information and calculation, constant surveillance and an inflexible normativity, intimate government “works by dispersing rule and scattering involvement in government more widely” (2005a:278). In such a theoretical model, “practice and sociality rather than expertise” form the basis of regulatory practices and “the ability of regulation to make itself felt in the realm of everyday practice is dependent upon channeling existing flows of power within (...) communities” (2005a: 278).

During my fieldwork, documents seemed to play a crucial role in informing the processes of intimate government taking place in Ampiyacu basin. As Agrawal has noted, intimate government ultimately depends on the “joint production of interests” between regulators and the rest of the population (Agrawal 2005a:179). This means that FECONA’s regulatory project hinged upon the construction of partial agreements and ephemeral understandings among dwellers and between dwellers and FECONA officers. Since FECONA did not collect taxes nor possessed significant financial or logistical resources, its enforcement capacity resided directly on peoples’ own time (and even material) investments on such enforcement endeavors. In other words, consensuses around interventions and confiscations had to be constantly rebuilt, and no authoritative claim could be pursued without previous negotiation between dwellers and FECONA officers. Testimonies of Ampiyacu dwellers are crowded by anecdotes and episodes where rules enforcement was possible only to the extent that a FECONA leader could convince her fellow dwellers of the *fairness* of a given intervention.

“Once we’ve stopped a log raft coming downstream right here, in Pucaurquillo. It happened on 2008. A man from Pebas, a foreign guy, he came with a timber load of over two hundred logs during the night, around 1:00am. That time we had been warned by radio and we all agreed in doing something. When the log raft passed through our port, people started to play

the Manguaré [a traditional drum made out of a hollowed log], and all of the community, men, women, ladies, run into the river in order to detain the raft. Once the raft was detained, we waited for dawn at our port” (Dweller from Pucaurquillo Bora, a Bora native community).

During these events, documents helped to introduce a sense of validity and even legality in conversations about interventions and confiscations. The authority embodied in documents allowed FECONA officers to turn to them in order to expose to others the fairness of their regulatory claims, since the existence (or not) of certain documents made evident the lack of compliance of unauthorized loggers to a body of rules that were seen as foundational to the defense of local forests. At the same time, documents were important for indigenous families pursuing extractive endeavors in the upstream forests. As several dwellers that I talked to mentioned to me, families transporting log rafts through the river were extremely careful in having their communal and federative authorizations always at hand. During a river trip that normally could take from three to five days, the log rafts, always guarded by some family members or their hired workers, passed through the river docks of numerous native communities of the basin. In this process, it was not unusual that some of them were detained by occasional dwellers that stopped them and asked them for their authorizations. If the people transporting the log rafts lacked these documents, they could be subject to spontaneous confiscations led by the president of a native community or other local dwellers, a situation that according to some testimonies could easily escalate into violent episodes of confrontation. In any case, documents carried a sense of legality that was important to all the parties participating in the conversations that informed FECONA’s regulatory actions.

It is important to note that documents went beyond merely conveying information in these local conversations: they also held affective properties that made them capable of prompting certain emotional dispositions in their interlocutors. This became evident in the way documents mediated local conversations about the fairness of a given extraction campaign and the pertinence of intercepting a log raft. As various FECONA officers told me during my fieldwork, senses of kindness, respect and peoples' needs and desires profoundly shaped how FECONA rules were implemented in everyday practice. Despite the fact that the rules of FECONA were supposed to be formally enforced to everyone in the same way, both FECONA leaders and dwellers normally agreed that the application of rules and regulations was contingent upon peoples' needs and peoples' attitudes and kindness.

“There are some people who let us (the Federation) know that they are going to extract a little bit more than fifty logs because they need to. When that happens we do not take any measures as a way of rewarding the logger, but when we find a logger trying to violate the rules (encontrarlo con las manos en la masa), we apply the law (le aplicamos la Ley)” (FECONA's representative).

“During an intervention, one logger did not want to hear us. He adopted a very insolent position towards us. He and his crew wanted to throw FECONA officials that went to talk to him into the water. Next day we took his log raft back to FECONA's dock. Finally, when the logger decided to come along, we demanded 5 000 soles in compensation for his bad behavior. He got mad at us, but finally he had to pay us” (FECONA's former representative).

What is interesting about these testimonies is the way that they exemplify how certain extraction rights were negotiated through the recognition of both respect and kindness. During these regulatory encounters, documents had the important role of

materializing loggers' senses of respect towards the Federation. The fact that loggers produced the appropriate documents and asked for the appropriate authorizations was perceived by FECONA officers and other dwellers as something more important than actually complying with the official quota per family. In other words, documents had the power of embodying a relation of respect that was highly valued by FECONA officers. Their presence mattered to the extent that they deployed senses of respect and kindness that were independent from the information that they were formally conveying within the situation.

“When the logger is a local dweller we do not do anything because indigenous brothers (hermanos indígenas) are allowed to log a little bit for their family subsistence, in a total amount of fifty logs” (FECONA’s representative)

“...When one sees that a local indigenous man is extracting barely fifty, sixty chunks of wood for his own subsistence, we must let him pass. Why is one supposed to confiscate his timber if he is in a state of need?” (State officer stationed in Pebas)

Another fundamental feature of the affective power of documents was their capacity to frame conversations about local peoples' needs in relation to logging. As the testimonies above show, the question about what constituted peoples' needs was a fundamental moral stake in debates about the fairness of FECONA's interventions. Debates about the notion of subsistence served as a way of bringing these issues to the fore. The importance of the notion of subsistence was salient in the constancy with which certain terms were used in conversations about logging regulation. The Spanish terms *subsistencia*, *sostenimiento* and *necesidad* were present in almost every permit request that I had the opportunity to examine during my fieldwork (See Figures 7 and 9, red circles). They were constantly used for

DE LA UNION NACIONAL DE LA CRISIS EXTERNA"
FEDERACION DE COMUNIDADES NATIVAS DEL RIO AMPIBACU (FECONA)

Señor. Rejer Vazques Presidente de fecona,

ASUNTO: SOLICITO: CONVALIDACION Y APROVACION DEL ACTA DE ASAMBLEA PARA EXTRAER MADERA.

Para el señor, [REDACTED], [REDACTED],
[REDACTED], Como Natural de la comunidad, nativa de Santa Lucía de pro, Indentificado con: D.N.I: [REDACTED] —
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] en el distrito de Pevás provincia de mariscal Ramon castilla.

Ante usted con el debido Respeto que se merece me Presento & expongo: que el acta de asamblea del 1 de noviembre del 2009 que aprobaron mi solicitud para la tal de madera; para satisfacer mis neseidades familiares ya que es la unica fuente de Ingreso Economico, para mi familia yo como Interesado me comprometo en cumplir con todos los acuerdos de la Comunidad & como la de la Organizacion, por lo cual se dispone lo Coveniente a fin, que se accede ami solicitud.

Para mayor Informacion & credibilidad adjunto ala solicitud en el acta de asamblea & una copia del acta de aprobacion de la comunidad; ¡Por los EXPUESTO! Ruego a usted. Señor Presidente de (fecona) acceder ami peti... por ser de justicia que espero alcanzar.

[Signature] [Stamp] [Signature]
VICE P.t. de la comunidad. SECRETARIO DE LA COMUNIDAD;

Figure 9: A permit request (photo by author)

explaining the needs of local families to extract a certain amount of timber in the upstream forests.

“Ante usted con el debido Respeto que se merese me presento y expongo: que el acta de asamblea del 1 de noviembre del 2009 que aprobaron mi solicitud para la tala de madera; para satisfacer mis necesidades familiares ya que es la única fuente de Ingreso Economico, para mi familia yo como interesado me comprometo en cumplir, con todos los acuerdos de la comunidad por como de la organización, por lo cual se dispone lo conveniente a fin que se accede a mi solicitud. (...) ¡Por lo expuesto! Ruego a usted Señor Presidente del FECONA acceder a mi petición por ser de justicia que espero alcanza.”

“I hereby come to you with all due respect in order to expose that in the *acta de asamblea* of November 1st, 2009 my request for logging was approved, in order to fulfill my family needs, given that it is the only source of income (with capital letters) of my family, so I commit myself to comply with all of the agreements reached in my community and the organization (FECONA), for which I have disposed everything so that my request is approved. (...) ¡For all that I have said! I implore to you Mister President of the FECONA to agree to my request because it is fare.”

Phrases such as this populated documents almost with a normative force. Moreover, the notion of subsistence was not only inscribed in permit requests, but also circulated in local conversations about whether it was fair or not to intervene a given log raft, a conversation that normally revolved around the loggers' needs as they were declared in their permit requests. In this way, documents played the fundamental role of reinforcing the moral connection between the fairness of logging activities and the subsistence needs of indigenous families. Documents helped to stabilize certain associations about fairness and rights, a connection that was fundamental for how debates about FECONA's interventions

unfolded. Here, it is noticeable how the bureaucratic formality of FECONA's documentation was not exempt from complex moral and affective associations. In fact, it was through the set into place of these bureaucratic forms of expression that certain notions of justice, fairness, rights and respect were mobilized, reinforced and negotiated among people. Therefore, the way FECONA officers and loggers produced and talked about documents collapsed the modernist separation between bureaucratic formality and affective relationality. In other words, it was through a bureaucratic formality normally associated with impersonal and decontextualizing abstractions that very concrete moral and affective connections were made among people.

In sum, documents were capable of prompting certain emotional dispositions into their interlocutors, of morally framing certain debates about peoples' needs, and of embodying relations of respect and kindness. These affective properties were associated with the ability of documents to evoke State's forms of authority and introduce them into FECONA's regulatory claims. It was the power of State material forms inscribed in these documents what allowed FECONA officers to evoke the power of the State when setting into place their regulatory actions, a process by which FECONA officers and others could create the kinds of partial agreements and ephemeral understandings upon which FECONA's regulatory actions were based on. Therefore, despite its ambiguous legal relationship with the Peruvian State, FECONA's regulatory project profoundly depended on the political and affective mediation created by these State-like forms of documentation. The long history of interactions between indigenous peoples of Ampiyacu and writing technologies has thus yielded more than just a change in local forms of political and social organization. Local production of documents has radically changed the way local conversations about forests and their preservation unfold. In this sense, the role of

documents is not limited only to fulfill functional roles of communication, register and formalization (See Howe 1979; Goody 1986), but more fundamentally, it is associated with the mediation of forms of political imagination where new relations between affect, political authority and local matters of concern can be practiced and thought of.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

In this study, I have sought to show how indigenous political experiments such as FECONA emerge at the interface of different historical processes. My goal has been to examine the connections between various local histories as they materialize in the everyday life of contemporary Ampiyacu basin, and expose how they actively permeate different facets of reality, including the spatial distribution of native communities, but also the ways indigenous peoples relate to local forests, extractive markets and the Peruvian State. I have done so by showing how the emerging regulatory and political practices that gave birth to FECONA can be seen as the product of two complementary histories. On the one hand, a history of ethnic violence, territorial insecurity and material necessity whose formation can be tracked back to the late 19th Century and that, in many ways, keeps on informing how local people relate to extractive activities in the forest today. On the other hand, a history of complex interactions between indigenous peoples and the Peruvian State, mediated by schooling, colonization, land property rights and new forms of political struggle, that have established the terrain for the emergence of new indigenous forms of political imagination in the basin. At the convergence of these two histories, I have sought to understand the emergence of FECONA as an alternative governmental project where territorial concerns take hold through practices that both subvert and reproduce bureaucratic forms of imagination.

As Christopher Krupa has pointed out, “conditions of fragmented, competitive statecraft might be better understood not as deviant exceptions to otherwise centralized

political systems but, rather, as the way that government is actually experienced in much of the world today” (Krupa 2010:319). Such a claim makes it possible to consider the many ways in which competitive governmental projects can flourish in the contested and porous margins of the contemporary Peruvian State. In acknowledging margins as a necessary condition of the States that produce them (Das and Poole 2004), scholars can examine the complex liaisons between such governmental projects and the State’s political authority. Ampiyacu’s case exemplifies the complexity of such liaisons, and provides elements for thinking about how such projects both evoke and transform the forms of political imagination associated with modern States.

The important roles played by documents in FECONA’s governmental project challenge some common ideas about the “absence” or “lack” of State in contemporary Amazonian landscapes. The production of documents, charts and procedures with a clear bureaucratic spirit, and the adoption of authoritative forms of argumentation based on “the application of the Law”, clearly shows that the State’s forms of authority need to be constantly evoked in order to legitimize FECONA’s regulatory claims. Hence, despite the elusive character that written Spanish has amongst most of the population, or the lack of material presence of the majority of State institutions within the basin, the State’s forms of authority are a powerful motif within Ampiyacu’s everyday politics. This line of thought makes it possible to consider the active role of the Peruvian State in partially informing the political life of its margins, and undermines the extended idea that indigenous Amazonia is somehow “outside” the development of the modern Peruvian State.

Ethnographic attention to the social lives of documents and other State material forms throws light into how the State is evoked, appropriated, transformed and disputed at its margins. Once one considers the fact that the State as a practice and as a site of

imagination is not a monopoly of the State itself, a series of ethical and pragmatic questions arise. Should the Peruvian State acknowledge the value of indigenous political experiments that claim for themselves some of its administrative and political functions? How should the Peruvian State approach these experiments if it comes to admit the inevitability of their existence? Can these indigenous projects be actually beneficial for advancing forest conservation and law enforcement in the margins of the State?

I sincerely do not have an answer to these questions, but as in most complex debates emerging in contemporary politics, I suspect that the problem is not so much on the practical solutions we can give, as in the many ways our questions are informed by assumptions that force our reflections to dead-ends. An examination of these assumptions would necessarily involve considering how (or if) the State goals of reducing illegal logging and diminishing forest degradation could make sense in a social world informed by the histories that I have sought to present in this study. How does the State, with its hierarchical structures and budget allocations, its need for formalization, precision and maximization, its support for notions of economic development and spatial organization that barely participate of Amazonian landscapes, can become a productive partner of indigenous endeavors taking place in Ampiyacu basin?

An immediate point of encounter between the Peruvian State and FECONA is their shared fascination with documents. The State's resolution to take seriously the documentary production of FECONA could trigger the development of new governmental conversations that may enhance forest conservation in Peruvian Amazonia. As documents are capable of conveying information and embodying social relations that transcend the spaces in which they are produced, they could serve as privileged sites of political and regulatory negotiation between different peoples and organizations, and hence redefine the way the Peruvian State

relates to its own margins. But this process would need the State to problematize some of its own assumptions about how authority, sovereignty and public regulation are supposed to work. Since margins exist by definition beyond the reach of any State attempt to tame them, the “absorption” of FECONA’s project through the (supposedly) totalizing machineries of the Peruvian State becomes a little more than an oxymoron. And here is where I consider that the complex lives of documents that I have explored in this study are important. If one is to take seriously Akhil Gupta’s claim that “the State [is] constituted through writing” (Gupta 2012:143), then it is not just that documents produced by FECONA cannot be reduced to a rational and functional life because they exist at the margins. Rather, their affective and evocative capacities are a central feature of how bureaucratic forms of political imagination actually unfold in contemporary times. It is the possibility of acknowledging the complex social lives of documents and the ubiquity of contemporary forms of bureaucratic imagination what I think is crucial for bringing the State closer to the regulatory conversations taking place in contemporary Ampiyacu basin.

In a way, what I have sought to do in this study is to reflect about the State and its forms of political imagination through an examination of what happens at its margins. As new global politics continue to destabilize and redefine what the Peruvian State is and how it is supposed to behave, its historical relations with its margins must be assessed as a means for imagining how such relations could be redefined in the future. Here, I have sought to show the importance of recognizing the ubiquity of bureaucratic forms of imagination for moving forward this assessment. Advancing these reflections among the histories and everyday lives of Ampiyacu basin is particularly meaningful since Amazonia is (and probably will continue to be) a challenge to the Peruvian State’s governmental projects. To question how these forms of bureaucratic imagination can thrive in the midst of the very forests and

peoples that for centuries have remained inscrutable for State bureaucrats and policy-makers is, without a doubt, a productive irony to be explored. I hope that this study can contribute a little to do just that.

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