

“The Feast of War” Violence, Indians, and Genocide in Colombia

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Through the artful reduction of differences and conflicts to the only one opposition represented by the enemy—the absolute other—war operates as an intimate and effective mechanism of cohesion and happiness. For war is feast, the feast of a community of individuals finally freed from their solitude and particular interests, and united without hesitation or doubt against “the perverse enemy.” While the desire for the collective drunkenness of war is rationalized by invoking such solemn words as honor, patria, or principles, the intimate happiness of war steams from the rather absurd willingness to bear testimony of one’s truth with blood in spite of the clear disproportion between the values of what is to be sacrificed and what is sought for. In 1982, Estanislao Zuleta, one of Colombia’s most important philosophers, surprised intellectual and public audiences with his short meditation *Sobre la Guerra* (On War). In a country fixated on the image of peace as an idealized state of tranquility, non-conflict, harmony, and abundance, Zuleta’s words were distressing yet thought-provoking. Was the Colombians’ dream of peace as non-conflict the mirror side of war? Zuleta was skeptical about what he called “the feast of war” and the very idea of peace as non-conflict. He decried our inability to recognize and live productively and intelligently with conflict, and the recourse to the suppression, murder, humiliation, or silencing of the other as the mechanism of conflict resolution.

Zuleta’s meditation On War is the starting point of my reflection about the nature and outcomes of the violences against Indian populations, and their histories of suffering, struggle and redemption. My goal is to keep a critical glance at the symbolic dimensions of the “feast of war” in Colombia, and its implications in terms of the analysis of violence among ethnic minorities. Although violence in Colombia has been the matter of large scholarly consideration, the specific problem of violence and genocide against Indian communities has been rather overlooked in spite of pioneering contributions by the anthropology of decolonization in the decades of 1960s and 1970s. In the first part of the paper, I present an overview of the central issues at stake in the debate on violence, and discuss alternative understandings of the experiences of violence regarding historical legacies of humiliation, exclusion, and non-recognition. Then, I move on to examining the issue of violence against Indian communities. In the third section, I introduce the figure of Manuel Quintín Lame, who is the most important native intellectual of twentieth-century Colombia, and examine in detail the characteristics of his Indian struggle. In the fourth section, I use data from archival documentation in order to contrast the experiences of the Lamistas (followers of Lame) during the violent juncture

of the 1931 regional elections, and reflect on the symbolic dimensions of the feast of war. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks.

Violence in Colombia

There is no doubt that violence in Colombia is following historian Marco Palacios a “national trauma” (Palacios 2003, 18). Violence and the mythologies of violence are part of the Colombians’ everyday life and their complicated memories of historical loss, humiliation, exclusion, and injustice. Cristina Rojas has argued that Colombia is “A case of a paradoxical marriage of a state of continuous violence with the hallmarks of democratic civilization” (Rojas 2002, xxiii). In 1819, the Congress formed at Angostura proclaimed the Gran Colombia’s independence from Spain and its birth as a sovereign republic. Politics was organized around the ideals of the modern national state and the principles of liberal constitutionalism and democracy. However, the coexistence of constitutionalism and the defense of the rule of law, at least theoretically speaking, and the realities of war and privilege produced odd results and certainly deep exclusions. The emergence of the modern state was characterized by periods of civil war, the consolidation of an oligarchic tradition of rule (in which the private interests of the well born and wealthy prevailed), anti-democratic, elitist, and hierarchical political practices, state-sponsored violence, and sociopolitical exclusion and extreme inequality. Twenty years after the independence from Spain, Simón Bolívar bitterly decried the fact that the elite’s desire for “absolute power” was leading to the anarchy and civil war, and that the “implacable hatred” was corrupting the ideals of freedom (Bolívar 1981, 343-360). Along with the high concentration of power in the hands of the elite living in the most important urban centers, large masses of colored, poor, and Indian people had limited access to the protection of law and to equal membership in the nation.

How subordinated groups in Colombia have experienced violence, politics, and war is to be analyzed historically and according to what Frank Safford and Marco Palacios argue to be the country’s pattern of power fragmentation, weak political and economic integration (mainly due a territorial and cultural fragmentation), extreme inequality, and the tension between legitimacy and violence (Safford and Palacios 2002). There is no doubt that violence has been a key regulator of individual and collective conflicts, and that the borders of legitimate and illegitimate violence are but blurred. As Gerard Martin argues, in spite of democratic procedures and discourses, local actors use violence as their “symbolic resource” when resolving disputes (Martin 2000). There is also a lack of trust in institutional action and justice administration, and a tendency to resort to the public force as a private instrument of security and to private justice and paramilitary organizations. The image of the state as a symbol of justice, impartiality, and the guardian of legitimate violence, order, and welfare is contradicted by a dynamic politics that registers intense competition through war, privilege, and violence. Not only do many people perceive the state as powerless—some in fact decide to take law and justice in their own hands—but also see authority as menacing and arbitrary (arbitrary authority) (Jimeno 2001).

Colombian scholarship has been largely focused on the twentieth-century violences particularly those that occurred during and after *la Violencia* or “the classic

violence.” This was an interparty warfare that started in 1945 and ended in 1965, and was characterized by partisan factionalism, banditry, and peasant insurgency. *La Violencia*’s conflicts had their roots in the historical legacy of armed confrontation between the two political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, and the continuous exclusion of non-bipartisan demands and popular movements, which were treated as problems of public order, declared illegal and openly harassed. During the 1960s and 1970s, state-centered and structural approaches to violence focused on the formation of mutually antagonistic bipartisan identities, the weakness of the state (its inability to achieve hegemony and impart justice), and the negative effects of accelerated capitalist modernization. Since the late 1980s, agency-oriented approaches to violence have been focused on issues of political agency, subjectivity, and governance, and the relationship between the state and civil society (Ramírez 1997). Scholars have emphasized the fact that contemporary “violence has been multiple in terms of its origins, objectives, geography, modus operandi, and strategies” ranging from organized crime, guerrilla struggle, dirty war, to more diffuse forms of social violence (Sánchez 2001, 2). While the state’s crisis of legitimacy and the government’s lack of monopoly over the legitimate use of force have been central topics of analysis, the experiences of violence, their normalization in daily life, and what Michael Taussig has called “the deceit in the service of justice,” which paramilitary violence exacerbates, have been areas of recent examination (Taussig 2003, 48). Along with human rights abuses, the increasing territory-based power of non-state and armed actors, and the progressive “militarization of politics and banditization of war” (Peñaranda 2001, 180), the country faces the aggravation of income inequality, poverty, and exclusion (Palacios 2000, Garay 2003, López 2003).

The problem of recognition lies at the core of many social struggles in Colombia. Historian Herbert Braun has argued that one of the paradoxes of Colombian life is that those “from below” have sought to be recognized as part of the society and the nation “only to be turned away” (Braun 2003, 10). The constituencies of the “nation from below,” formed by large disfranchised, subordinated, and excluded populations including guerrilla groups have mostly struggled for recognition, respect, and political inclusion. Indeed, the feast of war in Colombia has abundant histories of humiliation, betrayal, solitude, and persecution. Braun has said referring to the countryside guerrilla men of the 1950s who were withdrawn from official membership to the party the following:

Without the support of their leaders, the rank-and-file rural men and women became simple bandits, *bandoleros*, who had nothing to protect but their own lives and their livelihood. It hurt. They were treated as criminals. [...] Betrayed by their leaders, they felt deeply *humillados*, humiliated and left alone in the *soledad*, the solitude of their own lives and in the *silencio*, the silence of the countryside. [...] These men wanted to be respected by their leaders. They wanted to be accounted for. Acknowledged. They yearned to be part of it all, part of the Liberal Party, the nation, and history itself (Braun 2003, 243).

Braun has pointed out the importance of accounting for the symbolic dimensions of violence and its subjective causes by focusing on the narratives of the local actors themselves and on what they tell to us about the local histories of violence. Such popular narratives frequently revolve around issues of exclusion and suffering, whether they refer

to the 1950s violences or to other experiences such as popular rebellions, grassroots movements for social justice, and other attempts at being included in the narrow borders of honor, respect, and politics imposed by the hegemonic elites. The experiences of violence, trauma, and suffering cannot be understood in terms of force, assault, or the infliction of pain alone; they imply the assault “on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth of the victim,” and the way in which the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate violence is expressed (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). The meaning of the feast of war, which Zuleta tried to problematize, is to an important extent in the eye of the beholder. Not every one feels in communion with the collective drunkenness of a feast of war, have the same perception of revenge, humiliation and exclusion, or, by the same token of inclusion and politics. Beyond resorting to an empty cultural relativism, what I want to illuminate is the fact that social and cultural factors give to violence its power and meaning. The very terms of the feast of war and the fleeting moment of happiness it provides need to be examined carefully, particularly if we are interested in understanding the experiences of the subaltern subjects themselves, their own words, and the way in which they make sense of their experiences and sufferings.

Violence, Genocide, and Indians

With the exception of the work of some anthropologists, the Indians’ experiences of violence, suffering, and exclusion have been largely overlooked in Colombian history (Vasco 2002; Taussig 1986; Arocha and Sánchez 1987). Such violences cannot be understood without accounting for the legacy of genocide—or what some define as the long-term effects of ethnocide. One of the most effective strategies of genocide is to erase the past existence of a people and the very event of genocide. As H  l  ne Piralian argues in her study about the mechanisms of genocide, the denial of memory is perhaps one of the most extreme forms of human violence (Piralian 2000). It is not surprising that North American Indian activist and intellectual Ward Churchill has spoken about the “little matter of genocide” that remains hidden, unacknowledged in American history (Churchill 1997). Combined with their physical extermination, people face the assassination of their symbolic chains of transmission, of their genealogies and collective meanings. Victims of genocide are expelled from the human order and condemned to wander in a place of non-memory and non-existence in which survivors are denied the possibility of mourning, and are forced to resettle and in some cases integrated into strategies of social and biological reengineering.

When speaking about genocide against Indian populations, we may consider the close connection between civilization, violence, and law. The genealogy of the Indian is bound to the imposition of dehumanizing discourses and practices of domination and subordination based on colonial differences (racial, social, and cultural). Since the colonial era through the modern national state, they made thinkable and painfully real the existence of thing-like, disposable people whose territorial dispossession, enslavement, and forced assimilation were considered legitimate; they were part of the civilizing mission. The sixteenth-century Conquest of the Americas inaugurated modern relations of domination based on the articulation of race and labor, space and people, knowledge and oppression on a global scale (Escobar 2002). Later on, they defined the limits of sovereignty, citizenship, and inclusion within the nation.

The idea of bringing civilization to others had historical nuances. The Spanish conquest was a project of Christianization and taming (*reducción*) of “the barbarian,” of its land, languages, and memories (Mignolo 1998). Aboriginal populations were inscribed as barbarians and natural vassals while the violence against them was authorized in the name of Christian civilization (Padgen 1999; Dussel 1992). In 1558, the Council of Indies ordered the granting of *resguardos* or portions of communal and inalienable land on behalf of the Indians who also gained rights to local government through the *cabildos* or local governing councils. With this policy of territorial and political *fueros* or special privileges, the Spanish Crown tried to take control over the power of the *encomenderos* and create an efficient strategy of tribute exaction and labor appropriation under its direct control. It also wanted to settle the Indians’ grievances and the increasing criticisms against the wars of conquest such as Bartolomé de Las Casas’ moral and theological indictment of the just war (Casas 1552).

Although *resguardos* and *cabildos* offered a degree of semi-autonomy to the Indian communities in Colombia—some of them even actively worked towards their establishment—they embodied the ideology of dominium, vassalage, and service that characterized the Spanish empire. In the Castilian society status was based on blood purity, religion, and wealth; justice in turn was seen as a distributive principle aimed at recognizing such kind of differences (Jaramillo Uribe 1994). Once the pacification wars in the Spanish colonies were over or subsided, surviving Indian communities signed capitulations, were subjected to forced resettlements into agricultural farms and towns, or segregated into *resguardos* (Triana Antorveza 1985). Simultaneously, a system of hierarchical socio-racial differentiation was formed that organized the relations, codes of behavior and dress between Whites, Indians, Blacks and the so-called “castes:” mestizo, *cobrizo*, mulatto, and *zambo*.

By the eighteenth-century, Indian communities such as the Nasa people in the Colombian southwest Andean region had been successful in reorganizing themselves through *resguardos* and *cabildos*, creating strategies of cultural revitalization, organization, and resistance. Other communities nonetheless suffered acute processes of cultural assimilation or *ladinización*, and the progressive loss of *resguardo* lands due to partitions, sales, fraud, indebtedness, and the violence of land conflicts. At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the fight for independence was undertaken against the despotism and corruption of Spanish imperial power and in the name of the oppressed subjects of colonialism: the Indians who had been brutally conquered and robbed of their lands, the Blacks who had been enslaved, and the Creoles who had been excluded from power and representation. With the new social contract, citizens were to enjoy the benefits of civilization and material progress, freedom, autonomy, and sovereignty. In 1821, the Congress of Cúcuta asserted the civil equality of Indians, setting them free from colonial tribute, and making them sovereign individuals no longer subjected to special colonial legislation. This meant the abolition of the *resguardo* system. Indians should no longer be named *indios* but rather *indígenas*. Creole politicians and reformers argued that Indians had to be tamed and assimilated into civil life (*reducidos a la vida civil*) in order to enjoy full citizenship. Hegemonic discourses of emancipation idealized the Indian

pasts with images of primitivism and romanticism while the actual Indians were represented as degenerated “savages.” They were seen as a residue of colonial domination, therefore, they were odds with progress and modernization. Excluded from the republic’s official culture and politics, they were represented as ignorant and backward. In short, they continue to be suitable subjects of civilization. Their economic exploitation, the seizure of their land, and taxation were taken for granted as legitimate civilizing practices. Liberal reformers understood civilization in terms of the principle of sovereign individuals, laissez-faire doctrines, and modernizing ideals. In contrast, Conservative reformers saw civilization in terms of Christian morality, enlightenment, and wealth (Rojas 2002).

While colonial legislation regulated the segregation of Indians, post-independence legislation decreed their assimilation. The goal of most of the politicians and reformers of this period was to dismantle the colonial *fueros*, abolish communal property, impose a regime of liberal individual property rights, reorganize Indian labor and taxation, and reallocate uncultivated or *baldío* lands in the hands of white proprietors. Land seizure along with the denial of legal protection and civil rights were of common occurrence during the nineteenth-century, and Indians remained under relations of production based on servitude, payment of dues in kind, and debt-peonage. After the mixed results of the implementation of laws of assimilation and the numerous conflicts they provoked, towards the end of the nineteenth-century reformers created a system of tutelage or Special Indian Legislation. With the Law 89 of 1890, the government of Rafael Nuñez established a centralized law that classified communities according to stages of civilization (Correa 1992). The native populations of the Amazon lowlands were considered “untouched by civilization” and hence “savage;” they were left under the control of missions. The indigenous communities of the Andean region were classified as “Indians in process of transition to civil life;” they had the right to live in *resguardos* and form *cabildos*. Nonetheless, they were regarded as minors concerning civil and penal matters. The legislators conceived the Law 89 as a transitory one; it would take approximately fifty years to finally and properly integrate Indians into civil life. The Indians that were classified as *ladinos* or already civilized people could not claim the protection of the Special Indian Legislation; they were regular citizens. In practice, they did not enjoy full citizenship or equal rights. Citizenship in fact was quite a contested matter in Colombia.

The Special Indian Legislation did not meet its status of limitations. It lasted more than a century as a legal oxymoron. It preserved some aspects of the sixteenth-century Spanish legal philosophy of *fueros* that were not swept clean by the liberal and positivist reforms of the nineteenth-century (Van Cott 2000). This situation sets Colombia apart from most other Latin American states, and opens particular questions about the responses of Indian communities to civilizing discourses and practices, the formation of politicized forms of historical consciousness, militancy, and insurgency, and the deployment of law in the struggles for land, autonomy, and rights. At the beginning the twentieth-century, the Indian movement led by Manuel Quintín Lame raised awareness about the white’s land usurpation of the Indian territories, and the Indian’s history of oppression and violence under the evils of civilization. Lame and his

supporters not only pointed at the historical injuries suffered by the Indians but also at the betrayals of freedom and the limits of citizenship in the modern state. They claimed that the humiliation of the Indians should not prevail, and that they should be redeemed for their losses and sorrows. By reinscribing modern notions of humanity, justice, and freedom in their own image, they challenged their generic universal shape; simultaneously, they enacted an insurgent counter-knowledge.

Manuel Quintín Lame and the Twentieth-Century Indian Movement

Manuel Quintín Lame (1883-1967) was and remains the most prominent Indian leader of twentieth-century Colombia. The social movement he led lasted sixty years, from 1910 to 1967, and mobilized Nasa resguardo people, Nasa and Guambiano landless sharecroppers, and Coyaima and Natagaima Indian peasants in a large region of the southwest (Espinosa 2003, 2004). In 1912, the cabildos or local Indian councils elected Lame their chief and representative. The peak of the Indian mobilization in Cauca occurred between 1914 and 1917, and was known as *La Quintinada* (a derivation from the name of its main leader Quintín). The protest began over the refusal to pay *terraje* or days of service to the hacienda, and it progressively involved claims to land and communal ownership, and demands over education, civil, and political rights. In 1916, after escalating antagonisms between Indians and local authorities, Lame and his supporters were accused of sedition. *La Quintinada*'s leaders were persecuted as criminals and imprisoned even though the charges against them were never successfully proved. Lame was arrested in 1917 and remained in jail until 1921. After his release, he moved to the south of Tolima where he founded the village of San José de Indias with Coyaima and Natagaima families from the dissolved Greater Ortega and Chaparral resguardo. The *Lamismo* was divided into three main phases. From 1922 to 1930, Lame formed alliances with the Socialist Party and the agrarian movement. After internal divisions, from 1931 to 1939, the *Lamismo* centered on the recovery of the Greater Ortega and Chaparral resguardo and the application of the Law 89 among what the regional government considered civilized communities with no right to claim special protection. From 1940 to 1967, the *Lamismo* entered a phase of strong religious militancy invested with a sense of martyrdom that coincided with the escalating conflicts of *la Violencia* (1945-1965). Until his death in 1967, Lame was active in demanding the restitution of communal lands, the application of the Special Indian Legislation or Law 89, the political recognition of the local-based cabildos, and the Indian rights to autonomy, representation, and self-determination.

In 1927, Lame, his political companion José Gonzalo Sánchez, and Indian women from different communities across the country produced and distributed the broadside, *El derecho de la mujer indígena en Colombia*. In 1939, Lame finished his treatise *Los pensamientos del indio que se educó en las selvas colombianas*, and in 1963 a short text entitled *La bola que rodó por el desierto* (Lame 1971, 1973). In his writings, Lame established a symbolic opposition between civilization and what he called "wild civilization." He conveyed the later as a *saber* (knowledge and wisdom) in its own right, and as a visionary experience of illuminations and sorrows that catalyzed a life long apostolic militancy for the Indian cause. He was concerned with the eventual reversal of

the historical injury and humiliation of the Indian, a thought that was rooted in both Andean messianic traditions and Christian notions of justice and redemption. He also spoke about “the betrayals of freedom,” which was his way to refer to the Indians’ exclusion from full citizenship, representation, and politics. In short, he reinscribed modern notions of humanity, justice, and freedom, challenging their generic universal shape, and producing a historical interpretation from the standpoint of the subaltern subject of the Indian. Under his leadership, La Quintinada and the Lamismo marked the emergence of modern and distinctive Indian politics. In addition to the project of memory revitalization and the reinvention of Indianness along the lines of a politicized consciousness, Lame and his followers developed a strategy of land repossession and ritualized demarcation of *resguardo* boundaries. They appropriated writing, the liberal discourse of rights, and what Lame called “civil knowledge” in their militancy strategies. They also established a sense of moral continuity with the colonial past, and tried to raise awareness about what they called the “usurpation” that Indians had suffered since the Conquest. They criticized the oppression caused by colonialism and capitalism, the corruption of judges and politicians, and the racial hatred. They fought to protect the *resguardos* against the liberal regime of individual property rights, and to obtain political and cultural recognition within the nation-state, preserving the autonomy and the protection of group-rights. Not only did their claims clash with the dominant ideology of whiteness as civilization and knowledge, and the often-contradictory legal regulations of Indianness, but also with the hacendado power and its political factionalism. They faced the criminalization of their demands in the exclusionary sphere of bipartisan politics, and the state-sponsored and paramilitary violence that has afflicted popular politics at large in Colombia.

Like other such histories, Lame’s has been largely neglected or trivialized by official history. When accounted for, like in the case of the Liberal and Marxist Colombian historiography, it has been represented as a failed peasant-Indian protest plagued by an atavistic or premodern nativism (Gilhodès 1989). Allegedly embedded in the impurity of the colonial identity of the Indian, the dangers of false consciousness and class blindness, Lame’s Indian politics has also been referred to as prepolitical, ideological, and spurious, prone to cooptation by hegemonic politics, and lacking revolutionary consciousness or a truly insurgent force (Bonilla 1979; Vasco 2002). Although deeper analyses of Lame’s thought and movement have proved wrong some of such assumptions, they have condemned Lame as an inauthentic and legalist caudillo who tried to forge a political unit where it did not exist, was trapped into his condition of acculturated sharecropper, and spoke no native language (Rappaport 1998, Vega Cantor 2002). His later strategy of resistance is seen as compromising the possibilities early attempts of liberation (Vasco 2002). The general statements of such representations are of no surprise. Peasant politics has usually been represented as failed, and when mediated by religion as prepolitical or backward, unable to address a truly transformative agenda (Guha 1983; Chatterjee 2000).

In order to better understand the significance of Lame’s social movement in the context of both colonial and neocolonial domination, and offer alternative understandings of the problem of violence, we must examine larger historical events. It occurred more or

less at the same time that Emiliano Zapata's revolution in southern Mexico, and the Uitoto and Muinane revolts in the Colombian Amazon against the rubber company *la Casa Arana*. As Joanne Rappaport has demonstrated, Lame's Indian thought had roots in the tradition of Andean historical consciousness and visionary leadership (Rappaport 1998). Lame in fact was called messenger. There is an important element of "continuity" in the Andean native thinking that emerges with the 1781 anticolonial movement in the southern Andes against the Spanish rule. Tomás Katari, Túpac Amaru, and other Aymara-speaking and Inka leaders in fact imagined a counterconquest of their own (Thomson 2002). In the areas under their control, they created local-based assemblies and cabildos. They defended forms of communal, decentralized, and participatory political practice. They rose up against Spain's imperial power almost coincidentally with the insurgents here in North America and shortly before the *sans culottes* in France and the black Jacobins in Saint Domingue. Neither the Indian movement in the Andes nor the rebellions in the Amazon were victorious. Indeed, the aspirations of the Indian leaders were not in line with what subsequent thinking has deemed "modern" or "revolutionary." Indian leaders were concerned with claims on ancestral hereditary and communal and territorial rights, and with counter-acting the violences of white domination. However, there is a broader array of revolutionary subjects, emancipatory and resistance projects in circulation during the "Atlantic moment" of globalization. Events such as La Quintinada and the Lamismo, and the very characteristics of Lame's Indian thought, exceed strict chronologies and pose questions about an "age," an age of civilization and violence, insurgency and nation building. They also remind us that there is a recurrent theme in the narratives of indian insurgency and their search for social justice. In their fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, the Zapatistas of Mexico argued that they were fighting "for dignity, respect, knowledge, land, job, life, justice, liberty, and history" (Zapatistas 1996)

Lame's Indian thought and his collective movement represent a struggle over history, and a local history in its own right, historicity, and vocality. The fragmented, silenced, and dispersed memories that weave this history were forced to inhabit the language of the victor, and were inscribed into specific forms of subjection. In other words, they were constructed as criminal and denied of their political and historical agency. Since the Spanish Conquest, native intellectuals responded to what they rightly considered an invasion through different written strategies (grievances, legal petitions, memorials, and treatises) connected to both their forms of historical thinking and storytelling and western notions of historical thinking. Lame is one of such intellectuals. He and his followers tried to make sense of their realities by creating a language able to convey their demands and reflect on their history in their own terms. The experiences-turned-stories, memorials, and written words archive referred to past and present experiences whose remembrance was useful to take action in the present and establish a moral link with the past. By transforming time into space and conflating the past and the present in a non-linear way, these narratives reminded their audiences that history was walking, recalling, and claiming memories and struggles, caring for life, and repossessing the land.

Lame's knowledge was about hybridity, translation, and insurgency. He was both a sharecropper and a resguardo advocate but he was not a member of a particular resguardo. He harnessed symbols and images that were part of the Nasa and Guambiano's traditions of cultural revitalization in Cauca, and he also crafted a new imagery to reflect on the situation of the landless Indian peonage of the south of Tolima. He spent quite a long time in the south of Tolima, where native languages had no longer been spoken since the nineteenth-century. Natagaima and Coyaima descendents of the Piajo people had experienced intense processes of acculturation and territorial dispossession since the sixteenth-century. Lame walked in that border zone of history where, paraphrasing Donna Haraway, "crossings are never safe and names never original" (Haraway 1992, 18). He and his followers—whether Nasa, Guambiano, Coyaima and Natagaima—had deep awareness of the labor exploitation, coercive exaction, land seizure, and political persecution to which they were subjected. This situation was for them a clear expression of their unfreedom and subordination in the modern nation. Their agenda and Indian politics were largely fixed by the hegemonic terms of domination and politics. They defended the Law 89 and sought the legal and political recognition of their authorities and forms of organization, their rights to voice and representation as Indians, developing over the time an autonomous consciousness, militancy, and situational politics beyond the bipartisan hegemony. In the face of political violence, attacks and harassment by hacendados, armed militias, and local authorities, Lamistas accentuated the sense of religious militancy and martyrdom. They were confronting forces that they saw as evil, and refused to comply with the images and oppressive practices of "beast-like" servants and slaves. For them, history had been turned upside down by the cataclysm of the conquest and the destruction of their genealogies.

1931: A Feast of War at San José de Indias

In the evening of January 31 in the afternoon, the indigenous people of San José de Indias or Llanogrande in Ortega (Tolima) were gathered together preparing for the state legislature elections that would take place the following day, on Sunday. They were going to vote for "religion and the white flag," which translated into electoral support for the Conservative party. While gathered together, they were harassed and then attacked by a group of armed Liberal militias. Six indigenes were killed with firearms, and 49 were wounded. Between that night and the following day, the chief of the local civil guard ordered their arrest. Lame and 40 companions were put in jail for disorderly conduct and armed assault. Lame was separated from the group, beaten, and strung up in a tree standing in Ortega's central plaza. In jail, he was left without food for three days. After some days of imprisonment, he and 13 other indigenes were sent to Ibagué's penitentiary. What follows is a fragment of the declaration of a police lieutenant who was called in to restore order:

I left Guamo [Tolima] at one o'clock in the afternoon. I took the express *autoferro* (train) and arrived in Saldaña where I took a cab to go to Santa Marta; then, I took the bus sent by Ortega's mayor to the site called "Vuelta de Gavilán." There, I found a cavalry squad of no less than 200 riders commanded by general Marco A. Bonilla, and Andrés Guzmán, Miguel Ortíz, and Antenor Herrán. They were hostile to the police. When I disarmed General Bonilla, he showed me his

immunity card, issued by the state legislature, and he alleged that due to his status as a political representative he could not be arrested. [...] The following morning, on Monday, I received a written notification ordering the capture of Manuel Quintín Lame. [During the events the day before] policemen saw a robust and longhaired (*mechudo*) individual who was quickly running through the *platanales*, jumping fences with astonishing ability, and escaping into the bush. Policeman Daniel Daza and his companion officer tried to track him down and found him sneaking through the shrubs. They ordered him to freeze pointing at him with their firearms, and Lame surrendered putting up his arms. He was carrying a *peinilla* (machete) that, according to the popular saying, is his inseparable companion. This individual was Manuel Quintín Lame. At the scene of the crime, they noticed that indigenous people had been celebrating, because they found a lot of spilled *chicha*. They also found instruments to distill *aguardiente*, Mr. Lame's entire archive, and his carnival costumes, which he used in his ceremonies and that his wife handed over to the officers. We confiscated a lot of *peinillas* and some shotguns, and we found in the ground some *gras* cartridges. They also noticed that in Lame's house and neighboring houses, they had piled lots of rocks as if they had consciously done so on purpose.

According to the lieutenant, Lame was not only trying to escape “with astonishing ability” in the bush. The “robust and longhaired” man was carrying a machete, and was ready to defend himself even with rocks. Furthermore, he was celebrating and distilling alcohol, which seemed to be proof of a mutinous behavior. The fact that Lame escaped was an indication of his culpability. But he was escaping not from a criminal act committed by him or his followers, but because he was being attacked with machetes and guns, and hence was trying to survive, as the numerous declarations of local witnesses stated it. Nonetheless, he was charged with disorderly conduct that resulted in the fatal death of his own people. Nothing was reported about the participation of the generals and civil guard. On March 14, 1931, the Superior Court of Ibagué released Lame and other indigenes on bail. In the official notification, the judge noted the legal irregularities of the entire process, and the violation of the civil rights of the accused. On June 5, 1931, Lame filed an accusation against Ortega's mayor, Alvaro Guzmán, and Gentil Castro, Marco A. Bonilla and the members of the civic guard for the homicide of six indigenous, the wounds of 49 others, and their bad treatment in jail.

While the Indians spoke of a massacre at San José de Indias, the police and state agents spoke of disorderly conduct and public order disturbances. Prior to elections, the atmosphere in many towns was festive although tense. It was not uncommon that armed militias harassed opposite political factions. Elections were in Colombia “feasts of war” plagued by partisan animosity and in some cases doomed to electoral fraud. Not always did indigenous people align with the Conservative party. In fact, most of their organizing attempts had been tacitly or openly defiant of bipartisan politics, particularly during the 1920s when socialists and Lamistas developed closer alliances. In 1930, Liberal president Enrique Olaya Herrera had come into power after the authoritarian and Church-influenced Conservative governments of the 1920s, and created an alliance of moderates from both parties called the *concentración nacional*. He defeated both of the

candidates of the Conservative party, Guillermo Valencia, who represented the majority, and Alfredo Vásquez Cobo, who represented the minority. Olaya Herrera carried out the *revolución en marcha* (revolution on the march), a modernizing program characterized by a strong state intervention. Despite of the central government's explicit commitment to labor organization and unionization, the triumph of the Liberals in the south of Tolima triggered a renewed wave of *hacendado* repression against the agrarian movement which included Lamistas, Socialists, and Communists. Ortega was a predominantly Liberal area, and although both Liberal and Conservative *hacendados* agreed on principle of private property, they differed about education and religion, and received the possibility of agrarian reforms with hostility, let alone the possibilities of autonomous popular organizing.

Organized Indians were thus seen as treacherous “ladinos.” The symbolic demonization of the enemy included precisely its construction as evil, disorganized, not related to civility (untamed), drunk, and rancorous. According to local politicians, hacendados, and state authorities, Indians had been already civilized; they however tried to use the special protection to get economic and political advantages, and to play the role of civilized men of politics when in reality they were almost barbarians. The discrimination worked in both ways: Indians were both civilized therefore they should not have any special treatment, they were barbarians therefore they were no legitimate political subjects. The result was a void. Things actually worked in complex ways. The imperatives of colonization had created in many parts of the country cultures of terror that operated through what Michael Taussig calls the colonial mirror (Taussig, 51). Mirroring the barbarism they tried to subdue, local elites had infused of barbarism their own social relations. There was a mimetic process between the savagery attributed to the Indians and the savagery perpetrated by the elites in the name of “civilization” and “national culture.” Perhaps this is why Donna Haraway argues that the genocides of modern history are formed by “unending series of mimetic and counterfeit events” (Haraway 1992, 87).

Indians were denied of their agency, symbolic presence, and history, reinscribed in the elites' own images. Their marginalization from the construction of the new polity was evident in the feasts of war. They were either part of the large, illiterate masses almost forced to vote (and therefore they obtained their national identification number shortly before the elections) or they were openly excluded, especially whenever they tried to create their own political agendas. The fact that they were actually willing to vote for a candidate of the dominant parties should not be understood and clear-cut cooptation but rather as negotiations whose terms we should better understand. This is the colonial legacy of modern history. Reexamination of modern nation building by looking at the coloniality of power that underlies civilizing mission and relations of power, Indians as subjects of law and civilizing desires, and as subaltern and insurgent actors.

Epilogue: Against the Feast of War
Conclusions to be drafted

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