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Frontier exchanges and territoriality in The Pedrera

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In small South Colombian frontier villages such as La Pedrera, forms of exchange are so diverse that it would be reductionist, from an anthropological point of view, to consider only the monetary (pecuniary) exchanges.² In this boundary region of the Amazonian trapezium, most exchanges are carried out without the use of money and a lot of them can be considered as "barter" or "gifts" (Mauss 1967). In addition to the usual market relationships, many other kinds of exchange exist where things are exchanged without the use of money.

This situation poses two questions: What replaces the use and functions of money? How does the circulation of goods work? These questions ask how the different local actors manage to exchange. In order to study this scenario we will require a detailed explanation of the traditions and cultural contexts of these activities, and we will also analyze each actors' conceptions of the exchange process.

In the last decade, individuals have constructed new forms of exchange which are simultaneously new means of intercultural relationship. These exchanges are interactions between the diverse groups of white colonizers (who come from every part of Colombia, Brazil and Peru) and the indigenous tribes. They represent an interface between different cultural conceptions. Moreover, one never knows exactly what happens to the good exchanged: it goes in other hands belonging to other people with a different culture. Objects may travel farther away than persons, especially when they are exchanged between different groups. Therefore objects may become implements of interaction between cultures. Hence the term, *frontier exchange*. For not only do exchanges occur in a geographical area near the national boundaries but they are also performed in the context of cultural frontiers. Physical objects are involved, as well as actors' behavior or "way of acting." In many ways, this behavior is more important than the material object.

Exchange is often interpreted by economists as a “return,” but this confuses the exchange with the thing exchanged and to dismiss the ways of exchange, which are essential. Each exchange follows the rules of the tradition, without which it can not be performed. Individuals must learn *how* to exchange.

In oral cultures above all, exchange is practiced using particular forms where speech is fundamental. In other words, the exchange needs to be performed with particular speech acts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). This is particularly obvious in traditional contexts where modern market exchanges are unknown or illegitimate. If one does not know the practice and speech of exchange, he cannot perform it. This poses the question: What forms the contexts of exchange? For not only are persons and speech relevant in exchange contexts, but we will see the relevancy of how unmovable goods such as territory are also simultaneously negotiated.

In territorial affairs, whites negotiate lands as geographical, political and economical areas. However, in multicultural frontier zones, Indians conceptualize space in a different cosmological and symbolic framework than colonists. In particular, they refer to traditional *exchange techniques* which occur elsewhere than in market situations (e.g. domestic exchanges in common houses).

After discussing the geographical and political characteristics of La Pedrera, we will examine the historical evolution of exchanges in this frontier zone; then we will show the progressive construction of exchange relationships between Whites and Indians from the 17th Century until now.

Nowadays many exchanges can be considered as alternative techniques of exchange, that is as apart from monetary exchanges.

The Pedrera geographic-political area

According to the Honorable Council of Amazonia, the Corregimiento of The Pedrera is delimited “at north, in the intersection of the 70°30' meridian on the Apaporis River, following its inferior course to the Caqueta River and along the latter until encountering the Apaporis point on the vertex of the major straight line of the Trapezium; descending along to this straight line until the intersection of the second south parallel, and straight on to the west until encountering the intersection with the 70°30' meridian, and

along the latter to the North until the intersection with the Apaporis River, point of departure.”³

This area is bounded on the North with the Vaupès department, on the South with the Tarapaca Corregimiento, on the East with the Republic of Brazil, and on the West with the Corregimientos of Miriti (i.e. Miriti-parana River) and Puerto Arica. The village of The Pedrera is situated on the right bank of the Caqueta River, just down the Cordoba rapids, and before the mix of its white water with the black water of the Apaporis River. Further along is the Brazilian frontier with The Villa Bittencourt, second and last village of the zone.

The Pedrera is surrounded with different Resguardos and communities, which are dependent upon their local administration (the *corregimiento*). In front of the village, on the left side of the Caqueta River is the Comeyafu Resguardo, which is divided into four parts named “parcialidades.” These are distinguished according to their ethnical majority; each one is led by an Indian captain. These are parcialidad Miraña, Macuna, Tanimuca and Yucuna. Up the Caqueta River, one finds the Resguardo of Cordoba on the right, and Resguardo of the Ingleses on the left. Farther upstream, scattered along the Caqueta River, are various communities without a Resguardo status -- such as Puerto Caiman. Down the river from The Pedrera village, live other communities like those of Bacuri or Puerto Curare.

Multi-ethnic population of The Pedrera

According to a 1997 census, The Pedrera Administration counted at that time a population of 1538 inhabitants, with 780 living in the urban village. They were composed as follows: 65 Mirañas, 49 Yucunas, 37 Uitotos, 25 Carijonas, 22 Tucanos, 18 Matapis, 16 Tanimucas, 12 Tarianos and 10 Cabiয়ারis.⁴ Thus indigenous people represent 32 percent of the urban population.⁵ However, the classification used in the census does not distinguish the different subgroups. For example the majority of Mirañas include Boras Indians and although both of them speak nearly the same language, (from the Uitoto linguistic family) they consider themselves to be different ethnic groups. Also, the Letuama are not differentiated from Tanimucas, and both speak roughly the same language, which is part of the central Tucano linguistic family.

As is typical in such classification, administrative categories are relatively arbitrary and don't take into account indigenous group distinctions and differentiations. From an Indian's perspective, many natives are not represented in this census.

In the case of the Yucuna, although they distinguish themselves as different lineages,⁶ they speak of themselves as "Yucuna" in White contexts; nowadays, many of them have taken this eponym as a first name, after their Spanish Christian name. Among the Yucuna lineages, the *Kamejeya*⁷ are considered by others as "proper yucuna."⁸ Another group of "Yucunas" is the *Jimikepi*.⁹ These are not seen as *Kamejeya*, because they have another first ancestor whose origin is not from the Miriti-parana River basin. Coming from another country, they spoke different languages. They didn't know how to build a *maloca* (roundhouse).¹⁰ They took daughters and sisters of *Kamejeya*, and lived with them; they were their servants for a long time, and finally learned their ceremonial language.¹¹ Others still are the *Jeruriwa*.¹² Like the Jimikepi, they don't have the same ancestor as the *Kamejeya*, nor did they know about roundhouses. When they met *Kamejeya*, they began to exchange sisters with them, and learned how to build *malocas*. Nowadays a few of them live in *malocas* built with the agreement of the *Kamejeya*. Finally, there are the descendants of the *Jurumi* who were at equal rank with the *Kamejeya* but born at a different place, in *Kuwana*. They spoke their language, originally different from *Kamejeya*.

As for the people called "*Matapi*" by the Whites, who called themselves *Jupichiya*, their old people say that they almost disappeared due to internal killing among themselves and epidemics, in such a way that they barely survived thanks to *Kamejeya* who gave them wives. Consequently, they lost their language and learned *yucuna*. They kept only a few words, ceremonial formulas and songs from their original language, and lived a long time with the *Kamejeya* as their servants, until they were able to give them wives back.

History of frontier exchanges

The Indians' memory of this frontier zone is marked by their relationship with other ethnic groups and particularly with Whites. Since the arrival of the latter, exchanges have been transforming in the contact zone between cultures.

The first Whites or “white Indians” who came into the Lower Caqueta are still remembered by natives as the Mirabara.¹³ Coming from Rio Negro in Brazil, they entered the area between the 17th and 18th Centuries to carry out natives as prisoners.

At the beginning, they battled to capture slaves in order to exchange them for manufactured goods with the Portuguese. Many prisoners were transported and sold on the great ports of the Amazon such as Teffé or Manaus. Later, many native groups like the Miraña and Carijona entered these conflicts.¹⁴ not only to satisfy their anthropophagous rituals but also to exchange prisoners for steel tools and guns. Finally, the Portuguese began to negotiate slaves directly with indigenous leaders in order to “save” them from their cannibal sellers. According to various authors¹⁵ who witnessed slave traffic, there was a very large population in the area, which decreased with the arrival of the first Whites, who introduced epidemics, strengthened intertribal wars, and deported a large part of the population.

Mirabararas are still famous in the natives’ memories. The term means “anthropophagous” in *yucuna*. Many Kamejeya still recount their practices and relationships with their ancestors. As with many groups of the area (Llanos and Pineda 1982), Kamejeya fought to capture slaves and exchanged them with the Mirabara. Many Indians worked with them to signal enemy sites and learned from them new artisan techniques, like making canoes and “white houses.” These exchanges and deals allowed some of them to gain power and become leaders.¹⁶

Since this time, merchandise such as salt, materials, steel tools, shotguns, and animals such as hens and dogs were introduced into the area. Natives thought of them with a particular symbolism that is still alive in oral histories collected recently.¹⁷

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the area saw an inflow of Colombian rubber gatherers. First came a group led by Moreno, who primarily exploited indigenous work force for carrying merchandise from the Miriti to Lower Caqueta.

After an indigenous rebellion in Miriti, which victimized many white, Yucunas and Matapiés were forced to change their original death-debt¹⁸ for labor and were taught to collect latex. Finally, Moreno and Emilio Plata were killed by Indians for their violence and sexual abuse with women.¹⁹

After having avenged Plata and Moreno on the Miriti, Oliverio Cabrera built his own empire from Campoamor, a rubber camp at the head of Miriti, and the two brothers of Plata²⁰ established another rubber camp on the Apaporis.

Natives were indebted to the rubber gatherers for killing Whites, a debt that gatherers considered to be for life. Thus, Cabrera built Campoamor with forced labor as a punishment for the indigenous uprising. Up to a thousand individuals, coming from many different ethnic groups came to the area, fleeing from Casa Arana to work with Cabrera (Van der Hammen 1992: 34).

Rubber barons used different strategies to integrate with the Indians. Some of them raised native orphans so that they learned Spanish and could lead the indigenous working force by translating their orders. Many rubber gatherers, such as Cecilio Plata and Cabrera, married indigenous women.

When the rubber crisis began, Cabrera intended to exploit rubber from *balata*.² This type of exploitation required native labor on a large range of camps, something that made punishments difficult. Progressively, the forced contract of labor-for-murder turned into debt-peonage. Rubber gatherers advanced merchandise of small value against work. They benefited from the fact that Indians did not know about value and were fascinated by manufactured goods. Therefore, they exploited them without canceling their debt. Symbolically, they reproduced the death-debt with small, valueless merchandise.

This situation changed with arrival of district officers who controlled the exploitation. On the one hand, they obliged rubber gatherers to pay their labor force and prohibited the abuse of violence. On the other hand, however, they legitimated debt-peonage and punishments.

After the war with Peru, where Cabrera had provided his work force to the National Government for the military conflict, a large number of indigenous people had died from epidemics so the exploitation of Campoamor declined. Cabrera left after district officer E. Uribe required him to pay the work of Indians from Araracuara.

Due to an increased demand for rubber in the World War II, other rubber gatherers entered the area. The use of guns was abandoned, but most of them continued to deceive natives in trade, and extended the debt-peonage with an “honor code” which determined and controlled the debts of Indians between patrons.²² Despite an acute competition, some

of them managed to continue the exploitation. Nevertheless, when the world market for rubber finally collapsed, they left the exploitations.

Several rubber gatherers, such as the two sons-in-law and the son of Cabrera, are still famous for their particular relationship with indigenous groups because they married indigenous women. Jácome Cabrera, brought up in Campoamor, spoke various indigenous languages. But because of these parental relationships to natives, it was difficult to adapt the use of labor for competitive purposes and to demand reimbursement of debts. Finally, he died “poor.”²³

During the 1960s, when profits from rubber were decreasing, exploitation of furs boomed. A large population of Indians benefited from a wave of prosperity, which increased their purchasing power. Consequently, many traders began to travel the rivers and they provided a wide range of merchandise.

After 1974, the year in which the INDERENA²⁴ prohibited the fur trade, extraction activities collapsed in the forest and began to concentrate in rivers. This brought about the development of commercial fishing in The Pedrera. This period ends with the construction of a landing strip, the introduction of the first cold rooms in the village, and with transition from dried fish to fresh fish exploitation (Rodríguez 1992: 42).

Many Indians that were accustomed to the “white way of life” and merchandise provided by *caucheros* (rubber gatherers), settled near The Pedrera after their departure. Very few of them became owners of means of production and circulation (nets, boats or engines). Still nowadays, most of them carry on debt-peonage with the patrons of commercial fishing (often former rubber gatherers) or share benefits with them.²⁵

Alternative techniques of exchange

As this brief history of exchanges shows, the use of money takes place very late in the area. Only after the war with Peru, when first district officers arrived, were rubber gatherers forced to pay their debt to Indians with money.

Nowadays, money is an important mean of exchange, but its use is still not very widespread among local exchange practices. A large proportion of the horticultural population in the forest does not need money to carry on its social-economical relationships with others. These are still maintained with other types of exchanges.

To analyze the variety of their aspects, the “terms of exchange” must not simply be taken as “data” of ethnographic fieldwork. First, they are social or cultural constructions. As has been underlined by several authors, it is important to distinguish between the various conceptions of the same good when it crosses cultural frontiers.²⁶ In each context, goods are associated with meanings and histories that often escape external observers. Furthermore, conceptions and uses are not attached to artifacts by their original producers: they vary according to their owner's particular culture. It is not only the conception of the units of exchange which differ between cultures, it is also the conception of the “transaction itself” (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992: 14).

In order to understand the mechanisms of such “particular” forms of exchange, which by definition occur in the margins of occidental cultures, they will be described here within their contexts, stressing the role of speech in its frame of reference to symbolize the exchange. More than simply transfers of goods, forms of exchange are *conversations* in the sense of Goffman (as exchange of speech). They will be analyzed as interactions where speech is a necessary condition for their occurrence. Besides, territory must be explored as a relevant component of a frontier exchange system. With this good which doesn't circulate, only people discuss and exchange things during their interactions. How do they speak? Why do they move, and stay?

Maloca and Traditional Exchanges

In the lower Caqueta region, nearly all horticultural populations have traditionally lived in large *malocas* that house several families. It was only after the first contacts with other indigenous populations and with the intensification of their relationships with Whites, that locals began to abandon this type of construction and adopt the architecture of “white houses.” Today, only natives strongly attached to their ancestral traditions live in *malocas*, but the practice of multifamily cohabitation has been largely restrained. However, the traditional institution of *maloquero* (maloca's head) is still a very important factor in the social organization of indigenous families, and their modes of exchange.

For the Yucuna, the *maloqueros*²⁷ are family chiefs simultaneously representing lineage, important allies and the firstborn. In the different contexts that arise under their *maloca* roof, they amass functions of responsibility and authority in the administration of exchanges. Moreover, they control not only the internal exchanges arising in the *maloca*,

but also the external exchanges. The internal exchanges of a *maloca* can be defined as those pertaining to the family that lives there, or its usual residents. On the other hand, the external exchanges of the *maloca* are those occurring between one of its usual residents and the representative of another house.

All exchanges, whether external or internal, always take place at a *maloquero's* place -- that is, on the space that he took possession of when constructing the *maloca* (below, we will see the different articulations between exchanges and territory). Internal and external exchanges can be distinguished by the contexts in which they occur. The former take place in a domestic context, while the latter are always carried out in the context of a visit, a collective labor or a ceremonial dance.

Domestic Life

According to Sahlins, the domestic unit is the place where “generalized reciprocity” occurs, where solidarity is at its maximal expression. Exchanges appear as “*deferred*.”²⁸ With this type of exchange, the equilibrium of value between the exchanged goods and services is not the ruling factor. For this reason, exchanges take certain aspects of a gift. It would be reductionist to think that internal exchanges of a *maloca* are free, spontaneous or guided by individual interests. Rather, these exchanges are ruled and defined by the family authority. The domestic unit must thus be considered as an institutional axis. At the interior of the *maloca*, the resident group’s rules are constantly being redefined and updated. We will briefly present some of these rules. For the Yucuna, each man has a status or a particularity that determines the characteristics of his or her exchanges with the rest of the family. This status is always given to the individual at his baptism by a *lawichú* (shaman), a status that he will keep throughout his lifetime. Moreover, each of these assigned particularities requires a specific type of shamanic expertise. Often, the firstborn is chosen as the *maloquero*, and as such, he must master the symbolic knowledge and practice that will allow him to construct and maintain several large *malocas*.²⁹ Subsequent male offspring learn dances and chants, and the youngest are taught a large part of traditional shamanism.³⁰

Depending on each one's function, a larger or smaller participation in the domestic food needs is required of the *maloca's* members. Thus, it is the *maloca's* head, especially if

he is the firstborn, which is responsible for supplying the *maloca* with game. Compared to other men, the *maloquero* has the highest obligation to feed the family living with him.³¹

Furthermore, each member of the *maloca* accepts the sexual division of tasks. Men contribute to the nutritional requirements by offering their hunt, while women contribute with cultivated manioc.³² When fish poisoning expeditions are carried out, men manipulate the *barbasco* (poisonous roots), whereas women are only charged with collecting the fish. At the *chagra* (garden), men plant *chontaduro* (peach-palm, *Bactris gasipaes*), bananas, pineapple, tobacco and coca, while women plant tubercles such as manioc and yam.³³

Visits

A large part of the external exchanges of the *maloca* takes place in the context of a visit between representatives of different families. These visits are essential for the performance of certain relations in the social organization. Most of them are purely formal, and are not announced in advance. In this manner, one can visit another representative of the lineage, an ally or the ally of an ally. It is important to point out that, for *maloqueros*, it is indispensable to receive and visit others. This implies that every *maloquero* must receive any visitor at his place, without notice and at any time, given that the visitor has never shown a hostile attitude.

The practice of exchanges between chiefs also possesses institutional rules. Moreover, as Searle explains,³⁴ such a practice cannot function without certain more or less formal speech acts. In other words, not only does there exist a particular know-how (*savoir-faire*) in the ways of receiving and visiting an alter ego, there also exists an associated manner of speaking. In fact, a visitor -- even if he is a complete stranger, and thus a potential enemy³⁵ -- must always announce himself when he approaches a *maloca*. Moreover, he cannot pass by the vicinity of the *maloca* without saluting the *maloquero*, otherwise he risks being considered an enemy.

Once announced, the visitor must necessarily enter the *maloca* through the main entrance. The *maloquero* is obliged to receive him by engaging in a conversation. This is necessary for any type of visit. Here of course, we cannot analyze in detail the form of these conversations which, even if they cannot be classified among the ceremonial conversations that take place in ritual dances, possess nevertheless rigorous formal rules pertaining to the style, subject and timing. With these conversations, the parties involved proclaim the traditional reference frame of the exchange that they are empowered to conduct together. It

is also important to underline that only goods introduced or presented in this fashion -- that is, with a certain mastery of the conversation -- can be given or received. Among the necessary ritual conditions for the culmination of an exchange, the *maloquero* must have food to offer the visitor, who may be in need physically, due to subsistence difficulties, or in need after a long trip. Once the meal is finished, the *maloca's* head must also offer chewing coca. Generally, the visitor also has coca with him such that he can exchange some with his host. It is only from this moment on that the two can begin to talk seriously about important projects. If the visitor decides to spend the night, the *maloquero* must direct the conversation towards mythological subjects when night arrives. The visitor can stay at his host's place as long as he desires, provided that this has been mutually arranged for during previous nighttime conversations. Yet, the *maloquero* is not at all obliged to keep his visitor indefinitely.

Just as he did at his arrival, the visitor must always announce his departure verbally when he leaves in order to prevent serious misunderstandings with his host. Depending on the particularities of the visit, the visitor may feel impelled to justify the reason of his departure by describing his immediate activities, or by verbally planning a future meeting which can take place in another context, such as a collective labor or a dance.

Collective Labor

The *minga* (day of collective labor) is chosen by the *maloca's* head and its preparation requires a certain level of shamanic knowledge. In consequence, the shaman is held responsible for climatic conditions and any eventual accidents that may occur during this day.³⁶ On one hand, he is in charge of anticipating and even controlling the weather that could otherwise hinder the collective workday's productivity. On the other, he must be able to anticipate and control accidents in order to avoid them. In this way, the preparation of a *minga* assumes a certain degree of "manipulation of the world."³⁷

This symbolic control, which is essential to shamanic thought, also occurs in nighttime gatherings where the *maloca's* head is supposed to be in dialogue with the master spirits of the region as well as with his ancestors. By mentally visiting and conversing with them, he can negotiate through the conditions necessary for the *minga's* success. Just like any visit, this negotiation requires the indispensable offering of coca and tobacco so that an exchange with the supernatural beings can take place.

Next, it is necessary to communicate the invitation to all *minga* participants by visiting them in advance. Generally, the participants are chosen from nearby and adjacent zones. Participants are thus chosen among the residents of neighboring houses,³⁸ even if some of them are only temporary residents or passing visitors.

The day of the *minga*, each participant must arrive at dawn in order to start working at an early hour. Some of them may even arrive the night before in order to be ready at the same time as the rest. Participants are awaited for impatiently, and therefore are not expected to announce themselves. On the contrary, often the participants already present organize the reception and welcome the newly arrived.³⁹

Guests are received with drink and food at their arrival, which shows that they are recognized as participants. By eating and drinking, the latter become engaged as members of that day's *minga*. They are hence obliged to work with all the others throughout the morning and will sometimes even be required to reengage in labor activities after the midday meal.⁴⁰ Whether it is in a household, a visit, a *minga* or a ceremonial context, each participant possesses a defined function within the *maloca* institution. Therefore, it always conforms to a strict statutory and sexual division of tasks. Nevertheless, in the *minga* context, tasks are distributed in collective fashion within the *maloca's* territory. Some individuals then take roles and responsibilities that they would not be allowed to occupy under other circumstances. Moreover, the *maloca* itself is rearranged and transformed by the collective event. In such a context, each one's task is organized according to a particular type of spatial distribution.

It is also important to underline the relation between several exchange contexts. A *minga* cannot be studied separately, that is, without being related to a more global frame of reference. In this way, a collective labor is always articulated to some other context, and even related to the context of other events, such as visits and dances.

So, when someone has been invited to participate in a *minga* by formal invitation realized in the context of a visit, he is held with certainty to participate. No one can fail to assist after receiving such an invitation, without giving very good reasons. Failure to assist can even be taken as unfriendliness and the host can even respond with countermeasures. Of course, if an individual refuses to participate to a *maloquero's minga*, he cannot expect the latter to participate in his own *minga* in the future. In addition to the food offered in

exchange for labor, it is the *minga* itself which is bartered between the *maloquero* and each one of his guests.

Ceremonial dances

As with the *mingas*, the planned date of a dance is announced in advance during a visit. At least a week before, when the appropriate amount of meat or fish has been accumulated, the fathers of families are announced that their presence is wished for at a ceremony. As opposed to a *minga*, it is convenient to invite not only the community, but also the families who do not live in the vicinity. The former benefits from a privileged status, because it is up to it to prepare the feast. In this way, the community of hosts is recognized as those who will together to produce food, drink and coca. Other communities are mostly invited to dance and manufacture their costumes.⁴¹

Again, it is important to highlight the importance of words in the updating of relations among a dance's participants. Undoubtedly, they take a particularly special value, given the ceremonial character of the event. All along the diverse steps of the exchange that is updated between the different groups, adult men must engage in conversation, two by two, announcing long and often complex ceremonial words one after another and which require burdensome training. In addition to the food, drinks and coca that have been proudly exposed to everyone's view, it is necessary to be able to know how to offer certain words, considered indispensable for a ceremony. It is always necessary to symbolically wrap the object of gift by means of appropriate words. Ceremonial words expose a frame of reference with which it is possible to measure oneself with the adversary. Once the words have been emitted, each one must be able to eloquently integrate the conversation.

Naturally, each individual always assumes his corresponding task, even in such an exceptional context. According to the status of the host or the guest, he or she can have more or less responsibility in certain specialized tasks or chores, be it in singing or in ceremonial or shamanic words.

It must also be said that a ceremonial dance is always the climax of a long preparation that requires different steps of collaboration and social gathering. Different exchange situations must succeed each other and articulate themselves for a ceremony to take place normally. These situations are performed in a series of different contexts, in

which not only relationships pertaining to the family occur (domestic relationships), but also those pertaining to external individuals (*minga* and visit relationships). However, it is only during the ritual itself that the external exchanges are realized between all the representatives of the diverse invited communities. Both before and after the ceremony, other exchange situations principally update internal relations between members of the community.

Market and Frontier Exchanges

After having considered the importance of the *maloca* as the framework within which traditional forms of exchange take place among the populations of the lower Caqueta River, we now turn to the task of analyzing their articulation with market exchanges, that is, those that update relationships with Whites. Contrary to a given culture's internal exchanges, some of these exchanges materialize this articulation, inasmuch as they delimit the cultural frontiers; understood as such, they constitute *frontier exchanges*.

The latter can be defined as exchanges that update the relations between different types of cultures, and are characterized by not being ruled by the same categories of institutions (the market versus the kinship, the church versus the shamanism, for instance), where it is precisely these institutions which impose particular conventions onto exchanges. Such a definition of the term allows us to study the complexity of the different forms of exchange, such as those performed between native cultures,⁴² or those that the latter favor with western markets. These particular forms of exchange, which could also be termed as "semi-modern" or "semi-traditional" exchanges, are very common in multicultural and acculturated regions such as that of The Pedrera.

Their complexity is linked to the diverse conceptions of exchange that come into play and to the passing of exchanged goods from one culture to the other or, more precisely, from the institutionalized context within a given society, to that of a different institution within another type of society. Take the case of peccari meat; traditionally, this good is never directly exchanged for another good among the native inhabitants of The Pedrera region, except within the contexts institutionalized by Whites. As mentioned above, the *maloquero's* food cannot be bartered, or sold, and is generally offered as a present within the family, to visitors or on the occasion of a *minga* or a ceremonial dance. It must even sometimes be subject to *curación* (shamanic preparation) before it's fit for consumption.

Nowadays, however, local food is frequently sold or traded for western merchandise. Indians themselves, motivated by colonizers, increasingly provide these articles to those who do not have access to them. They have thus endowed themselves with certain merchant conventions introduced by Whites. At The Pedrera, it is therefore common to see food sold in certain traditional contexts such as a visit or a dance, or in the merchant contexts of door-to-door sales or commercial feasts. The practice of selling is clearly different from the exchange as conceived by the local Indians, whereas it presumes a commercial benefit or margin. The latter is always considered inadmissible or is taken as a theft if placed within the traditional context. The different market or barter contexts that refer to the prices of the local market are linked to particular western economic institutions that strongly differ from indigenous institutions. When an Indian meets a White at the marketplace, neither of them requires a frame of reference different from that of the market in order to exchange goods or services. The exchange of speech that always composes a conversation in the different contexts of traditional exchange is reduced to a negotiation dominated and institutionalized by colonizers. Such a conversation only refers to goods, services and their prices on some market.

As long as the Indians fail to incorporate such a frame of reference that makes explicit the normative and constitutive rules of the merchant game, and in a contextual space that belongs to them, they will not find it legitimate. If they have failed to appropriate it, undoubtedly it is because it has not been given to them under the acceptable cultural conditions. Frontier exchanges are problematic from the moment that the exchange of goods and services is carried out without exchanging the corresponding frame of reference. In a traditional context, the exchange of knowledge relative to the elements of exchange cannot take place if it does not integrate some certain type of formal conversation.

Exchanges and Territories

Concerning goods, conceptions and practices linked to territories depend on institutional exchanges. In order to understand what and how people think about territories, nations and space, we need to know the contexts -- modern or traditional. Each context has its proper way of exchange, which determines the conceptualization of territories.

Traditional contexts

Indigenous people conceive territory and space in a very different way than in industrialized society; even though nowadays traditional conceptions may change under the influence of the Whites, as we will see later. We must first observe the fact that in the absence of occidental sciences like geometry, geography and astronomy, people don't have the possibility to represent their territory and space on maps -- which can be classified as icons according to Peirce terminology of signs (Peirce 1932).

Traditionally Yucuna Indians refer to territory and space in two ways: deictic and symbolic. The former uses oral and gestural deictic signs. For, as in other societies, when people speak of a particular place in a three dimensional space without instruments, they use the deictic function of language in reference to their body. Thus Yucuna Indians indicate particular parts of the space from their egocentric position: they point out their index-finger in the extension of their forearm and use deictic terms such as “there” (*a'jnare*), “far” (*ya'jná*) and “in direction of” (*ajní ño'jó*). Many forms of deictic signs exist which would require a specific study. For example, some of them signify orientations of movement, others indicate magical powers of a specific direction in a specific context (to damn someone or some place, or to change the weather); in this way, some ritual objects like clubs or spears are used to designate space and shamanic relations in ceremonial spells.

However, these spatial designations are not sufficient to transmit the idea of space. The pragmatic use of oral and gestural deictic signs requires the presence of one or more speakers, especially in narrations. Interlocution is the necessary condition in order to recall spatial features in traditional contexts. Obviously such interlocution goes with other forms of exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1949: 70; Fontaine 2001: 32). For when people agree implicitly on conventional forms of exchange, they agree with the associated conception of space, in particular cosmology. In the Yucuna case, mutual understanding on space occurs principally during performances of myths; verbal exchange between narrator and audience supposes exchange of ritual things (coca and tobacco) and exchange of services like providing hunting, fishing or to participate in the construction of a traditional house, etc.

The second way uses metaphors symbolic of natural organisms or cultural constructions as models to represent the elements of the universe and of its structure. As in many societies around the world, the principal Yucuna model of the universe is the human body. The universe is seen as the body of a lying divinity oriented east-west named *Je'chú* (“the Sky”); his head faces toward the east and his feet toward the west. The center of the

world is the *rimu 'chure* (navel) of *Je 'chú*, which corresponds to a river named *Yapiya* concretely situated at the source of the Apaporis river; north and south are seen as the costs of *Je 'chú*. When Yucuna people speak of these last directions, they say “his cost side” (*ripara 'lá ejó*) -- north, and “his other cost side” (*apojó ripara 'la ejó pitá*) -- south. The ambiguity between these two directions is always resolved by a deictic gesture. In order to point east and west, the Yucuna people often refer to the symbolic movement of the sun and the waters. As other Amazonian groups, the Yucuna think that the sun turns around the world in the Milky Way as in a circular river.⁴³ The orient is named *kamú jeño 'ka ejó* (the side from where the sun jumps) and the occident is named *kamú ja 'ko ejó* (the side where the sun falls). This axle West-East is supposed to correspond broadly to the course of rivers, which constitutes the other landmark in this region of the Amazon forest. Thus, *yenojo* (up) refers to “the West” or to “upstream,” and *kawakajo* (down) means “East” or “downstream.” The origin and the orientation of rivers are related in the myth of Karipú Lakena, the four origin heroes who mythically created the World (Schauer 1977; Van der Hammen 1992; Schackt 1994). The myth narrates that rivers originate in a huge tree, which is then cut down by the four of Karipú Lakena for *Je 'chú* at the mouth of the Amazon River.

Apart from natural organisms used as model of environmental features, the *maloca* embodies different symbolic functions. Each element of the roundhouse is associated with some part of the surroundings: the pillars with mountains, the holes in the roof with the night stars, the succession of the woven leaves remixes with the different skies of the cosmology, the circular beam with the boa that is supposed to surround the world, etc. Moreover, the *maloca* is also the main *institutional surrounding*, which gathers the personal territorial sentiments related to territory of each of its inhabitants in the different traditional contexts.⁴⁴ For every *maloca* defines a legitimate territory, which is concretely determined by its head, the *maloquero*, when he decides where his *maloca* will be constructed and where the gardens will be located. This legitimacy rests on territorial rights inherited in patrilineal line, on institutional rules which knowledge is transmitted from *maloquero* to his first son, and on assent of other heads in his lineage and allies. Territory distribution and legitimization is achieved through agreements with physical and non-physical people. The *maloquero* doesn't build his *maloca* alone with his close relatives. Traditionally after having cleared a bit of the forest, he built a *ranchito* (shelter), in which he would spend quite some time checking the nearby surroundings (land and streams) by means of shamanism before

felling the forest, clearing the land and building the *maloca* proper; activities that he would achieve only with the help of men of his lineage or clan, and allies. In such a way that finally a *maloca* is more of an institution than a material house.⁴⁵

For Yucuna-speaking people, territory has been the object of a primordial gift given to the first (mythical) ancestors by the *Karipú Lakena*. Since the very beginning of their creation, Yucuna people have acknowledged the fact that humans must share their land with other beings, animals, plants, rocks, mysterious people, forest masters and spirits who eventually possess shamanic wisdom. This is the reason why they must also consult the *Karipú Lakena* (which were the first in this world to construct a *maloca*) and other mythical (shamanic) beings that inhabit the different heavens of cosmology. A *maloca's* head ought to maintain a regular relationship with all of these beings in order to construct and have the right to inhabit his *maloca*; it is also through festivals and rituals that he regularizes his relations with them. More concretely, in order to be able to ask for a supernatural beings' opinion or advice, a Yucuna man must seclude himself (with coca and tobacco) on a daily basis. These "foods of the soul" are indispensable for any shamanic exchange, because they are simultaneously the means and the mediators of communication, with humans and non-humans alike. Apart from these specific seclusions, Yucuna *maloquero* should go to visit lineage relatives and allies who live in neighboring areas. It is in the context of such visits, during nighttime conversations that the elders learn the reasons supporting the construction of the *maloca* and the new condition of exchange induced by the establishment of the new *maloca*. In turn, these elders cannot give a favorable opinion until they themselves have consulted the supernatural beings with which they are supposed to relate commonly.

When an agreement has been reached, they organize together the collective work and tasks of the construction of the *maloca*. Once it is completed, it is necessary to thank all those who contributed to its making, human and non-human, by having a ceremonial dance which "inaugurates" the *maloca*. In doing so, the community designs new exchange perspectives between the community of the participants to the *minga* and the visiting people of the nearby communities.

Modern contexts

Faced with the traditional contexts of exchange, linked to a certain conception of space and territoriality, the enclosing modern society has come to progressively impose its

own contexts. Nowadays, native peoples have no choice but to accept and to incorporate themselves into Western society. In order to negotiate their ancestors' territory, they have to slip through other dynamics and learn to appropriate their lands according to other rules of exchange. For their traditional territory has become land, object, that is a challenge for colonizers, NGO's and national governments. Those have imposed legal, political, administrative and economic frameworks over indigenous ruling, obliging natives to form associations and to organize themselves in order to resist and to defend their community existence, such as "community reunion," "intercommunity congresses" and "territorial ordering workshops." Yucuna people can be called egalitarian in the sense that the basis of Yucuna existence is reciprocity. For example shamanic curing is always given in return for some gift (in mythical time: coca and tobacco); in festivals guests sing and dance in exchange for food provided by the hosts. Used to hierarchical and unegalitarian relationships, Westerners cannot imagine or suspect the social rationality of reciprocity. They develop some of their institutions to integrate indigenous people in their social order. They exploit natural environment and territories, while natives inhabit it successfully for thousands of years.

Since participants come from different linguistic groups, Spanish is generally the vernacular language. Thus most indigenous leaders must have succeeded in advanced studies in order to manage their association with governmental or non-governmental organizations and to administrate its financial resources. In fact, this new education "capacitates" (esp. *capacitar*) these new leaders to monopolize speaking time in meetings and assemblies. The mode of communication of the assemblies is the public right to speak, whose rules are far from the individual or secret traditional speaking of clans' heads and old shamans. When those are consulted, it is not to refer to the traditional knowledge of myths or shamanic spells (according to the capacity of initiated men to understand it), it is "to work in workshops" with scribes who will answer, put together, translate and schematize bits of their knowledge in occidental frame of mind. In matters of territories, the result is generally a document which obliterates most parts of the traditional dimensions and which tends to replace the speech of the traditional informants by some written summaries or synthesis belonging to some modern contexts. The information provided by shamans cease to be private and, in this case, adapted to Yucuna speaking individuals, to become public in order to be accessible to everybody (including White people). Moreover, when assemblies are carried by communities with scarce resources, shamans receive coca and tobacco and

food in the same way and equal to other participants.⁴⁶ When the caring community has more resources, apart from the food collectively redistributed, a certain amount of money is offered annually to each shaman equally, whatever their services. However, shamans don't consider it reciprocal and lose interest in workshops and assemblies. Thus, it is frequent that erudite indigenous people do not accept to publicly divulge their knowledge. Most of it is secret and cannot be shared with uninitiated persons (the young, women and Whites) or with anyone who could use as black magic. Many places of the forest are considered special, because of the privileged symbolic exchanges with their owners, as spirits or forest masters. As it is presented in many myths, to tell how the spirit of a place had been encountered would make him angry and it could involve his damnation or the lost of all the powerful things he offered.

Conclusion

In a multicultural space such as La Pedrera, individuals have different conceptions regarding not only the elements that surround them, including territory, but also regarding the concept of exchange. Exchange practices are regulated and vary markedly from society to society, in this case the *maloca* and the market. Exchanges must be analyzed within the framework of these institutions and in particular contexts. In a *maloca*, the forms of exchange differ according to the domestic context, a visit, a *minga* or a ceremonial dance. Distinct speech acts occur in each situation -- each has its own importance and all are mutually interdependent. In the lower Caqueta region, however within a market economy context, the *maloca* is still the traditional institution where most of the exchanges take place. Just like the market, but in a different way, it regulates social relations and exchanges.

Our brief historical recount of the multicultural and frontier exchanges shows that cultural appropriation of territory depends on the different forms of exchanges. In order to study territory, an analysis of the conception of social relationships and practice is essential. Shaping and delimiting of territory can only follow the development of exchanges. And in this context, the study of the transformation of speech acts constitutes a powerful new tool, above all since money and writing have become a condition in the exchanges with Whites.

The traditional space composed of the *maloca* and its territory has taken new meanings in these modern contexts: it has become a matter of attempt to control the

relations with government entities, e.g. to elicit legal documents about land rights, residence, etc., with the help of NGO's and indigenous organizations. One can ask oneself, if such contextual space is pertinent enough to exchange each other's knowledge. Interactions between indigenous people, colonizers, NGO's and state will remain problematical, if not conflictive, as long as actors will not try to understand the conceptions of their interlocutors, beyond simple and material matters of territories and goods. Obviously when people disagree on the rules of exchanges, i.e. their social relations, they will probably disagree on the sharing of lands or goods. Often institutional rigidities and cultural miscomprehension are responsible for legitimacy failure of territorial borders, although cultural matters may seem quite marginal. Westerners should ask themselves to see how they can cross over traditional knowledge limitations before beginning to resolve material problems of merchandise exchanges and territories. They need to ask themselves: What are the differences and the relationships between the Western and the Indian comprehensions of territory and territoriality?

Endnotes

¹ I am thankful to Pierre Yves Jacopin who red the text and made his suggestions and corrections.

² This article is based on various fieldworks in the area of The Pedrera and Miriti-parana (Colombian Amazon) between July 1997 and September 2006. One of their goals was to study the social and economical relationships between Whites and Indians.

³ Acuerdo N° 006 August 23th of 1988

⁴ Cf. Instituto Geografico Augustin Codazzi, *Zonification Ambiental para el Plan Modelo Colombo - Brasileiro* (Eje Apaporis-Tabatinga : Pat). p. 290. 1997. According to a projection of the DANE (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística), the village would have counted 3267 inhabitants in 2005 (www.geohive.com/cntry/colombia.aspx?sub=y&levels=Amazonas&diacrit=1).

⁵ A great part of these Indians live in Camaritagua.

⁶ There isn't a consensus among Amazonists about the term lineage, due to the fact that most Indians kinship terminologies are shallow and most often don't show real genalogical lines of ancestors as in Africa. However, we do think we should use the word lineage to account for the distinction, among the Yucuna, of genalogical lines of people pretending to descend from a common ancestor — which is not considered as mythical. I.e. the Kamejeja can reconstitute their filiation to their "first ancestor" *Periyu*, (9-generations); the Jupichiya do the same thing.

⁷ In Yucuna language, this term is associated with *kamejeri*, which means "ground-game". Literally "who has game".

⁸ The case is even more complicated for many old men contend that all proper Yucunas died long time ago: "In that time, it was our eldest, who spoke the Yucuna language, that everybody speaks now" (Personal information given by Milcialdes

Yucuna, an old Kamejeya). Kamejeya are younger brothers of the first ancestors who were named as Yucuna. All of them had the same first ancestor *Periyu* born on *Ewa'ta*. After many generations, Kamejeya got separated from their seniors and spoke different languages. Then after many intertribal wars, a great part of them died. The Kamejeya began to live again with their eldest, which explains why they speak Yucuna.

⁹ Term associated with *jimichi*, "grass". Literally "grass people".

¹⁰ Maloca (vernacular Spanish term) are large common longhouses frequent all over Amazonia. Yucuna longhouses are round; we'll call them roundhouse for that matter.

¹¹ Personal communication from P.Y. Jacopin.

¹² Jeru means "pig". Literally "Pig's people".

¹³ For an account of the Yucuna's memory of the Mirabara : Cf. Malaver and Oostra: 1984 ; Van der Hammen, 1992 ; Schackt, 1994)

¹⁴ Cf. Pineda Camacho, 1985.

¹⁵ Cf. Monteiro de Noronha, 1862 ; Spix and Martius 1976 quoted by Llanos and Pineda *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Various natives' stories tell about Keyako, a Kamejeya leader who organized work and journeys to Teffé, transporting artisan goods (Cf. Van der Hammen, 1992: 25 ; Schackt, 1994: 104).

¹⁷ For an account of the symbolism of steel axes and their white sellers in this area, see Guyot, 1979; Pineda, 1985: 73-84.

¹⁸ Cf. Van der Hammen, *op. cit.*: 32-33.

¹⁹ In that time, many Indians knew about the atrocities of Casa Arana and thought that Moreno and Plata were cruel Peruvians (Van der Hammen, *op. cit.*: 30).

²⁰ Koch-Grundberg, 1995.

²¹ *Manilkara bidentata*

²² Van der Hammen, *op. cit.*: 44.

²³ Rodríguez, Van der Hammen, 1995.

²⁴ Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales y del Ambiente. (National Institute of Natural resources and of environment).

²⁵ Rodríguez distinguishes the "mediería" from salaried relationship. Owners and anglers share benefits according to the amount of captures, and not only in proportion to the invested capital (Rodríguez, 1992.: 50).

²⁶ See Kopytoff, 1986 ; Hugh-Jones, 1992.

²⁷ Obviously, one must not consider the power or charisma of these "family chiefs". Rather, it is convenient to analyze the institution as a whole, taking into account the roles of its members and especially the way in which this institutional framework reproduces itself.

²⁸ Cf. Sahlins, 1972. Bourdieu, 1972.

²⁹ For the Kamejeya, the shamanic knowledge that must be mastered by the maloquero is a reference to an episode of the myth of Karipu Lakena (Karipu grandchildren who created the world) while they were with *Je'chú* (the Sky), and to the *Periyu* history (first Kamejeya ancestor).

³⁰ The Yucuna distinguish 2 types of shamans. The *lawichú* are those that can "see" sickness inside a body and extract it. The *lawichú ra'ru* "extinguish" body sicknesses, baptize children and master mythical knowledge.

³¹ Certain indigenous conceptions explain these institutionalized rules, which are admitted by each one in their cultural context. The Yucuna employ the term *ne'makana* (he who makes them live) to designate the maloca chief.

³² This sexual division of tasks is part of an implicit world order. For this reason, it is continuously represented in the mythology (Cf. Jacopin, 1981).

³³ It would not be worthwhile to enumerate in this text, the vast number of domestic activities assigned to each member. There already exists a rich ethnographical literature on the lower Caqueta.

³⁴ Searle stated the hypothesis that every institutional action possesses normative and constitutive rules that function thanks to speech acts, that he calls "institutional acts".

³⁵ Cf. Sahlins, *op.cit.*

³⁶ If an adult man dies during the *minga*, the maloquero must take charge of the deceased' man's family for the rest of his life.

³⁷ We retake here the term used by Maria Clara Van der Hammen (El manejo del mundo, 1992).

³⁸ Nowadays, housed individuals are regrouped in the form of a community. A *minga* is always representative of community work. When a *minga* is announced, all community members are obliged to participate in the collective effort organized by one of them.

³⁹ In yucuna language, a newly arrived person (or persons) is welcomed with the term *wajé* (literally, "new"), which shows that their entry has been acknowledged. Such welcoming only occurs in the context of a *minga* or a dance.

⁴⁰ In the *mingas* before a ceremonial dance, certain individuals are required to work until dusk. The community's women can thus dedicate the workday to collecting manioc and preparing casabe cakes.

⁴¹ For the Chontaduro Dance, the creation of "doll" (*muñeco* in spanish) masks and dresses requires at least a month's work.

⁴² It must be noted that frontier exchanges also exist between natives. The traditional relations between maloca and non-maloca cultures are one such case. Take, for example, the exchanges between the Macu and the Macuna. The first is a hunter gatherer society while the second is a horticultural one. Nevertheless, we do not consider these cases here, because they do not occur in the vicinities of The Pedrera on the lower Caqueta river; they are found in the lower Apaporis.

⁴³ This conception of the revolution of the Sun is mentioned in the Myth of Kawarimi when the hero falls in the other side of the world. There, he sees the boat of Sun and, after it, the boat of Moon sailing on the world river. Cf. Jacopin, 1981: 79-81.

⁴⁴ On the relation between territory and the maloca in different traditional contexts (Cf. Jacopin, *op.cit.*, 1977)

⁴⁵ Cf. Jacopin, 1992: 131-143.

⁴⁶ Generally there is not enough food the last days of the assemblies. Contrary to food distribution in traditional festivals and collective labor, during which people are authorized to quit the reunion if food is missing.

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