

# INTERCULTURAL UTOPIAS

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Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation,  
and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia

JOANNE RAPPAPORT

## INTERCULTURAL UTOPIAS



A BOOK IN THE SERIES  
LATIN AMERICA OTHERWISE  
Languages, Empires, Nations

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# Intercultural Utopias

PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS,  
CULTURAL EXPERIMENTATION,  
AND ETHNIC PLURALISM  
IN COLOMBIA



Joanne Rappaport

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## ABOUT THE SERIES



*Latin America Otherwise* is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequence of concepts used to define “Latin America” at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped “Latin American” worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural and economic intersections that demands a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, that rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, that assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and that, correspondingly, demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

This book is about dreams: dreams of belonging to and participating in a new Colombia. The dreamers are part of an indigenous movement in the province of Cauca—an extraordinary one that builds on the many knowledges and talents of native and nonnative women and men. Their vision is insistently inclusive, incorporating the insights of intellectuals and cultural planners from different ethnic backgrounds; it is also insistently communicative, forging dialogues between indigenous communities and across them to representatives of larger regional and national groupings.

We learn about building dreams and attempts at realizing them and about the complex roles of public intellectuals in that process. We learn about intercultural engagement and the transformative discourses that ensue. But,

most astonishing, we learn from an extraordinary dialogue between indigenous thinkers and the anthropologist whose participation in this movement for an all-embracing nationalism is inseparable from her ethnography of the movement. *Intercultural Utopias* is engaged anthropology at its best, providing us with “otherwise” perspectives on cultural practices—perspectives rooted in indigenous knowledges, indigenous inclusiveness, and an advocacy anthropology.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The research on which this book is based was conducted during the summers of 1995–2002 in the cities of Popayán and Bogotá and in various rural communities in Cauca, Colombia. It began in 1995, when David Gow and I were asked by the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología to conduct an exploratory study of the Nasa of Tierradentro, who had been displaced in 1994 by a massive series of earthquakes and avalanches and resettled in distant territories. From 1996 to 1997 we were supported by a grant from Colciencias, the Colombian scientific research agency, to the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología for a team project on new social movements in which David and I participated; I thank María Victoria Uribe, director of ICAN, Claudia Steiner, then director of social anthropology in ICAN, and María Lucía Sotomayor, coordinator of the research team, for the opportunity to participate in the project. In 1998, 1999, and 2001 I received summer research support from the Graduate School of Georgetown University, for which I am grateful. In 1999, I was awarded, together with Myriam Amparo Espinosa, David Gow, Adonías Perdomo, and Susana Piñacué, an International Collaborative Grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, which provided a critical arena for discussion of the issues brought up here; the grant was renewed in 2001 with the participation of Tulio Rojas Curieux in place of Myriam Amparo Espinosa, who was involved in other projects. The National Humanities Center, through a fellowship funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, provided me in 2002–2003 with a stimulating environment in which to write this book. I am particularly grateful to the fellows with whom I had the privilege to interact and exchange ideas and to the NHC administration, librarians, copy editors, and computer specialists who keep this wonderful place running. I am particularly beholden to Kent Mullikin, director of the fellowship program, to Eliza Robertson, director of the library, and to Joel Elliott, the resident com-

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## A NOTE ON THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF NASA YUWE



Nasa Yuwe, the language of the Nasa, has over time been written in various alphabets, beginning with the 1755 dictionary, grammar, and catechism of Fr. Eugenio del Castillo y Orozco (1877 [1755]), parish priest of Tálaga, Tierradentro. However, it is only in the last decades of the twentieth century that the Nasa themselves began to employ various orthographic systems in the educational sphere. The first of these alphabets (Slocum 1972), based largely on the Spanish alphabet but also to some degree using borrowings from English, was created by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), an organization of evangelical missionaries whose objective was to translate the Bible into indigenous languages and to convert indigenous peoples to evangelical Protestantism. Until recently, the SIL alphabet was employed not only by Nasa Protestants, but also, in slightly altered form, by Roman Catholic missionaries from the Apostolic Vicariate of Tierradentro and those Nasa intellectuals engaged in educational planning within the Vicariate's schools (García Isaza 1996). As a result of advanced linguistic training at the Universidad de los Andes received in the mid-1980s by several Nasas affiliated with the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC), a more rigorous alphabet was developed (CRIC n.d.c) to account for the complex phonology of Nasa Yuwe; this alphabet has been used in most of the CRIC publications, with the exception of the earliest ones, which employed a variant of the SIL's orthography.

Beginning in the 1990s, attempts were made to create a unified alphabet for Nasa Yuwe (Various n.d.), bringing together proponents of the CRIC alphabet with advocates of the SIL orthography and with representatives of the Apostolic Vicariate in Tierradentro. To some degree, the positions of the three parties owed to distinct appreciations of how Nasa phonology should be written, particularly concerning the necessity of following Spanish ortho-

graphic conventions. However, the differences across the three positions were largely political, given that each of the three groups espouses a distinct vision of the nature and objectives of the indigenous movement. By 2000, a single alphabet was agreed upon (Abelardo Ramos and Collo 2000). For the most part, I have chosen to privilege the new unified orthography by substituting it in quotations in the place of earlier alphabets. Its rules are reproduced below, adapted from Abelardo Ramos (2000, 52–53).

## CONSONANTS

### *Basic*

p t ç k m n b d z g l s j y w r  
 Ç has a hard sound, like the letter *k* in English. *J* is pronounced as in Spanish. These were concessions to Spanish orthography. Consonants *b*, *d*, *z*, and *g* are prenasalized; in the SIL alphabet, these consonants were preceded by the letters *m* or *n*.

### *Palatalized*

px tx çx kx nx bx dx zx gz lz sx jx fx vx

### *Occlusive silent aspirated*

ph th çh kh

### *Occlusive silent aspirated palatalized*

pxh txh çxh kxh

## VOWELS

### *Oral*

a	e	i	u
a'	e'	i'	u' (glottalized)
ah	eh	ih	uh (aspirated)
aa	ee	ii	uu (long)

### *Nasal*

â	ê	î	û
â'	ê'	î'	û' (glottalized)
âh	êh	îh	ûh (aspirated)
âa	êe	îi	ûu (long)

Nasal vowels can be written with the following diacritics: *â*, *ä*, or *ã*.

## ABBREVIATIONS OF COLOMBIAN ORGANIZATIONS



### *Indigenous Organizations, Programs, and Political Parties*

ACIN	Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (Association of Indigenous Cabildos of Northern Cauca)
AICO	Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia (Indigenous Authorities of Colombia)
ASI	Alianza Social Indígena (Indigenous Social Alliance)
CECIB	Centro Educativo Comunitario Intercultural Bilingüe (Intercultural Bilingual Community Educational Center)
CETIC	Comité de Educación de los Territorios Indígenas del Cauca (Education Committee for the Indigenous Territories of Cauca)
CRIC	Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca)
CRIT	Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima (Regional Indigenous Council of Tolima)
MAQL	Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Quintín Lame Armed Movement); also called Quintines in this book
ONIC	Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia)
PEB	Programa de Educación Bilingüe, CRIC (Bilingual Education Program, CRIC)

### *Peasant Organization*

ANUC	Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (National Association of Peasant Users)
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## XX ABBREVIATIONS

### *Guerrilla Groups*

ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement)

### *Paramilitary Organization*

AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
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### *Nongovernmental Organizations and Research Institutes*

CINEP	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (Center for Popular Education and Research)
FUCAI	Fundación Caminos de la Identidad (Roads to Identity Foundation)
FUNCOP	Fundación para la Comunicación Popular (Popular Communications Foundation)
La Rosca	La Rosca de Investigación y Acción Social (Circle of Research and Social Action)
TDH	Terre des Hommes

### *State Organizations and Mainstream Political Parties*

CNK	Corporación Nasa Kiwe (Nasa Kiwe Corporation)
DAI	División de Asuntos Indígenas (Division of Indigenous Affairs)
ETI	Entidad Territorial Indígena (Indigenous Territorial Entity)
INCORA	Instituto Colombiano para la Reforma Agraria (Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform)

## INTRODUCTION



Colombia, as we know from media coverage, is a land riven by almost fifty years of civil war. Torn apart by guerrilla violence and paramilitary terror fueled by money from the sale of illicit drugs, Colombians are heirs to a feeble state, one of whose few effective institutions is an armed forces with deep links to ultra-rightist paramilitary forces. Colombian citizens, particularly those living in rural areas, do not always benefit from the basic services that a state is supposed to provide; in some regions there is virtually no state presence and the territory is occupied by leftist guerrilla organizations that, though not as bloodthirsty as the paramilitary, are guilty of numerous abuses of human rights and of local sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> In this complex mix, only 2 percent of the 42 million Colombians identify themselves as indigenous or live in a *resguardo*, the communal territories designated for native peoples and administered by *cabildos*, or traditional indigenous authorities. So why, then, write a book on native-inspired intercultural utopias, when Colombia is only marginally indigenous and is hardly a place known for its utopian dreams?

### *Indigenous People and the Colombian State*

Despite its small aboriginal population, slightly more than a quarter of the Colombian national territory is in indigenous hands, constituting more than a million square kilometers of communally owned *resguardo* lands. Eighty percent of Colombia's mineral resources are to be found in these territories. Indigenous lands are also home to some of the most intense conflicts in modern Colombia, which many times revolve around competition for resources and for agricultural land (Valbuena 2003, 14). Therefore, although Colombia is not similar to Bolivia or to Guatemala in terms of the statistical weight of its indigenous population, the distribution of native peoples across

certain critical regions lends them a significance that transcends their demographic impact.

Indigenous political discourses also weigh heavily at the heart of Colombia's moral conscience because of the strength of its ethnic organizations. The first of these to appear was the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), one of the most consolidated of the nation's indigenous organizations, founded in 1971. CRIC conceived itself as a council of cabildos representing various ethnic groups in the southwestern highland province of Cauca, including the Kokonukos, Guambianos, Nasas, and Yanaconas.<sup>2</sup> CRIC's original platform revolved around land claims, the reconstitution of cabildos, and the promotion of indigenous culture (Avirama and Márquez 1995; Gros 1991); CRIC's program followed the demands laid out in the first half of the twentieth century by the Nasa political leader Manuel Quintín Lame (Castillo-Cárdenas 1987; Castrillón Arboleda 1973; Rappaport 1998b). Since CRIC's founding, a plethora of local, regional, and national indigenous organizations has entered the Colombian political stage, many following the CRIC model. In Cauca, new indigenous organizations sprang up in the late 1970s, including a network of cabildos coalescing around Guambiano leadership, which would ultimately be called AICO, or the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (Findji 1992). AICO grew out of Guambiano critiques of CRIC's land claims strategy, which in the early years centered on the establishment of government-supported cooperatives; AICO, in contrast, advocated the reincorporation of reclaimed lands directly into the *resguardo* structure. Undoubtedly, AICO also developed out of a centuries-old rivalry between Guambianos and Nasa, resulting in a Guambiano-dominated AICO opposed to a Nasa-influenced CRIC. In the 1990s, a group of Nasa cabildos with largely evangelical Protestant leaderships constituted what they called a "nonaligned movement," which remains independent of CRIC and AICO, although its demands echo theirs. This constellation of organizations, and their counterparts in other regions of Colombia, is what I call the "indigenous movement." The movement has proven itself to be a major contender for political space in Colombia, belying the fact that it is so diverse and represents such a small sector of the national population.

By the 1990s, CRIC celebrated twenty years of existence, dedicated to the highly successful recovery of native lands usurped from *resguardos* in the colonial period and the nineteenth century and to the reconstitution of indigenous political authority in regions where cabildos had been liquidated or co-opted by mainstream political parties. During the course of its first two decades, the leadership of the organization shifted from militant agriculturalists

trained in the various leftist movements that operated in the region throughout the century, to schooled and cosmopolitan leaders who erupted onto the national scene with a sophisticated critique of neoliberal government policy and dreams of building an ethnically pluralist nation (Gros 1991, 2000; Jimeno 1996). Correspondingly, CRIC's objectives were repositioned from a focus on rural land claims to an active intervention in regional and national affairs. The militancy of indigenous organizations, particularly in areas marked by conflict among armed actors, had forced the Colombian government to take native peoples into account during the two decades of peace negotiations that marked the close of the twentieth century (Leal Buitrago and Chernick 1999). Native leaders were propelled into the legislative arena as participants in the drafting of the 1991 constitution, which recognizes Colombia as a pluriethnic and multicultural nation (Van Cott 2000a), forcing Colombians to reimagine themselves as a society free of the myth of racial and cultural homogeneity that permeated postindependence nationalism throughout Latin America (Gould 1998). In this sense, Colombia's indigenous movement mirrors developments in Ecuador (Pallares 2002; Selverston-Scher 2001) and Mexico (Collier and Stephen 1997; Hernández 2002; Nash 2001; Stephen 2002) in its advocacy of new notions of ethnic citizenship, the insertion of indigenous demands into those of other popular sectors, and the opening of a dialogue among equals between members of the dominant society and indigenous citizens.

### *Collaborative Research*

I began my research career in the Nasa heartland of Tierradentro in the late 1970s, combining ethnographic research on how historical memory was encoded in the topography with archival work on the transformations of Nasa leadership over the centuries. After completing my dissertation research, which I initially wrote up in Spanish, I left Cauca for a time in response to the violent conflicts taking place there between an indigenous guerrilla organization, the Quintín Lame Armed Movement (MAQL), and the Colombian army. I gravitated toward the study of indigenous organizing at the grassroots level, conducting fieldwork along the Colombia-Ecuador border among descendants of the Pasto ethnic group, who have harnessed their historical memory to the repossession of lands usurped by large landowners in the nineteenth century (Rappaport 1994). I had always sought a collaborative relationship with indigenous organizations, but in the 1970s my advances had been rebuffed by a CRIC distrustful of foreign scholars or, indeed, of anything that



smacked of the United States. I returned to Cauca in 1995, when the Colombian Institute of Anthropology asked me to do an ethnographic study of Tierradentro communities that were displaced by a landslide and earthquake in 1994 (Rappaport and Gow 1997). Upon my return I discovered that CRIC was now open to dialogue; those activists affiliated with its bilingual education program, some of whom had read my Spanish-language publications, made overtures in the hopes that I would share my historical analyses with them. Thus began a long-term collaboration, in which ethnographic research merged with participation in CRIC seminars, workshops, and meetings, leading to joint research on the history of the organization's efforts at bilingual education and to numerous instances in which I was invited to teach and to facilitate workshops in communities. Thus, the fieldwork that I have conducted since 1995 is unusual for a foreign scholar, insofar as it combines scholarly research with advocacy, not on an international level, but in the local and regional arenas.

My dialogue with CRIC was complemented by participation in an international and interethnic research team, composed of U.S. scholars, Colombian academics, and two Nasa researchers, one affiliated with CRIC and the other an advocate of the "nonaligned movement." The purpose of our team was to share our interpretations of contemporary ethnic politics in Cauca, with the objective of establishing a mutual dialogue emerging out of three different subject positions—foreign researcher, national scholar, indigenous intellectual—each with a distinct agenda and methodology.<sup>3</sup> Most of the issues and conceptual categories I use in this book come out of these parallel conversations with CRIC and with the interethnic research team. My intention is to privilege these categories in an effort to engage in an anthropology whose agenda not only reflects the issues currently in vogue in the North American academy, but also revolves around the concepts with which indigenous intellectuals are grappling. Perhaps the best way to get at how I merge these overlapping approaches, one transnational and academic, the other activist, is to mine the issues at stake in the title of this book: *Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia*.

### *The Notion of the Intercultural*

Multiculturalism has gained a great deal of currency during the past few decades in North America and other parts of the developed world, where minority groups fight for a piece of the action not only in the state and civil

society (Kymlicka 1995; Povinelli 2002) but also in the academic world (Turner 1993). Among Latin American activists, however, it is interculturalism, the selective appropriation of concepts across cultures in the interests of building a pluralistic dialogue among equals (López 1996), which has been harnessed as a vehicle for connecting such domains as indigenous bilingual education to the political objectives of the native rights movement. The philosophy of interculturalism is framed by a critique of multiculturalism, the latter being seen by Latin American educators as fostering tolerance but not equality. Interculturalism is a central discourse for CRIC, affording indigenous educators ways of critically absorbing ideas and practices from the dominant society, including the technology of literacy, pedagogical methodology, the analytical insights of linguistics, and theories of ethnicity from anthropology and society. Out of the cultural insights gleaned from intercultural research CRIC politicians construct elements useful in a proposal for ethnic pluralism in the political realm, drawing on those grassroots sectors that have been organized politically through experimental schools, intervening in the construction of local systems of justice, participating in constitutional reform, and entering electoral politics under independent platforms.

As my collaboration with CRIC and my conversations with the research team deepened, I came to appreciate the ways interculturalism operated in the indigenous organization. I began to focus on how translation furnished a strategy for the appropriation of concepts across cultures. I discovered that native linguists who had translated pertinent articles of the 1991 Colombian constitution into the Nasa language had harnessed translation as a tool for reconceptualizing key political terms—state, justice, authority—from a Nasa point of view, thus going beyond the creation of neologisms to pose indigenous-inspired alternatives to existing models of nationality and citizenship. Translation was also key to the appropriation of ideas outside of the constitutional sphere, serving as a means of making sense of external pedagogical and social theory, proposing new regional administrative structures in the educational sphere, and discovering new ways of synthesizing the values of indigenous cultures that the movement sought to emphasize and propagate.

I began my research with a desire to write an ethnography of indigenous intellectuals in Cauca, focusing at first on the members of CRIC's bilingual education program: young, schooled indigenous researchers, mostly Nasas, engaged in educational planning and in ethnographic and linguistic inquiry. I found that my dialogue with them was to become an intercultural exercise, in which I shared ideas originating in anthropological and cultural theory and, in

turn, absorbed some of what drove their own agenda. Among the ideas that I could share with them, I discovered that W. E. B. Du Bois's (1989 [1903]) notion of double consciousness, which conceptualizes the tensions between ethnic identity and national belonging in discriminatory societies, was quickly latched onto and reinterpreted by Nasa intellectuals; they were also intensely interested in anthropological debates over essentialism. But, in turn, they had a great deal to share with me. I came to appreciate the political and intellectual utility of describing cultural projects as indigenous activists do, in terms of the movement between cultural "insides" and "outsides," conceptual boundaries that permit indigenous militants to distinguish groups on the basis of their relative adherence to distinct cultural logics or, perhaps even more important, culturalist projects. For the indigenous intellectuals with whom I was in dialogue, cultures are not delimited as geographically based things. Instead, "inside" and "outside" constitute metaphors through which the cultural values that the movement aims to construct and instrumentalize are imagined. That is, their dichotomy does not delimit existing or bounded constellations of culture, but instead, furnishes signposts for conceptualizing politicized notions of culture that are in the process of creation. In this sense, the "culture" in CRIC's interculturalism does not derive from realist anthropology but from a political imaginary in which culture is a vehicle for negotiating diversity and is, consequently, always in flux.

As my research progressed, I was struck by the multiplicity of the indigenous movement, whose variability is apparent not only in the range of political positions that its component organizations take, but also in the heterogeneity of its participants. CRIC is an organization that folds various ethnic groups into a common platform, thus laying the foundations for an intercultural dialogue among subordinated groups. But even within those groups, there are varying commands of native languages, political discourses in conflict, different modes of appropriating the cultural values of the dominant society, and distinct ways in which indigenous cultural forms are accentuated. In part, this heterogeneity closely follows regional lines. As I show in the course of this book, northern Cauca, a militant area where CRIC was founded, is a space in which the values of the dominant mestizo society and of leftist organizations merge with Nasa mores and Afrocolombian cultural forms to a much greater degree than in the less politically active and more traditionalist Tierradentro, where key elements of Nasa culture, particularly language, have been conserved. These differences, which are the basis of regional rivalries within CRIC, result in different approaches to the politics of culture. So "Nasa

culture” is by no means monolithic. The intracultural diversity of Nasa activists is further crosscut by differences between regional activists and local leaders, who appropriate external concepts and movement discourses in radically distinct ways, suggesting that cultural variety should not only be sought at the grassroots, but must also be found in the ways localities construct their identities in dialogue with overarching political organizations.

Finally, I discovered that the fact that CRIC is part of an *indigenous* movement does not mean that all of its militants are members of native ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup> To the contrary, the day-to-day work of the organization is carried out by intercultural teams that include not only Nasas, Guambianos, and Totoróes, but also leftist intellectuals from urban centers who have dedicated themselves to indigenous politics and who bring much-needed skills to the movement. Some of the most fruitful ideas developed at the regional level come out of conversations between indigenous activists and nonnative sympathizers (whom I call *colaboradores*, as they call themselves). Interculturalism does not, then, consist exclusively of the process of appropriation of external ideas within the indigenous movement, but is an essential component of everyday social interaction in CRIC, a kind of a political microcosm in which pluralist practice can be imagined.

Interculturalism thus encompasses three interwoven threads. First, it constitutes a method for appropriating external ideas, connecting the diverse network of activists, *colaboradores*, and occasional supporters of the indigenous movement into a common sphere of interaction. Second, it is a utopian political philosophy aimed at achieving interethnic dialogue based on relations of equivalence and at constructing a particular mode of indigenous citizenship in a plural nation. Third, it poses a challenge to traditional forms of ethnographic research, replacing classic thick description with engaged conversation and collaboration.

As I became aware of the significance of these three meanings of interculturalism, I began to reconsider my initial objectives, which confined the scope of my project to a relatively narrow sector of regional activists. Instead, I found that my understanding of who is an intellectual and what is a social movement were problematized, leading me to expand the scope of my ethnographic attention. As I began to view the indigenous movement as a complex bundle of interethnic networks and not as a homogeneous entity, I also came to realize that the conceptual framework within which activists operate is not essentialist. The notions of inside and outside that they use to make sense of the multiple identities at play in ethnic politics furnish, instead, penetrating con-

ceptual—and political—tools for making sense of cultural diversity and for proposing new kinds of political practice in a divided nation. In short, my attention was turned away from the construction of an ethnography of a monolithic movement with a homogeneous set of actors, and toward an examination of how ethnic politics emerges out of the negotiation of a broad network of political and ethnic identities, a process that includes not only regional indigenous intellectuals, but less cosmopolitan local actors as well, a web of affiliations that also encompasses individuals not attached to indigenous communities, such as colaboradores, anthropologists, and state functionaries.

### *Forging Utopias*

CRIC and other indigenous organizations are in the business of formulating utopias. For Cauca native activists, utopias are not impossible dreams, but objectives toward which they strive, sometimes in the long term. Their ultimate objective—to live as indigenous people in a plural society that recognizes them as equal actors who have something to contribute to the nation—has been only partially realized as a result of their efforts over the past thirty years. Indigenous organizations have successfully reclaimed the bulk of those traditional lands that were once in the hands of large landlords, integrating them into the communal regime of the resguardo and affording former indigenous sharecroppers a space in which to farm; that is, they have laid an economic and political basis for enacting pluralism from an autonomous position. Indigenous organizations have persuaded the dominant society that ethnoeducation must be a primary national concern, permitting communities to build bilingual schools in which indigenous cultural identities can be strengthened. They have made the first steps toward official recognition of Colombia as a pluriethnic nation, both in the text of the 1991 constitution and in the legislature, where indigenous people are entitled to two seats in the Senate. They have achieved recognition of native legal systems at the local level.

But Cauca's indigenous people are still mired in poverty, forced to migrate to urban areas as markets contract and the foodstuffs they produce bring in ever diminishing earnings, or to grow coca or poppies on the hillsides in hopes of eking out a livelihood. While urban migration pulls apart the social, cultural, and political fabric of resguardos, drug cultivation subjects communities to the dangers of U.S.-sponsored aerial fumigation and diminishes the land base on which food can be grown, fostering malnutrition. Freedom of move-

ment has been restricted by guerrilla groups, paramilitary organizations, and the Colombian army, all of whom periodically occupy indigenous territory, sometimes blocking the transport of food and people. For example, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitary has limited residents of the resguardo of Las Delicias-Buenos Aires, in northern Cauca, to less than \$20 of goods that individuals can bring into the community each time they visit the markets of Piendamó, Mondomo, or Popayán.<sup>5</sup> This deprives resguardo residents of access to food and critical supplies, placing them in great danger should the limited number of roads that lead to the community be closed by armed conflict. Numerous massacres have been perpetrated by armed actors within Cauca's resguardos, sometimes aimed at dampening indigenous self-determination and sometimes focused on appropriating native lands. One of the most egregious examples was the 1991 massacre of scores of Nasa and Afrocolombians in the Naya region of Cauca at the hands of the AUC, whose members then occupied these lands. Leaders of many communities have been singled out by armed groups and murdered, particularly by AUC and by the guerrilla groups FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and ELN (National Liberation Army). Indigenous youth are frequently rounded up by guerrillas and forcibly recruited, or they are offered monthly wages if they join the guerrillas or the paramilitary.

Yet peaceful utopias, and not violence, are the central trope that comes across in indigenous political discourse. At the many meetings called to address the most recent wave of violence, which began in the mid-1980s and has intensified at the turn of the millennium, one hears little about armed aggression and much about the need to strengthen native cultures, to build grassroots authorities, and to relegitimize shamanic practice and authority.<sup>6</sup> The ubiquity of utopias, and not talk of violence, in the Caucan indigenous movement led me to follow a course that might seem unusual to North Americans, who are anxious to learn more about the Colombian conflict. My friends in CRIC and on the intercultural research team were more interested in how I see their education projects as contributing to an intercultural future. They requested that I give workshops on the history of their culture heroes whose traces can be found in the archival documentation of the eighteenth century. They expressed interest in my ethnographic analyses of the gap between regional militants and local activists. In short, they are more concerned with my interpretations of their utopias than with an analysis of the activities of the armed actors that surround them. They want to be seen as actors, not as

victims. And because they are unarmed, their agency emerges through their dreams and plans, not through military action.

Quite obviously, indigenous utopias run up against the objectives of those who seek to control indigenous lands as corridors for transporting troops or as reservoirs in which illicit crops can be grown to sustain armed struggle. Indigenous utopias also come at loggerheads with forces bent on controlling native hearts and minds. So violence is an essential component of my story. But in this book I intend to privilege the strengthening of community authority, as much in the cultural arena as in the legal and political orbits, because it functions as an antidote to the violence of outsiders. The construction of an indigenous cosmology and the relegitimization of shamans are as essential to this objective as are the introduction of civic guards in localities and the building of an indigenous legal system to judge and punish violent offenders, because the movement can survive only if it engages in a process of identity formation that promotes the construction of novel strategies for survival. Otherwise, theirs would be a peasant movement and not an indigenous movement. This distinction is crucial in Colombia, where indigenous communities and, increasingly, Afrodescendants identify themselves by culture and ethnicity, and not by an economic positioning within Colombian society, as do peasants. In other words, “indigenous” and “peasant” are seen by the movement, and increasingly by the state, as categories that do not overlap.

### *Public Intellectuals*

Indigenous utopias are constructed by intellectuals. My own understanding of what constitutes an intellectual grows out of the work of Italian communist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971), who did not confine his analysis to the lettered classes that produced learned writings, but argued that intellectual work is the province of the many and involves much more than production of scholarly research, a literary canon, or the erudite essays of social commentators. Instead, Gramsci rooted his argument in the historical contexts in which intellectual work of all sorts maintains the hegemony of certain social classes or fosters the emergence of new sectors. Gramsci’s notion of the intellectual was not so much focused on individuals as on the relationship between intellectuals or groups of intellectuals and the social sectors in whose name they speak. Their role is to create new cultures or maintain existing ones. Gramsci distinguished between those whom he called traditional intellectuals who work within existing hegemonic sectors in order to maintain them—teachers

and priests are good examples—and organic intellectuals who nourish the imaginings of emergent working-class groups. For Gramsci, the notion of organic was not confined exclusively to those intellectuals who emerge from a given class. Instead, he emphasized that what is at stake is the creation of organic relationships within a class in the course of a struggle for hegemony. In this sense, the creation of intellectuals involves not only fostering their emergence within a particular class, but also assimilating traditional intellectuals into that group, thus transforming them into organic intellectuals.<sup>7</sup>

The people with whom I originally planned to conduct my research, the activists in the bilingual education program of CRIC's regional office in the provincial capital of Popayán, are organic intellectuals who come out of *resguardos* and whose activist aspirations led them to Popayán to pursue political and cultural activities in the organization's regional headquarters. Many cultural activists are Nasas who come from areas characterized by subsistence farming and the use of indigenous languages, places like the *resguardos* of Caldono on the western slopes of the Central Cordillera, a few hours from Popayán, or from the isolated communities of Tierradentro, four hours of hard travel to the east.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, they tend to define "indigenous" according to the cultural characteristics of their home communities, where the native language is Nasa Yuwe, where shamanism provides a widespread alternative to Western medicine, and where the majority of the population supports the *cabildo*. Having received the bulk of their training as apprentices in the indigenous organization, their task is to produce a cultural discourse and to create an educational infrastructure in which this discourse can be operationalized at the regional and local levels. This dual task involves a combination of community organizing with ethnographic, educational, and linguistic research. Given their objectives, such activists are intellectuals only to the extent that they remain conscious of their ethnic identity, because this is what distinguishes them from those members of indigenous communities who have acquired university degrees and become professionals at large in the dominant society.<sup>9</sup> In addition, CRIC educational activists are intellectuals so long as they participate in the organization, in *cabildos*, or in other similar institutions, because it is through their identity as members of a group that they function as intellectuals. The objectives of the organic intellectuals of CRIC thus revolve around their identity as native people and their service to the movement. Their work is not harnessed to the creation of academic knowledge, but to promote local activism infused with a contestatory and culturally oriented indigenous ideology. This is achieved by encouraging local schools to function



as organizing venues and, simultaneously, as a base from which an ethnic ideology that originates from below can be articulated in dialogue with regional cadres.

Cultural activists employ discourses that diverge significantly from those of indigenous politicians, who are much less apt to make recourse to cultural forms and are more motivated to cast their objectives in a universal political language that is comprehensible to their allies in other social movements and to the state officials with whom they negotiate. CRIC's most forceful political leadership springs from northern Cauca, where in the early and mid-twentieth century, Nasas migrating from insular areas like Tierradentro sought employment on cattle ranches and sugar plantations, and where Nasa lifeways have taken on the cadences of urban Colombian culture, given their proximity to the metropolis of Cali and the small city of Santander de Quilichao. While many of these leaders maintain a strong indigenous identity, they have opted for a regional organizational culture and discourse, as opposed to local ones. Thus, many of these men—for their ranks are largely male—are highly pragmatic social actors not as apt to speak in the culturalist discourse of their colleagues. In fact, CRIC's cultural activists see themselves as the cultural conscience of the movement and are constantly seeking to instill in the political leadership a deeper appreciation of the nuances of cultural difference. It is important to note, however, that cultural activists, like indigenous politicians, are intensely political, wedded to organizational strategies and CRIC's program of land claims, defense of the *resguardo* system, and support for *cabildos*. What is different about the two groups is the discourse that each employs to achieve these common objectives and the political space in which each moves.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the work of indigenous organic intellectuals is not confined to educated writing, but to the creation from below of an activist politics of identity.

True to their calling as cadres who emerge from the native sector, indigenous public intellectuals in Cauca are generally loath to call themselves by such an elitist epithet. Lacking the traditional status and tools of the trade of those deemed by the dominant society to be intellectuals, they prefer to see themselves as activists who are engaged in intellectual concerns. That is, they consciously dissociate themselves from those who identify as intellectuals in Colombia, and whom Gramsci would call traditional intellectuals.<sup>11</sup> Beyond the obvious members of the Popayán elite—a city known for its poets, historians, and national politicians—whose job has been to mediate between a bourgeois civil society and the state (Castañeda 1993; R. Ortiz 1998; Sarlo 2002; Yúdice

1996), traditional intellectuals include local priests, particularly in Tierradentro, who are wedded to mainstream political parties and who in the early years of the indigenous movement strove to dampen its emergence. There are still a few *tinterillos*, or unschooled grassroots lawyers, whose livelihoods are sustained by the ignorance of legal procedure and indigenous rights among many rural people. There are local powerholders, both indigenous and nonnative, who cling to the clientelistic politics of the mainstream parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. There are many schoolteachers, both nonnative and, increasingly, indigenous, who reject politicized claims to indigenous identity and conform to national curricula that “other” native peoples.

But beyond the obvious candidates in Popayán who vie for the status of traditional intellectual and who are seen by indigenous public intellectuals as the antithesis of what they hope to become, I also met university professors who work closely with native activists in the various indigenous organizations and whose intellectual priorities have merged with those of their Nasa or Guambiano colleagues, resulting in a relationship that has shifted the paradigms used in the academy. This has especially occurred in anthropology, marking Colombian social science as different from its northern counterparts. But the relationship of these metropolitan intellectuals to the indigenous movement is uneasy, as they are outsiders to indigenous communities and to the political discipline of the indigenous organization. Furthermore, the theoretical discourses that they employ, though frequently of interest to indigenous intellectuals, emerge from and are most pertinent to academic agendas and are geared not toward promoting activism but with an eye to producing academic writings—which, for many indigenous activists, makes academics essentially untrustworthy, almost cannibalistic. Academics are traditional intellectuals who are not organic to indigenous organizations, but are sympathetic to them; they could almost be said to be in transition between traditional and organic status, given that in the Gramscian model, traditional intellectuals could potentially be absorbed within the cadre of organic intellectuals.

More active interlocutors are the *colaboradores* who work full time for ethnic organizations, whose everyday lives transpire in an indigenous milieu, and who submit to the rigors, the dangers, and the discipline of ethnic organizations. Many of the most prominent members of this group function as interlocutors who stimulate discussion in the organization, but they rarely publish their ideas in formats other than internal documents and reports. This sector is almost totally ignored in the academic literature, perhaps because *colaboradores* do not fit neatly in the essentialist models that we have created

for analyzing indigenous organizations. I also came across radical priests ready to give their lives for the indigenous cause and open to mixing Christian dogma with native cosmologies. These men are torn between the discipline of their religious calling and the exigencies of the movement they have chosen to serve, leading them to be at odds with both their own hierarchies and indigenous political leaders.

All of these actors are organic to the indigenous movement. However, despite the adherence of such outsiders to organizational objectives, their discourses only partially mirror those of indigenous intellectuals, for the conceptual models that they employ originate in part in the worlds from which they have come, just as do those of academic interlocutors. In fact, their origins outside of the *resguardos* and their use of external ideas mark their ambivalent membership in the movement as “outsiders-within” (Collins 1991, 11). But in spite of their close association with indigenous intellectuals, they are not, in any sense of the word, a vanguard of the sort that intellectuals in leftist parties hoped to constitute. *Colaboradores* see themselves as adherents to an existing movement, playing an equal role alongside the *cabildos* and the indigenous activists that form its backbone, although as native activists become more and more cosmopolitan, *colaboradores* find themselves occupying a subaltern position in indigenous organizations. Furthermore, their political goals frequently transcend those of the indigenous movement to encompass more global demands on the national level. Although for the most committed, and although it would be painful to disengage from the indigenous movement, there are many other organizing venues in which they can incorporate themselves and further their political agendas, unlike the indigenous intellectuals who recognize that their very survival as indigenous people is what is at stake in the movement.

*Colaboradores* and university-affiliated supporters of the indigenous struggle are intellectuals who are, in many senses, in the process of becoming organic to the indigenous movement—*colaboradores* more so than academics, as the latter’s interests are less likely to be subsumed by the exigencies of the movement. Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals is useful in making sense of how these outsiders are able to play an internal role in indigenous organizations. In fact, if we are to take Gramsci to heart, we cannot study the indigenous movement without paying attention to the role of outsiders within it. But notwithstanding the utility of the Gramscian distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals for making sense of the relationship between indigenous intellectuals and *colaborador* outsiders, Gramsci does not supply us with

sufficient conceptual tools to contend with the internal complexities of intellectual work in Cauca, nor, I suspect, in other locations.

The category of the organic intellectual provides a key to comprehending the interactions of the organization with external actors but does not shed light on negotiations internal to CRIC or between the regional office and the local sphere of action, where a multiplicity of indigenous organic intellectuals operate, frequently at loggerheads with one another. There are considerable differences in the discourses employed by the indigenous intellectuals of CRIC's regional office and affiliated teachers or cabildo members working in local venues. Whereas the former look to leftist theorists, particularly those writing about bilingual education or grassroots development, to stimulate their construction of indigenous proposals, the latter are more concerned with fostering an exchange with other indigenous groups and with subordinated minorities, such as Afrocolombians, in the peasant sector. It is within the dynamic that unfolds between regional and local indigenous intellectuals that ethnic projects are constituted, not in the imposition of one sector on top of another.

There is, moreover, another significant group of local intellectuals, the shamans—in Nasa Yuwe they are called *thé' walas*—whose discourses are rooted in an exchange with the spirit world and not with the dominant society and whose knowledge provides a potent language for the construction of politicized cultural forms. I call these individuals *sabedores* or “knowers,” in acknowledgment of the recognition that the movement has given them as the source of the organization's cultural imaginings and their role as brakes against what the movement perceives as its ideological colonization by external forces. Despite their considerable influence, shamanic language and methods stand in such a stark contrast to other indigenous intellectuals that they must be considered separately from other activists.

So, while Gramsci's contribution helps us to conceptualize the differences between the articulation of intellectuals with social movements and the mediating function that Latin American intellectuals have filled between civil society and the state, we need to go beyond Gramsci to make sense of the multiplicity of organic intellectuals in indigenous organizations and to explore how the very heterogeneity of this group presents fertile ground for the construction of a native political ideology. One of the most useful tools I have encountered is the distinction between culturalist projects and discourses of sovereignty (Albert 1995; Chadwick Allen 2002; Field 1999): between an inward-looking emphasis on the revitalization of cultural specificity and a