

The Emberá-Chamí Documents

In December of 2007, the Colombia Support Network chapter from Kansas City, Missouri traveled to southern Colombia. The purpose of the trip was to establish a “sister community” relationship with the Emberá Chamí people, who live in three small towns northwest of El Tigre, in the Putumayo Department.

One of the interests expressed by the Emberá Chamí was to record the legends and stories of their indigenous group, so before we left we provided them with cassette tape recorders, tapes and batteries to records their legends and history.

In July of 2008, Cecilia Zarate, the National Program Director of CSN visited Bogotá. Ancizar Gutierrez, a member of the Emberá Chamí community traveled by bus from the Putumayo to meet with her there. He presented her with 65 hand-written pages in Spanish, plus audio tapes in the Emberá Chamí language.

Those documents were sent to Kansas City, where arrangements were made for a group of students and faculty members from Truman State University, Kirksville, MO, to take on the job of translating the documents into English. Rachel Hogan brought together a committee of several Spanish-speaking students at Truman, along with faculty members and others (including one Colombian, the wife of the Truman Soccer Coach), to work on the project.

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Introduction to the text

These documents contain several cultural myths, histories, and legends of the Emberá-Chamí people, an indigenous group that lives in Colombia. Although many ethnic Emberá groups live in various Latin American countries that stretch from Panama to Peru, the Emberá-Chamí live only in Colombia¹. The Emberá-Chamí people belong to the ethnic and linguistic family of Chocó, a denomination that includes the Emberá and Waunana people, who also live in parts of Panama and Colombia². Although today there are approximately 80,000 ethnic Emberá living in Panama, Colombia and Peru, only 11,000 Emberá-Chamí remain. These 11,000 make up a small part of the indigenous population of Colombia, which exceeds one million people.

As part of a growing empire, the original Emberá inhabitants of Colombia lived along the northern parts of the coast, in an area which comprises the present-day departments of Antioquia, Valle de Cauca and Chocó. With the arrival of Spanish settlers and the development, the empire diminished. Through various transitions, the Emberá-Chamí community continued to occupy northern territories along the coast but the 1970s brought conflict to the area and led to a further division among the Emberá community. Some Emberá-Chamí groups immigrated to the southern departments of Putumayo, Caquetá, Meta and Santander³. By and large, the Emberá-Chamí people live on reservations; each legally protected from seizure and guaranteed certain sovereign rights by the Colombian government⁴.

Recently, the Emberá-Chamí groups that migrated to these southern districts formed a sister community with the Kansas City chapter of the grassroots organization The Colombia

¹ Romero Loaiza, Fernando. "La oralidad y la escritura entre los Emberá-Chamí: Aspectos educativos". Ciudad Virtual de Antropología y Arqueología. 26 de junio de 2007. Equipo Naya. 20 de octubre de 2008.

< http://www.naya.org.ar/congreso2002/ponencias/fernando_loaiza3.htm >

² Lodoño Fernández, María Eugenia. La música en la comunidad indígena Ebera-Chamí de Cristianía. Medellín, Colombia: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2000.

³ Lodoño Fernández, 14

⁴ Lodoño Fernández 11

Support Network. Dialogue between the two communities led to this documentation of the cultural myths and detailed history of the Emberá-Chamí groups who now live in the Putumayo department of Colombia.

At times, the narration of these histories or legends is interrupted or disjointed. There are many switches mid-sentence in subject or gender. These “errors” are likely due to the nature of how these documents were created: first, recorded in Emberá and then transcribed and translated into Spanish by bilingual members of the community. However, these irregularities are also products of cultural difference. Firstly, although there are ongoing efforts to implement a written system, the Emberá language remains primarily an oral language⁵. What a Western reader may perceive as confused speech is partly due to the difference in how things are expressed in an oral language instead of a written language.

Furthermore, the struggles that any reader may experience when reading the texts are consequences of a decision made by the translating team to preserve the texts as much as possible. In an effort to keep these texts authentic and to highlight the cultural differences in how the Emberá-Chamí community tells a story, the translators refrained from regularizing or anglicizing the stories. Instead, there are many footnotes and commentaries provided alongside the text to help explain the texts to a reader unfamiliar with the culture, region and language.

⁵ Romero Loaiza, 26

The Origin Legend

The origin story of the Emberá people details the emergence of the main deity of the Emberá, called both Caragabí and Carabí (in other stories Karabí). This god Caragabí, the ruler of the world, was wise and powerful and gained more power by defeating his father in battle. Upon discovering the existence of more worlds, Caragabí and Trutuica (Tutruica), the ruler of one of the worlds below engaged in many battles. To establish a lasting peace, Caragabí challenged Trutuica to a trial of fire. The two gods both demonstrated the same ability to withstand the heat of the fire and so they decided that each should govern his own world.

Examining the social organization of the Emberá people and consulting some of the traditional sources about its creation myth, it seems that it was a man and three women that gave rise to the Emberá people. These women transformed themselves into animals that they consider sacred and at the same time, they are the fundamental forms of the three main clans of the Emberá. The women transformed themselves into the fish, the snake, and the frog, while the male human being ascends to heaven.

Other versions tell a different myth, which refers to the battle between two gods of different worlds. In the theogony⁶ of the Emberá, there is a pre-existing god called Tatzitzetze, which means the first father or father of all people, who has no beginning and who created himself. From the saliva of this god sprang Caragabí⁷, master of this world where the Emberá live.

Caragabí is attributed much wisdom, which he gained rapidly and then rose up in arms against his father...⁸. In this battle, the son defeated the father and became the master of our

⁶ Theogony refers to the origin or genealogy of the gods

⁷ Caragabí, also called Karabi in these legends, is the main deity of the Emberá people.

⁸ In the original version, this thought is followed by “porque todo lo daba muy barato”, meaning “because all he gave was very cheap”. It is unclear to the translators what exactly this means in the context. It is possible that the speaker mistranslated from Emberá to Spanish.

planet although it is assured that there exist four other worlds above this one and the same number below, with their respective gods.

⁹...A challenge to Tutruica, which consisted in finding out which of the two could withstand the most heat and for the longest time. Tutruica accepted without hesitation and they built an immense oven that Caragabí entered. Then, Tutruica placed inside it all the wood he could find and sealed the oven for one whole day. At the end, Caragabí emerged, dressed in bracelets and necklaces made of gold¹⁰ and letting his long hair fall around his shoulders. In the end, he had withstood the test of fire.

Now, it was Tutruica's turn, and as before, Caragabí placed inside all the wood he could find and left Tutruica inside the sealed oven for a whole day. However, upon opening the oven, Tutruica also emerged, making the two gods even.

Afterwards, the gods carried out other trials but the gods always tied. In the end, the two decided to allow each one to govern his own world.

⁹ There seemed to be a jump in the story line from one page of the original version to the next. In an alternate version of this story, there is more development of the plot before the presentation of the challenge.

¹⁰ The original word is "chaquiras", which refers to traditional adornments, sometimes in the form of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, that are (generally brightly colored) beads woven in elaborate patterns.

Origin Story (Extended version)

Upon examining the social organization of the Emberá community and in reference to traditions about the creation myth, it seems that it was a man and three women that gave rise to the Emberá people. These women transformed into animals that are considered sacred. At the same time, they became the three main clans of the Emberá people. The women were converted into the fish, the snake, and the frog, while the male being ascended to heaven.

Other versions tell a different myth, which refers to the battle between two gods of different worlds. In the theogony¹¹ of the Emberá, there is a pre-existing god called Tatzitzetze, meaning the first father or father of all, who has no start and created himself. From the saliva of this god came Caragabí, who is the ruler of this world where the Emberá live.

Carabí is attributed much wisdom, which he gained rapidly and then rose up in arms against his father...¹². In this battle, the son defeated his father and remained ruler of our planet, although they ascertained that there exist four worlds above this one and another below, each with their own gods.

Beneath this world, another exists that is the domain of Trutuica, who created himself. They say these two gods lived a long time without knowing each other. One day, the god from above saw a small globe and went down to see what it was and in this way, they two gods met each other, which caused many battles and disputes. It is not clear how their battles started. If Carabí had won, the people of this world would be immortal. The world of Carabí was much

¹¹ Theogony refers to the origin or genealogy of the gods

¹² As before, in the transcribed version, it is very unclear. The thought is followed by “porque todo lo daba muy barato”, meaning “because all he gave was very cheap”. It is unclear to the translators what exactly this means in the context. It is possible that the speaker mistranslated from Emberá to Spanish.

more beautiful than that of Trutuica¹³. For this reason, the second envied the first. The women of this world were much more beautiful than those of the world below, in order to marry them¹⁴.

Carabí became furious and threatened Trutuica with considerable retaliations. At the end, this one realized his bad action and forbade those of the lower world to bother the world above. But the peace between these two gods was not secure.

In this way, Carabí offered a challenge to Trutuica, which consisted of the most heat for the most time. Trutuica accepted without hesitation and they built an immense oven that Carabí entered. Then Trutuica placed inside it all the wood he could find and sealed the oven for one day. At the end, Carabí emerged adorned his entire body with bracelets and necklaces¹⁵ made of gold and letting his long hair fall around his shoulders. At the end, he had withstood the test of fire.

Now, it was Trutuica's turn, and as before, Carabí placed inside all the firewood he could find and left Trutuica inside the sealed oven for a whole day. However, upon opening the oven, Trutuica also emerged triumphant, once again making the two gods even.

Afterwards, they carried out other trials but the two gods always tied. In the end, the two decided to allow each one to govern his own world.

¹³ There are two versions of this origin story. The first calls this god "Tutruica" and later on in this version, the name changes to Trutuica. It is possible that the god is called both Tutruica and Trutuica. However, it is also possible that the appearance of Trutuica is an error on the part of the transcriber.

¹⁴ It is possible that those of the lower world, including Trutuica tried to win the women of Carabí's world in marriage and this angered Carabí so much that the gods decided upon a final trial to establish a lasting peace.

¹⁵ The original word is "chaquiras", which refers to traditional adornments, sometimes in the form of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, that are (generally brightly colored) beads woven in elaborate patterns.

Jinopotó, Son of the Leg

Jinopotó is a mythical character who is born out of his father's leg and left orphaned. He begins to seek vengeance for his mother and each time the villagers tell him who the culprit is, Jinopotó sets out to kill this being. Since Jinopotó is never satisfied, he continues to seek his mother's killer even after killing the tiger, a seven-headed snake and the gods, called the Chaverara. Finally, the villagers lead him to believe that the poisonous bumblebee killed his mother and in this confrontation, Jinopotó is killed and turned into the bloodsucking insects of this world.

I'm going to tell you what happened to Jinopotó, he who visited the Chaverara¹⁶. It is when a story that is analyzed emerges as history. It turns out that there was a boy who was very scared of the lizard¹⁷ and always ran when he saw it. But once, when he was fishing, he was not paying attention and the lizard stuck onto his leg. The leg began to swell to a point that the Emberá call "jinopo". The man, frightened, went home but the leg was already pregnant and the leg began to grow until nine months later, it had a son and the man died from the pain.

The boy grew up and at about age 15, he began to ask,

"Who killed my mother?"

"Your mother, the tiger killed him¹⁸", some told him.

Jinopotó pursued the tiger until he had killed it and then started to ask again who killed my mother.

"Your mother, the moon killed him", someone told him.

"If the moon killed my mother, I am going to climb up there".

¹⁶ The Chaverara appear to be divine beings, those that do not eat and live in the heavens

¹⁷ As it appeared in the original Spanish version, this animal is the "lagartija", meaning small lizard and usually lives in the walls, gaining its colloquial name of the "wall lizard".

¹⁸ In the original text, the gender switches from feminine to masculine multiple times.

The boy began to construct a ladder that had the form of a guadua¹⁹ box. He climbed and climbed and after two months, he was close to the moon but men brought the Truenene, the woodpecker bird, one which is very small and reddish and lives by pecking at the trees, so that Jinopotó could not go up to the moon.

When Jinopotó was taking ahold²⁰ of the moon, the Truenene²¹ began to knock down the guadua ladder and the boy barely managed to touch the face of the moon. Because of this, we say that the moon turned half gray, and half striped.

Jinopotó began to make fun of the air, saying out loud that he would transform himself into Tukuno wood, in order to come down slowly. But, when he was near to the ground, he said he would transform himself into manpoguara, into “lover’s rock”, which would send him into the other world.

Thus, he went directly to hell, to the land of the chameleon and asked,
 “Who killed my mother?”

“It is not known who killed your mother”, they answered him.

Meanwhile, the boy was eating and he was offering food until a boy told him,

“Your mother, the sky killed her²².”

So, Jinopotó began to rise and came to the place of the Chaverara, those who don’t eat food. There, there is much chontaduro²³ and they were cooking and they fed themselves just on the steam. Jinopotó began eating that fruit and the Chaverara asked him,

¹⁹ Guadua is a type of tree that is very strong and grows in the Amazon, similar to bamboo. Typically, fruits and other foods are stored in guadua boxes.

²⁰ In the original version, the word used is “cegarrar”, which implies both the effect of being blinded by the moon at the same time as the boy is grabbing it.

²¹ The Truenene bird is an Amazonian bird that has black feathers with a white stripe in its wings and neck. It feeds off of insects that live inside trees.

²² Again, there is a change in gender, suggesting that the mother’s gender is ambiguous or she is a hermaphrodite.

“You, why do you eat that fruit and we don’t?”

“If you want, I will cure you; operate on you so that you can be like me”

Then, he came by a knife and began to break them but since they were supernatural, they all died and he flew away before the others could kill him. He returned to this world and said that from that moment on, he would only eat the menstrual blood of women. Because of that, everyone wanted to kill him to such a point that they told him,

“Your mother, a snake with seven heads killed her”.

Jinopotó got an oil lamp, firewood, knives, and a bag and began to swim over the swamp, over the water. And, truly, the snake swallowed him, the people were content because he had died. But, after three days, the snake began to give off smoke because he was standing up inside the stomach of the snake and there, he made a bonfire with the dry firewood that had been swallowed. And, he left by a path where he had placed a wedge so that the snake would not close it.

The snake died and Jinopotó rose up again to this land and continued questioning,

“Who killed my mother?”

So finally, the people began to think of how to respond and who they could blame it on and they decided to tell him that the one responsible for the death of his mother was the poisonous bumblebee and the Abuimia that live in the beehives, inside of rotting branches. He was a clever sort of person and he had only one door where he hung scissors.

“You killed my mother?” Jinopotó asked the bumblebee.

“No, I did not kill your mother, and don’t come near me because I will kill you.”

²³ Chontaduro is a type of Amazonian fruit, called the “fruit of the palm”

When Jinopotó tried to get in through the door, the bumblebee killed him, cutting open his stomach with the scissors. And thus, he²⁴ continued turning into flies, mosquitoes and horseflies to suck blood until his body disappeared. And that is how these insects came to be in the world and this is why we say, Jinopotabarra.

²⁴ The subject is most likely Jinopotó in this case but due to the use of pronouns instead of specific nouns, it is unclear who turned Jinopotó into the insects.

The Origin of the Plantain (Banana)

Long ago, there was one person, the Muchilero bird, who owned all the plantains. He is sometimes called the colon or Colono although in Embera, he is called Kubarre. When Karabí and his son discover the Muchilero bird and all his plantains, Karabí asks for some starts of the plantains so that they too can grow them. When the Muchilero bird refuses, they rob him secretly of eight starts. Later, Karabí asks again and when the Muchilero bird refuses this time, Karabí grabs him and he turns into a bird.

The “colon” was the owner of the plantain tree. Some called him “Colono”²⁵; others say “Muchilero bird”²⁶, he who makes a knapsack. In Emberá, we call him Kubarre. Once, Carabí was living with his son; but there was no food. He was walking once and they arrived at a point where there were a lot of plantains, hartón²⁷, a primitive type of plantain, manzano²⁸ and other varieties of plantain.

“Who could it be who lives here?” said Carabí, and walking, and they sensed²⁹ a disagreeable smell. “Who could it be who smells so bad?”

Soon after, there was the animal, the Muchilero bird, but it was a person³⁰, and he smelled bad. And thus they arrived.

“Listen; are you the owner of the plantain?”

“Yes, it is I, the owner of the plantain.”

²⁵ This is the local name for the Oropéndula bird. In this story, its synonymy includes Muchilero bird, Kubarre, and colon.

²⁶ The Oropéndula bird is nicknamed the “knapsack bird” because of its nest, which is a woven basket nest that hangs from branches. The bird is native to the area; it has yellow feathers and black wings and tail. In cultural studies, it has been suggested that the bird has a phallic connotation due to the look of its nest (it resembles testicles).

²⁷ The translator could not find a direct translation for this plant that is the progenitor of the plantain.

²⁸ Manzano is a type of plantain that grows in the region.

²⁹ It is unclear if the switch in subject is intentional. The passage begins talking about Carabí but then changes to refer to multiple people who sensed the smell.

³⁰ In many of the Emberá-Chamí myths, the characters are both animals and persons.

“And will you give me a start³¹ so that I can plant it?”

“No, I will not give my start; I won’t sell it nor will I give it away.”

Then Carabí said to his son,

“Eh! What are we going to do? Shall we rob him or shall we kill him to win that start?

You know what? We are going to kill him, but before, I think that he is sure to be learned. Also he has to be a jaibaná³². Also, because it might happen to us as it did with the Conga³³, because we killed the Conga, and we could not take anything from him; we had to wait a long time. And this start could turn into another tree. So, it would be better to pull up eight little starts first and kill the Muchilero later if he doesn’t give us the start.”

In truth, one day they got back from doing that. Over there, they pulled up the starts and they told the Muchilero:

“Listen up, are you going to give it to us or are you not going to give it to us?”

Because before he didn’t like to give away; it was for the Muchilero bird: I don’t give away nor do I sell. Then, Carabí grabbed him by the nape of his neck and he was wrapped up in a long yellowed banana leaf, and that turned into the tail, a yellow tail, the body was a brownish color and the beak was yellow, he transformed into a bird.

Listen, when the Muchilero went to see the banana start, it was already a murrapo³⁴, a small plantain: thus the murrapo came to be. For this reason, wherever the murrapo is, there that bird lives. He liked to eat the fruit of the murrapo, which comes out as a small flower. So, the

³¹ The original version used the word “colino”, which refers to a start, or young shoot, of a banana tree that is used to propagate new banana plants

³² Jaibaná is a title held by someone trained in the ways of traditional medicine in the Emberá community.

³³ In the “Origin of Water” Emberá myth, the figure of the Conga controls the waters and Carabí tries to trick the Conga into divulging where the waters are located.

³⁴ Murrapo is a plantain that belongs to the family *Cyclanthaceae* and is a species that grows in tropical climates.

start of Carabí had been picked too early; this banana remained a seed because if not, all the plantains would have become murrapos. For this reason, some say that the ancestor of the plantain is the murrapo. That is another story.

The Origin of Water

In creation time, the god Carabí traveled with his family and on one occasion, they find a woman called Jenené, who controls all the water. Carabí tries to trick Jenené into telling him where the water is; he spies on her and tries to make an imitation of the key she uses to open a rock and access the water. Jenené is very shrewd and realizes what Carabí is doing. When he becomes frustrated and turns her into an ant, she has safeguarded the water. He and his family try to chop down the tree where Jenené has locked away the water. Finally, after many attempts to beat the tree at a game, one of Carabí's family wins and the land is swamped with water. After it all, Carabí changes his family members into animals so that they can manage his land.

The rivers came from a tree which we call Jenené. The time of Jenené was the time of the creation of the world. When Carabí began to travel with his family, it was not he who made the water. The river already existed, and it was controlled by a woman named The Conga, who is now like an ant, but in that age was a large woman. For get-togethers and for ceremonies, Carabí did not use water; instead he used a vine-like plant³⁵ called Agracia, from which he extracted a tasty water. Of course, one cannot let his body get wet with it because it will start an itch.

Carabí was traveling with the long-tailed monkey, the black monkey, the squirrel, the otter, the Tominejo³⁶ bird, the woodpecker³⁷, and the fox. He was walking with these people when he found a house in the jungle. They spied and caught a glimpse of a net³⁸.

Then, Carabí said, "We're going to pay a visit to see who lives there"

³⁵ In the original text, the word is "bejuco", which refers to many varieties of climbing vine plants that are typically used to make baskets.

³⁶ The Tominejo bird is a small brightly colored (goldish-green) bird of the Paseriformes family that lives in the Amazonian region and drinks the nectar of flowers. It is similar to a humming-bird.

³⁷ In the Amazonian region, there are many species of woodpecker, called "carpintero" birds.

³⁸ The "chinchorro" (as it appears in the original text) is a woven basket or net and is small and used to catch fish.

As they entered, they saw a very polite looking woman, who invited them to take a walk around. They spent a while there and the woman offered them a meal of fish, guacoco³⁹, and fresh-water fish, a fresh water mazamorra⁴⁰.

“Where did you catch this fish?” Carabí asked her.

“It’s from river”, she answered.

“Can you take me there, so that I can know the river?”

“No. You’re a god, aren’t you? You should know where there is water.”

Carabí insisted, “No, you must take me so that I can know the water that I don’t know, and I want to swim.”

He begged her four times, but she refused to show him the river. Carabí looked for them⁴¹ with his friends and nothing, nothing, there was absolutely nothing. They left the house and made a little hut nearby, and the next day, went to see the Conga again. She offered them a meal of sabaleta⁴², which is a very tasty fish. They asked her:

“Where do you catch that fish?”

“In the river. Why do you bother me so much? I am not going to tell you anything.”

Then Carabí told his friends:

“She weaves that net.”

Transformed into a louse, he hung off her hair, and he saw how she was making the net.

³⁹ Guacoco is a local word for clam

⁴⁰ This is a refreshing drink most likely made with fresh water and either corn or rice.

⁴¹ The rivers or the waters

⁴² The scientific name of the sabaleta fish is the *Brycon rubricuada*. The sabaleta lives in the Magdalena River basin in Colombia. The common name for this species of fish is sábalo. Sabaleta is also the name of an Emberá Chamí community. See the glossary attached for picture.

“And I am going to teach you⁴³ how to weave but first I am going to turn into a Tominejo bird, into a hummingbird, because I think that she always leaves to bathe and to catch fish at midday; because she has offered us fish in the afternoon.”

Transformed into a hummingbird, he watched how she was taking a large key and was opening a rock and from there, a mighty and beautiful river was emerging. She started to swim with the net and she caught in the net Carabí, who had turned into a sábalo⁴⁴ fish. She hit him on the head with a club and carried him contentedly to the house. She gutted him and prepared him and left him to smoke, but the next day, the fish had disappeared. So then, she thought,

“Ahh, this trickster⁴⁵ who set me a trap was Carabí. Now he must know where I keep the water. Uf! Now what do I do? Carabí will defeat me.”

Carabí told his monkey son:

“We have to make an axe and a key, because the Conga’s key is very large and she is very clever when she opens that rock. I am going to turn myself into a louse and I am going to measure that key while she is swimming, so that we can make one just like it.”

With a rock, they made a copy of the key, and they started to open and it opened.

“Ready! With this we can now protect ourselves, now we will kill the Conga for certain if she doesn’t give us the water”, said Carabí.

“Well, Mrs. Conga, now you will give me the water,” he said to her as he arrived at her house.

“No I won’t hand it over because you, as a god, should have your own water”

“Don’t you upset me.”

⁴³ It is likely that Carabí is still addressing the animals that are with him.

⁴⁴ See note 7

⁴⁵ In Colombia, a “verraco” is a skilled and clever person. In the context, it seems that Carabí’s skills are taken as negative attributes and so he is more of a sneaky trickster who uses his cleverness for bad things.

“Well, I am not going to hand over the water.”

“She is envious and greedy; I am going to turn her into an ant!”

Then, he grabbed her by the nape of her neck and her foot and pulled her, causing her waist to disappear.⁴⁶

“Do you know what, Carabí? Give me venom so that I can kill the people instantly; so that they will die,” said the woman, already changed into an ant.

“No, the venom I am going to give you will hardly be enough to make the person hurt for a brief moment”

Well, then because of that, they started to open the rock but there wasn't any more water.

Nothing! There were very many large trees; one of them was the Jenené. There was jungle but there was not any water. Then they said:

“Eh! That is punishment for us. She took the water away in her mouth she took all of it.

Let's see what we should do...”

Carabí started to walk with his people through the jungle, until the otter told him, showing him a stick,

“Papa! I hear a noise around here.”

Everyone gathered round that stick, and in truth, they heard a river that sounded like a snail—
uuuu! This is called Jenené.

“Our grandfather, our past, the water,” Carabí was saying, because he had dreamed it so.

Well, since they had already made an axe, they started to fell the tree among all of them. In total, they were about eight animals; among them, the monkey, the fox, the otter, the big squirrel, and the small one that lives eating the bark from trees.

⁴⁶ This is why ants do not have waists.

By the afternoon, they had already been cutting down more than half of the tree but they grew tired and went home to continue the next day. During the night, the frog was coming. In that time, he was a person, skipping around and peeing. Over there, and he was painting the tree with tar so that it would remain as if nothing had chopped it. Three times, the people of Carabí found the tree well healed after they had chopped on it with the ax all day long, until Carabí said:

“You know what? We cannot continue working like this. We are going to make a polish or beeswax, like those that our grandfathers used to make, cooking the “canturron”, until a tar-like substance remained that served as an oil lamp to give off light and with this, they could keep working.”

In the night, the fox stayed keeping a lookout, and he saw a gentleman (he started to rub), who seemed to be a painted frog. The man started to rub and rub until he left the tree well healed. Immediately, they set about felling the tree and they continued without stopping for two days. The Jenené tree did not fall all at once, but instead stayed twisted up in a vine. Carabí said to the monkey:

“Go take this fruit and if you fall before the fruit, you are going to win and the tree will tumble down”.

The otter said,

“Do you know what? We are going to play, but we have to make a raft of Tukuno⁴⁷ wood to save ourselves, because that river will engulf everything in a swamp.”

“Ha, clever!”

⁴⁷ Tukuno is likely a species of tree that grows in the region.

They made a raft to climb on when everything turned into pure swamp and after that, the black monkey, the red one, but the fruit would always fall first; the fox and the otter refused to climb the tree. Then the squirrel said:

“I’ll go. We’ll see if I win.”

The squirrel climbed up. When he climbed up, pun! He threw the fruit. But the fruit always fell first! Then, up there, that “runidito de chidinia” climbed and started and threw down one fruit and that chidinia fell first. And the tree started to fall when the fall was heard on the ground and it flooded. When it flooded, they said:

“Eh! What do we do? We are going to die!”

And they got on the large raft. There, they were lighting a campfire and making a little food. Everything was getting wet, but it was the otter, whom some call “mongrel of the water”, who brought the fish. The, Carabí thought:

What do I do with these people? These people have to change, he said. The one who yells quite a lot I am going to call “monkey”, he said. I am going to turn him into a monkey. The one who lives fishing every minute, I am going to call “otter”. The one who lives playing daily, I am going to turn him into a long-tailed black monkey and the other I am going to call “fox” because he like to meddle in other’s affairs and the one that like to take charge of the little sticks, I am going to call “squirrel”. And the one who helped to get the water, I am going to call “chidimia” or “ruñito de palo”.

Fifteen days later, they arrived at a dry land. They got off the raft and Carabí told them,

“I have already turned you all into animals so that you can manage your territories.”

A Historical Review of the Indigenous Reservation of the Emberá-Chamí

La Italia

The communities on the reservation La Italia come from the departments of Chocó, Risaralda. In these departments, our ancestors had their own territories where they practiced the hunt (went hunting), practiced agriculture where there was the first branch of society and from the territory. Because of conflicts and the colonization of the mestizo people⁴⁸, they had to abandon their territories and in search of the same calm atmosphere that their ancestors had. In the year 1977, they came to the department of Putumayo⁴⁹.

The late Arturo Niaza Cuazarabe, Bernardino Morales German Tamaniza, Genaro Yagari came to go around and determine⁵⁰ the quality of the land, planned by the late Rafael Mosquera, who had better knowledge of this land. He told them that in Putumayo, the quality of the land was very good for agricultural production and also, that there were valid lands. In analyzing this opportunity where it is said, "The Indian without land is not an Indian", we headed for the department of Putumayo and they⁵¹ came to the municipality of Puerto Asís and they entered

⁴⁸ In the original document, the word "maestro", meaning teacher or master of a field, was included in parentheses, suggesting that the prominent members of the community were subjugated under colonial rule and this sparked the abandonment of their territories.

⁴⁹ Department located in central southern Colombia, near the Ecuadorian border.

⁵⁰ Here, the original document only stated "rodear", which means to surround or, as in this context, to go around. However, it can be implied that the writer intended to describe how the group judged the quality of the land.

⁵¹ Many times throughout the document, the subject changes mid-sentence. This is likely due to nature of how these histories were recorded, first in Emberá and later transcribed and translated into Spanish by hand. It is enough to say that the group that is the subject in this sentence is the same.

from the small town⁵² of El Tigre. They came to La Argelia. They had camped eight days.

They entered Guadualito in search of worthy land. They did not like the remoteness.

They left again to go to La Argelia and from there, they went to Villa Hermosa⁵³ where they were able to go into the “Jardin de la Selva”⁵⁴, where Mr. Rafael Mosquera was and he told Mr. Eduardo Beltran that he was selling an open⁵⁵ land of two hectares, which Mr. Arturo Niaza bought. And in thirty minutes, [he] had the two open hectares and Mr. Bernardino Morales bought that and later, [it was passed to] don⁵⁶ Genaro Yagari. Mr. Jose Lito Cantillo bought an open land of about 80 square meters and a part was sold to Eduardo Beltran. And later, they returned to the department of Caquetá to where their families were; they had to travel by plane and the flight only cost 220 dollars.

And later they returned with all of the family and they started to build some huts made of yarina leaf and the pen with the same leaf. The only one of the family who came as a bachelor was don Bernadino Morales who brought his mother. Don Rogelio Arias also came with his wife Clara Rosa Yagari and the others [the Yagari brothers]. Don Arturo Niaza and his sons Jaime Niaza, Abigail Niaza and his other brothers each took over a plot of land and they started to sow the land with chiro⁵⁷, plantain, rice, corn and yucca. And when they arrived at this region, the flora and the fauna had been in much higher quantity, with the likes of tapir⁵⁸,

⁵² The word used in the original documents is “corregimiento”, which lacks an explicit translation. It is understood as smaller than a municipality or a municipality in the making; perhaps the meaning is captured in “departmental parish”

⁵³ Meaning “Beautiful Town”

⁵⁴ “El Jardin de la Selva” means the Garden of the Jungle; this text will maintain local names of all locations

⁵⁵ unoccupied

⁵⁶ “Don” is a title of courtesy used in Latin America; its rough equivalence is “Mr.”

⁵⁷ The translator was unable to find a translation for “chiro”, which is a common subsistence crop in the region

⁵⁸ The original document used the word “danta”, which is the common name for three species of tapir found in South America

cerrillo⁵⁹, spotted pacas⁶⁰, gurie, peccary⁶¹, pigs, monkeys, chiquiro, deer, jaguar, turkeys, the pajuil⁶² bird, the guacharaca⁶³ bird, tentes, macaw parrots, snakes like martiguajas, cats, orito, gananculcha, coral wio, etc. Also, there existed other spirits of the mountain like those called banbu⁶⁴, La Llorona, La Patasola, La Viuda, [and] Duende⁶⁵.

In that time, it was pure⁶⁶ mountain. There were dwellings six hours away. The agriculture was only utilized for human consumption but the rice and corn began to be developed for commercial sale, to be taken from the river Guamues. They were making contracts with mule drivers that were the neighbors. They took [their crops], by horse, up to the brink of the river called Zapote. Over there, they were constructing grocery stores where we were leaving the cargos and from that place, we were embarking in a boat in the direction of Puerto Asís. And in Puerto Asís, there was a mill; that was called the Caquetá mill. This served as support us; as the sustenance for our children.

After seven years, more families had already started to arrive to the departments of Risaralda; the family of Carlos Arturo Flores, Jaime Flores, and Hector Flores together with their families. At that time, we were belonging to the “Jardin de la Selva”. In the year 1982, we were working in this district until in the year 1987; we also were having children studying in that school. Mr. Ediluerto Sotelo [came] from the district of La Germania [and] gave us the idea to form the Board of Communal Action. He gave us guidance on how it would function. So, we

⁵⁹ The translators were unable to find translations for many of these animals or plants. This may be because they are local nicknames or Embera names for these species.

⁶⁰ The Spotted paca (*Cuniculus paca*,) or the boruga, is a large rodent found in tropical parts of the Americas.

⁶¹ A peccary is a mammal related to the pig; it is a blackish color

⁶² *Penelopina nigra*

⁶³ *Ortalis garrula*, also known in English as the Chestnut-winged Chachalaca

⁶⁴ These legends are common in many Latin American countries though Colombia has its unique version for each. To read about these legends, visit this website.

⁶⁵ A “duende” is a goblin or imp

⁶⁶ Here, “pure” most likely takes on the meaning of untouched or undeveloped

came together: Genaro Yagari, Leonel Yagari, Rogelio Arias, Pedro Luis Arias, Arturo Niaza, Abigail Niaza, Jaime Niaza y the Morales family, the Flores family, Patrocinio Niaza, Rogelio de Jesús Yagari, Jesus Niaza, Belizario Arias, and a census of about fifteen families.

Angelmiro Arias and Bernardo Yagari were taking charge of the office of mayor in the municipality of Puerto Asís and it was refused because he only had two last names and they told them that you couldn't form a board with only two families. So, we⁶⁷ went to where the parish priest, father Pablo Patino lived and he told them that they did have the right to form a board. Well, it was quite far from one school to the other (an hour) and the route, very mountainous.

Between don Genaro and don Rogelio, they had the idea to give it the name of Genova Italia and the father told them that it was very painful because the Spaniards had been coming to finish it off and to take the wealth from the indigenous people. It is better that they name it Genova or Italia so that they don't give [the Spaniards] too much honor because they arrived at a faraway land, like Christopher Columbus. Thus, they decided to name it Italia.

So, we again took an official proposal⁶⁸ to the mayor's office and at that time, they were in the middle of mayoral campaigns. The doctor Alirio Romo Guevara, one such candidate, pledged to create a proper name for the district. We asked that he give us a promoter so that he, [the promoter], could advise us at the executive board. They sent a police inspector Federmon Machado. It was not possible or sufficient for us to send another notice, stating that we could not elect an executive board. The mayor's office sent a regional developer for community boards, Mr. Victor Arevalo. He came and convened a general meeting and we were able to form the executive board on the 14th of November of 1988.

⁶⁷ Throughout the document, the speaker adopts the “we” form of the verb but then changes subjects later. This is likely due to the oral nature of the language and that this is a common history of the people.

⁶⁸ The original document used the word “oficio”, which means an official document or note. In this context, it is likely a proposal to officially name the town Italia.

In the official document, it was thus established:

President Genaro Yagari,

Vice President Jaime Niaza,

Treasurer Abigail Niaza,

Secretary Jesús Mosquera,

Prosecutor Rogelio de Jesús Yagari

The organization of committees

Physical education (Education of sports)	Leonardo Arias
Health and social welfare	Clara Rosa Yagari
Building and finances	Rogelio Arias
Conciliatory Committee	Arturo Niaza y Jesús Arias

They built a small hut⁶⁹, with dimensions of 7 by 4. The roof was made of Cananvo leaf and the floor of parts of a Yaripa palm tree⁷⁰ and while the board was authorizing it, they sent for a military professor that was to come from the Santa Ana base, name Luis Eduardo Coral Venavides. He arrived on the eighth of December 1989 to work as a teacher. He started off with fifteen students: Luis Orlando Yagari, Miyer Niaza, Alvear Ciegama, Diana Mana Niaza, Ancizar Arras, Esperanza Yagari, Alonso Yagari, Keynelio Yagari, Pedro Arias, Rubiola Arias, Luz Mari Yagari, Carmensa Niaza.

The professor lasted twenty days and [then] he left because he got sick and he did not come back again. After that, it took six months to send his replacement. They sent Mr. Cristobal Jacanamejoy, who worked for three months on contract and since the contract was not renewed,

⁶⁹ This hut was later used as the school building.

⁷⁰ Yaripa, one of the many species of palm trees found in the area, is often used in housing as flooring or walls.

they sent Professor Petevy in 1990. And, with that, the number of students grew. As there had been a good number of students, they sent for Mr. Miguel Angel Jacanamejoy, who worked for four months and he was replaced by Mr. José Dario Linares Quinchoa that same year and he lasted four years.

Since by that time, they had made a school of wood and zinc, thanks to donations from the mayor Alirio Romo. An idea emerged to build a school. The community approved the construction of the school of wood and they had a bidding of three million pesos. Professor José Dario Linares said that the building they constructed using the materials could be less costly and he was committing to make the blocks. The community approved [this] and bought fifty sacks of segments and Mr. Jorge Coral Rivas liked the idea and agreed and he said that it was better that they make it like this. The community promised to get five shipments⁷¹ of sand, twelve packages of rock from the Santa Maria gulley that was located about fifteen minutes away and they bought sixty leafs of ternet and in those times, they drained the dregs in Putumayo, that was about three hours by troche in bad weather.⁷² They were given the ternet leafs after five mingas⁷³ and after 25 trips carrying sand and getting the segments, children and adults and teachers worked for a year, later they negotiated with the Governor's office. They approved the proposal and sent two teachers: Pedro Linares and Julio.

They promised to arrange accommodations and food for the school and they sent it to the “plante” and they approved the 24 million. He was conducting a campaign to announce in the

⁷¹ The original document used the “bolquetada”, which does not appear in Spanish dictionaries but in this reference, can be understood as a specified quantity.

⁷² There is a sentence in the original text that is entirely unclear, whether because of handwriting or misuse of a word.

⁷³ A minga is a traditional word for a meeting where community members come together to work together to improve the community. In October 2008, a national minga captured the attention of the press. Some 30,000 Colombians from dozens of different tribes (among them the Emberá Chamí) came together to work in solidarity for improved treatment of indigenous communities.

year '95, when he was killed but he kept planning and left it in the hands of the mayor, Galviz, who did not give us all of the budget, but rather only nine million. Those same men hired another teacher and he bought doors, cement and the work was finished in '94. [The professor] Rubiela Petevy was replaced by Alda Galindes, who offered her services as teacher. She was settling in at this institution when they decided to send Luis Orlando Yagari, who was from the same Emberá community.

At this time, Dario Linares, who worked for years, decided to leave. In his place, Luis Enrique Mendosa showed up and offered his services for three years. Then his replacement, Dalia Caicedo, came. In place of the teaching assistant came José Alos Elago, who offered his services for one year. At this time, they fired Luis Orlando Yagari because he did not meet some of the requirements that the Secretary of Education demanded and they sent Gonzalo Millan Lerma to replace him.

In the year 2000, they sent the teaching assistant Claudia Patricia Noscue Zapata and they dismissed the teaching assistant José Alos Elago. As his replacement, they sent Silvio Miguel Munos, who became bored and left on the fifteenth of February 2007 and they sent Luz Adriana Noscue Zapata, who continued offering her services until the moment, in 2003, that these teachers were appointed in the institution in the I.E.R.M. La Italia appointed Silvio Miguel Munos and Eduardo Alos to the office of the Secretary of Departmental, or Municipal, Education. They worked in the “malvinos”, the teacher Silvio Miguel Munos so that he would perform the job of director of the center. They sent Professor Luz Adriana Noscue to La Italia reservation, who until now has offered her services as teacher.

Don Genaro served six years as President and later, he turned over the job to don Paulino Rosero, who worked for four years with 77 people affiliated with the Community Action

Committee. In 1989, he brought us the idea to form a “cabildo”⁷⁴. In those times, the community did not have ideas about indigenous organization or mobilization. In the municipality of Orito, there had been two organizations of the same ethnicity. They gave us ideas about how to be satisfied with the cabildo. The ones who helped us the most were Mr. Roberto Gonzales, from La Venada Town Council and Governor Pedro Luis Yagari from La Cristiania Town Council. They explained to us the advantages of an indigenous cabildo: the incentives for education and the respect the government would pay to the indigenous community.

And in that time, the Secoin Organization conducted a two-day workshop in the La Venada Town Council. We had the opportunity to participate in this gathering. This organization gave us guidance and the fundamentals of an indigenous community was its customs and rituals and from where it can prevented. The Emberá Katio⁷⁵ also advised us that we had to send official documents such as the minutes from the executive board’s meeting and the minutes from the swearing-in before the mayor’s office and to send them to the OZIP⁷⁶ organization.

And the cabildo consisted of twenty families of the surnames: Yagari Arias, Yagari Tamaniza, Yagari Onogama, Tamaniza Cano, Morales Niaza, Morales Flores, Ciegama Chogama, Arias Ciegama, Niaza Guasarabe, Niaza Onogama, Niaza Arias, Niaza Flores, Flores Gonzales, Arias Nacavera, and Tamaniza Morales. The first governor was Mr. Jaime Niaza. The town mayor, Genaro Yagari. Don Jaime Niaza worked for two years.

⁷⁴ A cabildo is generally understood as a town hall or council that meets to approve measures that affect the community.

⁷⁵ The Embera Katio people are another ethnic Embera group that lives in southern Colombia, in the departments Cordoba and Antioquia.

⁷⁶ OZIP is a Colombian NGO formed in 1986 that seeks to better represent indigenous groups in government and to respond to threats that commonly face indigenous Amazonian groups. OZIP stands for Regional Organization for Indigenous Groups of Putumayo. To find out more about OZIP, visit www.ozip.org.co

Routes

In the year 1977 when they had only just come, they were leaving by a trail to a place called Sapote, now called Las Brisas, about a two hour trip. There, they were boarding boats on the River Guames to arrive at Puerto Asís after [another] two hours of travel. Later, they made short cuts to leave to La Palla, downstream from Las Brisas.

In the year 1990, the Ecopetrol business, which made the Puerto Vega-Putumayo 7 Highway, came from the municipality of Puerto Asís. They started to look for an outlet toward there. They made rough roads to lead to Las Malvinas and to get from here to there. There were already roads to get to the Putumayo Highway 7. The roads were in bad condition, on account of the rain and the terrain, which are high plains⁷⁷.

Relief and Weather

This place is mountainous. The largest part is jungle and a minimal part is dry lands. And other parts were opened up by other landowners of these lands. These lands are suitable for ranching since for the most part, are hills and very small for agriculture.

It presents a beautiful countryside covered in forests and adorned with the sparse fauna that remains on account of the relief. The district has a temperature of approximately 28 to 30 degrees Celsius. It resides at an altitude of 2.68 meters above sea-level, with a warm climate. The months of winter are March, April, May, June and July. The months of summer are August through January. In the month of July, there is some frost, with frequent drizzles and it is a bit cold.

⁷⁷ Originally, the terrain is described as “altiplano”, which refers to a high plateau or high plains.

Hydrography

The district [has] various small streamlets that pass through the hills. Among them, is the streamlet called “El Perro y la Hormiga”⁷⁸ and it crosses the Santa Maria gully that comes from the Garden of the Jungle and continues downward, passing through parts of Las Malvinas. This stream is not very deep; in fact, the maximum depth is 2 meters. In summertime, its waters quickly become scarce. It doesn’t possess a large quantity or diversity of fish. Some families benefit from this; others collect water from the streamlets⁷⁹.

Topography

Fauna

In spite of the abundant jungle, wild animals are scarce, due to heavy hunting by its inhabitants. The animals still around are few like the boruga⁸⁰, parrot⁸¹, gurre, deer, cerrillo, peccary, squirrels, sloth. Also, the area is rich in foxes, raposas, and a variety of snakes like the martiguaja, guio, gata, orito, and monkeys like the flying monkey, the red howler monkey, the Owl monkey⁸², the boso de leche monkey, the monoranque, the churuco, and the soldado⁸³. [The area also hosts a variety of birds] like the panguana, the muchilero⁸⁴ bird, turkeys, hens, and the guacharaca bird among others.

⁷⁸ “El Perro” means “The Dog” and “La Hormiga” means “The Ant”.

⁷⁹ In the original document, it is also mentioned that people collect water from “nacederos”. However, the translator could not find a translation for this word.

⁸⁰ The translator was unable to find translations for some of the animals mentioned, perhaps because the names listed are local names.

⁸¹ The original document mentions the guara parrot

⁸² This monkey is called the “tutamono” in Spanish

⁸³ It is likely that one or many of these types of monkey refers to the capuchin monkey (*genus Cebus*), which is common in the area.

⁸⁴ The Muchilero bird, or Oropéndula, is nicknamed the “knapsack bird” because of its nest, which is a woven basket nest that hangs from branches. The bird is native to the area; it has yellow feathers and black wings and

Previously, tigers, tapir, black boar and deer existed here but have since died out. Some of these contribute to the average diet.

Flora

Before, when they had recently arrived, there was a lot of forest, full of timber-yielding trees, like the Yellow Elder, the Peine Mono, Dogwood⁸⁵, Cedar, the Bilibil, the Granadillo⁸⁶, the Tara, the Tornillo⁸⁷, the Guayacan, and the Caimo⁸⁸. Currently, they are in danger of extinction. [The forest] has a variety of bushes⁸⁹ and small plants and a small number of palms like the Milpesos Palm⁹⁰, the Canambo Bombona, and the Chuchana Palm. Fruit trees such as the Orange, the Pomorroso, the Araza, and Grape grow in great quantities. The [sugar] cane is cultivated as a subsistence crop and some medicinal plants are also farmed, like the bijao⁹¹, the yage, basil, the morrajo, and guarisacha, among others, that are frequently used by the jaibanás⁹² for healing practices of the townspeople. The felling of the forests arose as a means to introduce subsistence crops and pastures as well as to make room for streets and the construction of homes.

tail. In cultural studies, it has been suggested that the bird has a phallic connotation due to the look of its nest (it resembles testicles). See "The Origin of the Plantain" for its role in the lore of the Embera-Chami people.

⁸⁵ *Piscidia carthagenensis*

⁸⁶ This tree could be either a Pomegranate tree (*Punica granatum*) or the Sticky Hopbush ([Dodonaea viscosa](#)), as "granadillo" is a common name for both.

⁸⁷ The Tornillo (*Cedrelinga catenaeformis*) or Achapo tree grows in Mexico and parts of South America and is a large tree that grows up to 160 ft tall; it has a pale brown heartwood and is used in general construction.

⁸⁸ Sometimes called the Yellow Star Apple tree or the Abiu tree, the Caimo tree (*Pouteria Caimito*) grows well in tropical areas and produces a round-oval, soft, yellow-colored fruit that is eaten fresh.

⁸⁹ The original document used the word "aborto", which means abortion but in the context, this is understood as a orthographical error as "arbusto", meaning plant or shrub is very close in its spelling.

⁹⁰ Milpesos (*Oenocarpus bataua*) is a slow-growing palm whose fruit is very popular and whose wood is often used for construction.

⁹¹ The bijao (*Calathea lutea*) is a leafy herbaceous plant that grows in swampy areas with a range from Mexico to South America. Its leaves have a variety of purposes, from cooking to medicinal use.

⁹² Jaibaná is a title held by someone trained in the ways of traditional medicine in the Emberá community.

Health

This community is frequently subjected to illnesses due to poor nutrition, including problems of malnutrition, diarrhea, dengue fever, malaria, anemia, tuberculosis, toothaches, and many parasitical diseases that prevent healthy child development. These diseases show symptoms like high fever, malaise, physical exhaustion, headache, stomachache, diarrhea, and vomiting, all of which are treated by the jaibaná. If it is a serious case, they go to the hospital to keep the disease in check. The hospitals have become shelters although they are not frequently used on account of the distance; the path takes 2 ½ hours to arrive at the Poso Puerto Mayo 7 Highway. Another reason [for its infrequent use] is the lack of attention paid by the community to request an EMT squad. And people rarely leave due to their critical economic situation. Presently, we possess an office to deal with malaria.

When a community member is afflicted by bug bites or he suffers from less serious illnesses, he is attended to by a jaibaná. If he has an accident or contracts a more grave illness, he is carried by stretcher to the Poso Puerto Mayo 7 Highway and will wait for the car on duty that passes through Puerto Vega at least once or twice for transportation to the Puerto Asís Hospital in Putumayo. Pregnant women use a midwife.

In this indigenous community, there are seven jaibanás, who are very useful for the community; they possess knowledge about many plants. We don't have a sewer system or public restrooms or a water-supply line. Before, they didn't even have latrines. In 2002, the U.N. helped with the construction of sanitary units for families. They were made of wood and [had] porcelain basins. Trash is thrown into the yard or some burn it.

Ethnography

The approximate number of people in this community is 192 people. Within this group, there are 85 minors and about 50 adults and about 57 senior citizens. 38 families comprise the population and there is not a floating population.

The birth rate is 4 to 5 children annually and when someone dies, he or she has a wake in the school and is taken to be buried in the “Jardin de la Selva”, which is about a 7-hour walk, since there is a cemetery there.

The community is purely Emberá Katio indigenous people, who came from Chocó Risaralda. Said community shows off its cultural identity: 20 % are music enthusiasts and practice and play guitar, charrasca, and a keyboard. They are happy and active contributors [to the community]. The rest are calm, carefree and apathetic people that don't like to engage themselves at all. From time to time, there are internal festivals in order to collect funds, although they aren't very fruitful. They play soccer.

In times before, they did not identify with any political group. Those who vote are very few. One cause [of this apathy] is the armed groups that don't permit it and displace the ballots. A second cause is that the majority of people, though they are adults, do not possess documentation. A large part of the population is illiterate, especially adults.

Housing

In this neighborhood, we have 32 dwellings, distributed in this way: 10 houses [are] in the highlands on the western side, rather withdrawn from the school, about an hours' walk; the rest of the houses are found in the lower parts, covering the northeastern part and the southern part. They are much closer to the school, about 5 to 35 minutes away, and the school is surrounded by some houses.

Construction of a house

The walls are made of wooden blocks, the floor is made of planks, [and] the roof is made of zinc. Most of the houses have the following dimensions: 8 meters long by 6 meters wide. In general, some of the houses have two fireplaces. The houses are lighted by oil lamps, and firewood is used for cooking meals. There are some larger families.

Ethnography

Very few families are bound by matrimony. The majority of families live in an open union; very few older people live without a spouse. Domestic abuse of women is a problem and [some parents] show little affection for their children, and vice-versa. People are not very well educated.

Dress

The dress of our community is in accordance with our economic resources. For such reasons, we dress humbly and simply. The women wear a common skirt that runs long and a short-sleeved blouse. In respect to the climate, the men wear pants made of jeans and wool shirts and short-sleeved shirts. In the afternoon, the people wear sporty clothes; some women adorn themselves with chaquira⁹³-style bracelets and necklaces hand-made by these same women. In general, the people wear tennis shoes.

⁹³ "Chaquiras" are traditional adornments, sometimes in the form of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, that are (generally brightly colored) beads woven in elaborate patterns.