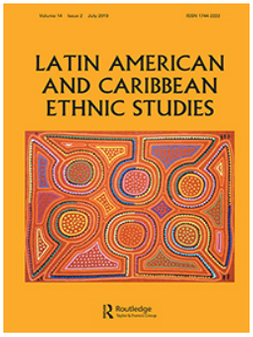

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Foes and allies: the Catholic Church, Acción Cultural Popular (ACPO), and the emergence of the indigenous movement in Cauca, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Literature on Latin American social movements has discussed the contributions of post-Second Vatican Council (SVC) (1963–1965) progressive branches of the Catholic Church in the formation of indigenous movements. However, this literature has largely ignored discussions on the intervention of non-SVC and conservative branches of the Catholic establishment. This article illustrates the role of the modernizing educational program Acción Cultural Popular (ACPO) (1949), a Catholic organization aligned with conservative forces of the Colombian State and developmental agencies from abroad, in the formation of the indigenous movement of the department of Cauca by Misak and Nasa indigenous people, who pioneered the indigenous movement in the country. ACPO provided educational tools and contacts that contributed to the creation of the indigenous movement of Cauca in the 1970s. However, it also promoted problematic technologies that affected indigenous territories and modes of understanding indigenous cultures that belittled the traditions of the Misak and Nasa indigenous people.

KEYWORDS

Colombia; development; indigenous movement; popular education; Social Catholicism

Since the 1960s, the Misak and Nasa indigenous people from the department of Cauca have engaged in political and cultural processes that have transformed these groups from being one of the most disenfranchised sectors of the society to one of the most influencial social-political actors in Colombia. Their methods have ranged from the foundation of the first indigenous organization of Colombia in 1971, the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Laurent 1988), to the organization of some of the most massive mobilizations against neoliberal policies and militarization in the country, especially during the rightwing presidency of Álvaro Uribe Velez (2002–2010) (Cortés 2016). Importantly, Misak leader Lorenzo Muelas also participated in the crafting of Colombia's multicultural constitution, which, ratified in 1991, was the first constitution that granted rights to protect indigenous and African descendant cultures in Latin America (Santamaría Chavarro 2013).

In addition to indigenous people's own actions, this remarkable political process was the result of efforts by a range of actors, including those of state-sponsored agencies

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(Laurent 2015), international organizations (Davis 2002; Roldán Ortega 2000; Schwarz 2018), members of leftist groups, academics, and university students (Caviedes 2002), evangelical groups (Troyan 2010), and the Church. Focusing on the intervention of the Catholic Church, some scholars have documented the contributions of particular groups influenced by liberation theology (Alvarado and Patiño López 2012; Beltrán and Mejia 1989). However, only a few academics have discussed the influence of more conservative branches of the Church in the development of Colombia's indigenous movement (see Fizpatrick-Behrens 2016; LeGrand 2016). This article aims to contribute to this discussion by examining the contributions of the Acción Popular Cultural (ACPO), a Catholic organization founded in 1947 that promoted a long distance integral educational program targeted at traditionally excluded Colombian rural populations, in the formation of the indigenous movement of Cauca.

ACPO was initially founded as part of Radio Sutatenza, a locally oriented educational radio station run by a small group of churchmen and led by the priest José Joaquín Salcedo, in the poor and isolated municipality of Sutatenza located in the department of Boyacá. The conservative government in power quickly supported this initiative by providing transmission licenses. Years later, some influential Catholic international organizations such as the German episcopate organization for development aid (MISEREOR) also endorsed ACPO, which provided financial assistance for the project during the 1960s and 1970s, and the U.S. Catholic bishops' Social Action Department (SAD), which facilitated ACPO's relationship with influential U.S. public and private institutions (Roldán 2016).

In 1949, Radio Sutatenza expanded to become a larger educational organization called Acción Cultural Popular, ACPO. From then until 1994, when the organization sold the majority of its assets to pay debts and became a small non-governmental organization (NGO), ACPO offered a developmental education program called Educación Fundamental Integral (Integral Fundamental Education, or EFI) (Beltrán 1975). European Catholic priests, endorsed by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and inspired by Catholic philosophers and sociologist such as Jacques Maritain and Joseph Lebret, designed this program (Lopera López 2016; Roldán 2014; Schoultz 1973). Overall, this educational effort aimed to transform the Colombian rural population from 'passive, traditional, and pre-modern' into modern Catholic agents of national development (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada 1998).

Grounded on the teaching of five essential areas – spirituality *(espiritualidad*), health (*salud*), literacy (*alfabeto*), math (*números*), and work and economy (*economía y trabajo*) – EFI developed study groups known as 'radio schools' (*escuelas radiofónicas*, RS), which were formed by small groups of neighbors (5–10), guided by a local leaders (*auxiliares inmediatos*), and coordinated by the closest parish (Lopera López 2016). These radio schools met once a day, during one of the three Radio Sutatenza transmissions of its classes. Based on the ACPO's five essential areas, these classes were organized around three levels: A basic level that lasted half an hour and focused on the teaching of reading, writing, and four mathematic operations; and progressive and complementary levels that lasted one hour each day and focused on a variety of topics, from recreation up to agriculture (Cabrera García 1976).

When ACPO arrived to the Misak and Nasa communities in 1963, 24 priests delegated by the Colombian ecclesiastic hierarchy monitored the work of the director, Father

Salcedo (Lopera López 2016). This collegiate body managed ACPO's infrastructure, which, in addition to Radio Sutatenza, included a newspaper (El Campesino), a publishing house (Editorial Andes), male and female training institutes at Sutatenza (Boyacá) and Caldas (Antioquía), various administrative centers, and hundreds of staff, who were in charged, among other tasks, with responding to the hundreds of letters that ACPO received daily (Lopera López 2016). According to Bernal Alarcón, ACPO received and answered more than 1.2 million letters from rural participants from all around the nation (cited in Roldán 2016). Due to its success in coverage, media production, and infrastructure, the Church replicated the ACPO model in various countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and México (Lugo-Ocando, Caizalez, and Lohmeier 2010; Peppino Barale 1999).

This article shows that ACPO played a significant, albeit paradoxical, role in the history of Cauca's indigenous movement. On one hand, I show how it offered the educational skills and social capital to many indigenous organic intellectuals[1] needed in the formation of the indigenous movement in Cauca. On the other hand, I suggest that ACPO's educational approach had a negative impact indigenous cultures, belittling their traditions and restricting their spiritual beliefs.

This study is based on the analysis of more than 500 ACPO letters, dated from 1963 to 1976, sent to and from the municipalities of Silvia (Misak) and Toribio (Nasa). This data is complemented by information and testimonies collected in those territories during almost two years of fieldwork, from September 2013 to June 2015.

Indigenous people and the church: a complicated history

Latin American social movement scholars commonly argue that the Second Vatican Council (SVC) (1962–1965) positioned the service to disenfranchised sectors as a fundamental Catholic mission. They explain that this new vision radically transformed the Church's historically oppressive policies towards indigenous communities into a more respectful, horizontal, and supportive approach. For instance, sectors of the Church influenced by the SVC contributed to the political organization of the indigenous people by supporting actions in defense of indigenous territories, learning indigenous languages, promoting self-determination, equipping the community with influential outsiders, recovering cultural memory, providing hope, and stimulating networking with members of other social sectors (Cleary and Steigenga 2004; Mackin 2015). Overall, Cleary and Steigenga assure that SVC theologians differed from 'traditional' Catholics in their advocacy for 'social change, action to promote justice, and emphasized communities with lay and clerical leadership as the basis of action' (2004, 9).

Following this SVC disruption, or as a Trejos (2009) calls it the 'doctrinal change hypothesis,' various scholars have shown a strong link between post-SVC Catholic Church interventions and political and cultural advances among indigenous people from the 1970s onwards (Gumucio 2002). For instance, there are discussions over the relationship between liberation theology and grassroots indigenous organization in Oaxaca, México (Norget 1997); the contribution of liberation theology priests in the Zapatista uprising (Burbach 1994); the importance of the introduction of egalitarian notions and social action by liberation theology inspired Catholic groups in the Mayan rebellion in the 1960s (Eckstein 2001); the contributions of Álvaro Ulcue, the first Nasa

priest, in the growth of the Nasa political organization in Colombia (Alvarado and Patiño López 2012); and perhaps the most significant, in the declaration for the 'Liberation of Indigenous People' at the 1971 Barbados Conference, an international summit of anthropologists sponsored by the World Council of Churches that marked the launching of the international indigenous rights movement (Varese 1997). Overall, as Brysk (2004) explains, scholars tend to depict the post-SVC Church as fundamental in establishing the modern indigenous movements in Latin America.

This favorable view of the Church after SVC contrasts with a negative depiction on non-SVC Catholic organizations towards indigenous people (Trejo 2009). This literature highlights the positive 'doctrinal change' of SVC by contrasting it with previously dominant missionaries that sought the eradication of indigenous cultures and the Christianization of indigenous populations (Bonilla 2006; Findji 1992; Levine and Mainwaring 2001).

Recently, some scholars started problematizing this pre-post SVC dichotomy. For instance, Trejos (2009, 325) explains that the doctrinal change hypothesis has some problems, including the over-prediction of the number of clerics that adopted progressive policies and the simplification of the large variety of approaches at the different Latin American dioceses. Orta (2004) adds that the 'inculturationists' – another 'progressive' wing of the Church – have criticized liberation theology's focus on class struggle and the promotion of strict Catholic theology among indigenous populations. As a strategy for social change, inculturationists opted to promote the return of indigenous 'traditions' – spiritual practices, languages, and other cultural practices (Orta 2004).[2]

Tejos and others (see Gill 1994) also state that changes in the Church towards indigenous people resulted not so much from the SVC as from the arrival of evangelical missionaries in the beginning of the 20th century, who came to compete for the control of indigenous populations. In addition, as the next section discusses, the 'Social Catholicism' reform of 1891 also influenced the positive changes of the Catholic establishment towards indigenous people. In order words, the Church's support for popular causes, including indigenous people, started many years before the SVC disruption.

The case of ACPO is one example of the intervention of a pre-SVC program in the organization of indigenous people in Colombia. Even though ACPO based its educational agenda on the developmental and paternalistic practices denounced by Cleary and Steigenga (2009), ACPO also had various components typically associated with post-SVC progressive Catholic braches, such as the promotion of community leadership through ACPO's educational campaigns and the facilitation of contacts with other popular sectors at ACPO's leadership institutes, among other tools for empowerment. As a result, the work of ACPO with indigenous people involved many polemical, but also valuable contributions. On the one hand, indigenous languages, spiritual practices, and modes of living were disregarded and controversial modernist technologies introduced. On the other hand, ACPO provided primary and technical education to Colombia's rural indigenous population, some of which would go on to lead their community organizations in the coming years.

In addition to the intervention of ACPO in Cauca, there are many other examples that show paradoxical results from the intervention of conservative missionary organizations in the lives of indigenous people. For instance, Nagel (1996) explains how Christian intertribal boarding school produced indigenous leaders during the early twenty century

in the Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kansas (Nagel 1996). Jean and John Comaroff (1986) describe how British Colonial missionaries promoted modern values but also discourses of protest and resistance among the Tswana people (Comaroff and Comaroff 1986). Similarly, Andrade (2005) and others (Brysk 2004; Muratorio 1981) explain how the indigenous people from the Ecuadorian province of Chimborazo reconfigured the apolitical and ultraconservative messages of U.S. Protestant missionaries and used them for radical social mobilization (Andrade 2005).

Yet, the degree of agency of indigenous people exercised in response to Catholic and Protestant efforts not only depends on the changes of competition in the 'religious market' (i.e., the arrival of Protestant organizations in Catholic dominated territories), as Trejos (2009) states. The presence of other nonreligious organizations also has an important influence in the lives of indigenous people (Gill 1994). In addition to ACPO and missionary evangelical missionary groups (Demera 2008), the Nasa and Misak also received aid from secular sectors, such as State supported unions (the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos, ANUC), peasant organizations (the Federación Campesina Nacional, FANAL), leftist research organizations (la Rosca de Investigación), and U.S. Peace Corps (Castillo 2007; Caviedes 2002; Schwarz 2018). Interactions with all these groups – in different forms and degrees – contributed to the consolidation of the indigenous movement in the following decade.

ACPO and Social Catholicism

As Roldán (2016) explains, ACPO was one of the many initiatives that resulted from the era of 'Social Catholicism' initiated by Pope Leon XII's (in 1891) encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical called for the development of social assistantship programs to improve the human dignity of disenfranchised populations and help them to adapt to modernization. Through this political move, the highest level of the Church's hierarchy intended to counteract doctrines such as liberalism and communism that threatened its dominant influence among the most vulnerable sectors of society (Montero García 1983).

Before ACPO, the Catholic Church in Colombia had created various programs in accordance with the principles of 'Social Catholicism,' such as the Jesuit umbrella institution Acción Católica (1909), which supported various local initiatives throughout the nation such as labor organizations in Bogotá (Circulo de Obreros) and Medellín (Patronato de Obreros) (Castro Carvajal 2008). These efforts maintained the paternalistic, yet self-empowering spirit that had characterized traditional Church's actions since colonial times. As Farnsworth-Alvear (2000) explains, through the Patronatos Obreros, churchmen and mill factory owners provided access to basic education, housing, entertainment and medical services to their mostly female working force, but they also used these organizations as instruments to launch paternalistic management to guard workers against communist ideas, keep them away from left-wing organizational efforts, and promote traditional patriarchal gender roles and family structures (Farnsworth-Alvear 2000).

In relation to indigenous affairs, the Mission of the Maria Immaculate and Santa Catalina of Siena, also known as 'the Congregation of Mother Laura' or 'Lauritas,' represented one the most important of these Catholic programs. Mother Laura

Montoya initiated this program in 1914 with the intention of Christianizing members of the Embera Catio people in the department of Antioquía. The local and national governments supported Montoya's efforts since they wanted to develop infrastructure projects to connect the industrial city of Medellín with the Caribbean Sea in indigenous territories (Montoya Upegui 2015).

Even though the Lauritas refused to employ aggressive colonization methods such as bringing the Armed Forces to their missions which were common during those years, their procedures did involve the intrinsic violence embedded in every colonization project (Quijano 2007). The Lauritas, for instance, planned strategies to build trust and become accepted by the Embera Catio community, such as visiting the communities permanently, presenting themselves as healers with a direct connection with God, and giving lunches, mirrors, and other small gifts to the indigenous people (Montoya Upegui 2015). Once they became accepted, the Lauritas launched rigorous educational plans that fanatically promoted religion and punished indigenous peoples for using traditional Embera clothing and language (Gaitán Zapata 2008).

According to a study carried out by anthropologists Roberto Pineda and Virginia Gutiérrez in the 1950s, the Lauritas' intervention led to multiple transformations in Embera society, such as the forging of syncretic religious practices, the opening paths for commercial relations with outsiders, and changes in communal practices toward more capitalist based modes of production (Montoya Upegui Some of 2015). The Lauritas' evangelization strategy was very successful, creating 123 missions in total, 90 in Colombia – including some at Misak and Nasa territories – 22 in Ecuador, 9 in Venezuela, and 2 in Bolivia (Montoya Upegui 2015).

The intensity of these 'Social Catholicism' programs diminished in the 1930s, when the secular Liberals retook power and attempted to lessen the power of the Conservative party by weakening the influence of the Church. However, in 1946, Conservatives reassumed control of the State and launched a series of actions, including refurbishing the power of the Catholic establishment and the formation of paramilitary groups called 'pajaros,'[3] as part of what was called the 'Conservative Restoration' (1946–1957) (Safford and Palacios 2002). These actions provoked the mobilization and radicalization of Liberal bases, initiating a ten-year civil war known commonly as La Violencia (1948–1958), which left hundreds of thousands dead[4] and more than two million people displaced, especially at rural areas (Roldán 2016). In the midst of this political and social upheaval, the Priest José Joaquín Salcedo founded Radio Sutatenza in 1947, the long-distance educational radio station that would later become ACPO, one of the first massive education programs to reach isolated Colombian populations, including the indigenous people of Cauca.

ACPO and development

In addition to 'Social Catholicism,' another event that facilitated Radio Sutatenza's fast transformation into ACPO was the rise of what is known as 'the development doctrine' during the 1940s-1950s. U.S. President Harry Truman (1945–1953) officialy launched this doctrine when he called for actions against the expansion of communism in the 'Third World' in the post-WWII Cold War era. For the Truman administration, the application of modern scientific and technical knowledge in undeveloped areas would guarantee the

replication of First World capitalist lifestyles and the implantation of global peace and security. Their proposal for social change involved the promotion of industrialization and urbanization, modernization of agricultural production, and the adaptation of education and 'modern' cultural values (Escobar 1998). From this perspective, those cultures that did not contribute to these modernist ambitions, such as those of the indigenous people, represented a deferral of development and progress (Gusfield 1967; Wade 2016).

Truman's anti-communist and pro-developmental rhetoric was well suited for the Social Catholicism doctrine embedded in Radio Sutatenza's project. In both cases, the primary objective was the transformation of 'pre-modern,' 'passive' individuals into 'self-sufficient' subjects capable of contributing to the modernization of the nation. The alignment of these two doctrines becomes evident when analyzing the relationship between ACPO and the U.S. For instance, ACPO received support not only from the religious and international aid organizations mentioned in the introduction but also from powerful U.S. multinational corporations, such as General Electric, American Express, the Chase Manhattan International, Pepsico and Rockefeller Brothers (Ferreira and Straubhar 1988). U.S. developmental scholars, such as Everett M. Rogers, also became supporters of ACPO's work (Lopera López 2016). Rogers became famous for promoting mass communication as an instrument for fostering First World's values and attitudes required for modernizing the Third World (Melkote 2003).

In addition to ACPO, the United States also sponsored some other developmental initiatives in Colombia, including the first program of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in Latin America in 1949 (Rovner 2001) and various developmental projects carried under the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s (Rojas 2010). In exchange, Colombia became one of the most supportive Latin American countries to U.S. polemical diplomatic and military actions, such as U.S. intervention in the Korean War.

The attention that ACPO received from the pro-developmental international community was not only because of Colombia's supportive position towards the global political agenda of the U.S. During the 1940s-1950s, Colombia suffered from high levels of developmental inequality between urban and rural areas. While a few urban centers, such as Bogotá, Medellín, and Barranquilla, experimented a significant industrial growth after the 1920s, rural areas endured a lack of infrastructure, poor access to education and health services, high levels of partisan violence, and an absence of State institutions and the rule of law. As a consequence, millions of people living in these areas endured rampant malnutrition, high maternal and infant mortality, and elevated illiteracy rates. These illiteracy rates reached 70 and 80 percent in various departments, including ACPO's birthplace, Boyacá (Adams 1969; Ocampo and Tovar 2000). Due to the severity of the situation, the U.S. Department of State and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development demanded urgent actions to overcome the Colombian lack of essential coverage on health and educational (Roldán 2016). ACPO's project gained a lot of attention from U.S. institutions and its allies, in significant part because it answered their call for improving the conditions that might potentially have fostered a communist rebellion among Colombian rural populations (De Kadt 1967).

ACPO enjoyed of a rapid growth during the decades of 1950s and 1960s. In 1951, UNESCO became ACPO's technical advisor (Ferreira and Straubhar 1988). The political turmoil in Colombia during those years allowed ACPO to become the country's leading

program for promoting modernization among the peasant population over the following 20 years. In 1953, the populist General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla overthrew the Conservative government but decided to reinforce the State support to Catholic initiatives, not only for gaining political sympathies from the Catholic establishment, but also for practical purposes. Pinilla's administration, therefore, increased the State's support to ACPO to bring the promised modernization at low cost in rural areas affected by partisan violence. As a result, ACPO's program rapidly expanded into more than 80 percent of the Colombian territory, placing ACPO's 'radio schools' into the center of the Colombian rural educational policy until the 1970s (Murillo 2014).

In 1954, UNESCO aided ACPO with the design of its first pedagogical materials designed specially for rural adult population. These materials replaced ACPO's first booklets, provided by the Rojas Pinilla's Ministry of Education, created originally for urban children (Murillo 2014). In the following years, ACPO and UNESCO developed an impressive variety of pedagogical material, including radio station programs, booklets, newspapers, personalized correspondence, recordings, leadership institutes and book collections. This material sought to touch all aspects of peasant life experience. Some of the campaigns were: Elementary education (reading competitions and advice on how to applying mathematics); health (providing instructions related to nutrition and human sexuality, promoting the consumption of protein and the use of towels, handkerchiefs, and shoes, remarking on the importance of drinking boiled water); entertainment (providing basketballs and hoops, promoting playing chess, teaching about the construction of sport facilities and the production of theater plays); home improvement (providing instructions for painting houses, building rooms, building organic gardens, construction of latrines and the construction of compost); agricultural production (providing instructions for soil improvement, fighting agricultural pests, the construction of fish farms, the development of family companies, group work, the 'right' employment of time and money, the production of more and better protein food, the importance of animal vaccination and the importance of having a milking cow); family life (promoting the importance of lunchtime for family union); Catholicism (encouraging church attendance on Sundays, the production of religious theater plays, Bible reading groups); and local politics and community organization (teaching the structure of the Municipal Councils, promoting community welfare and the organization of local community organizations, rural schools, and maintenance of local roadways) (Cabrera Garcia 1976).

ACPO and UNESCO covered several areas with the intention of transforming what they considered as 'prejudicial traditions' and forging subjects capable of contributing to the progress of the nation. For instance, Cabrera García (1976), in an evaluation of ACPO work presented by UNESCO, explained that ACPO sought to transform aspects of peasants' lives that constrain 'progress,' including non-Catholic religious traditions. He criticized the influence of of animist conceptions of the natural world, which privilege superstition over human actions, and traditional rural relationships of power, which obscure the importance of self-action for personal and social progress, over peasant's culture. As shown in the next section, ACPO's views on non-Christian religious traditions affected especially indigenous people, since they motivated ACPO's staff to engage in repressive actions against indigenous cultures.

In 1958, ACPO's excellent reputation among important sectors of U.S. society was such that sympathizers founded the American Foundation for Popular Cultural Action,

an organization that collected funding for ACPO as well as other similar developmental projects through Latin America (Roldán 2017). The nexus between ACPO and U.S.-based organizations became so intense that ACPO's founder, José Joaquín Salcedo, made more than 30 trips to the United States from 1947 to mid-1970s (Schoultz 1973).

While various researchers were initially enthusiast for ACPO's educational strategies in the 1950s and 1960s (Amaya 1959; Havens 1965; Nitsch 1964; Torres and Corredor 1961), others became more skeptical of its concrete results (Musto 1971; Schemelkes de Sotelo 1973; White 1972).[5] These critical voices stated that the majority of studies calculated 'success' based on ACPO's statistics regarding the scope of the program – coverage, student enrollment, and pedagogical material printed and distributed –, but did not account for the real contributions in the lives of rural populations.

With the evolution of critical theoretical alternatives to traditional views on development during the 1970s (Cardoso 1972; Chenery and Eckstein 1970; Dussel 1973), scholars started to build even harsher critiques against ACPO. For instance, Bolivian media scholar Luis Ramiro Beltrán considered that ACPO's emphasis on personal transformation over the pursuit of political, social, and economic structural changes contributed to the deferral of positive social changed and the perpetuation of an unjust social order (Pulleiro 2012). The criticism and polemics around ACPO boiled to the point that the leftist guerilla M-19 threatened to kill Father José Joaquín Salcedo for what they considered his role in the perpetuation of the oppressive structural conditions of the nation (Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada 1998). In the 1980s, Salcedo moved permanently to the United States, where he died in 1994.

In addition to the increasing criticism from academics and sections of the M-19, ACPO endured various other problems that eventually forced it to sell its assets and precipitated its transformation into a small, locally oriented foundation in 1994. In the 1970s, Colombia expanded its public education system and strengthened already existing rural development programs such as the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA) and the Agricultural Institute (ICA), progressively cutting public funding and responsibilities for ACPO (Rojas Alvarez 2015; Rojas Martinez 2009). ACPO and Colombian Catholic authorities also started to have conflicts over the ACPO's campaign on 'responsible parenthood,' which sought to create consciousness around procreation. As a consequence, the German Catholics, one of the main ACPO donors, moved away as well (Lopera López 2016; Roldán 2014).

Overall, critical scholars and members of radical leftist organizations have deemed ACPO as a failed imperialist effort to control indigenous and other rural populations. However, the case of the Misak and Nasa people shows another picture. The history of the intervention of ACPO in indigenous affairs resulted in a more nuanced scenario. Even though ACPO's methods restricted the possibilities of more radical mobilizations and belittled members of rural populations for their lifestyles, this program empowered several members of the Misak and the Nasa communities who became significant figures in the foundation of the first indigenous organization in Colombia.

ACPO and the indigenous communities of Cauca

Between 1998 and 2000, the Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (ACINC), UNESCO, and members of the Catholic Consolata Missionaries carried out the

Catedra Nasa, a grassroots' research project that aimed to document the history of the foundation of the first indigenous organization in Colombia, the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), in 1971. According to testimonies from Nasa elders, ACPO's Radio Sutatenza was a fundamental tool for forging the indigenous leadership:

> Several leaders took advantage of the radio school Sutatenza. They received training at Sutatenza, Boyacá, as leaders and teachers, then returned to educate other people. They were a small group led by Guillermo Tenorio, Marcos Yule, Alcides Mendez, Celio Escue, Cristobal Secue, Gabriel Velazco, among other leaders.
>
> In late 1975 Father Álvaro [Ulcue]…began to form a group of community leaders whom he called 'Lets March Together.' They studied legislation, indigenous rights, and the CRIC's indigenous organization. Also, they studied the Bible and documents about liberation theology, such as Puebla papers. Several leaders trained by Sutatenza participated in this initiative. (UNESCO-ACIN 2001, 5)

Moreover:

> Advances in the 1970s:
>
> One of the most significant advances was the awakening of people's consciousness about their exploitation and the fact that they have rights. There were strategies of renewal, such as bilingual schools, clandestine meetings, Radio Sutatenza, and the workshops in Buga. (UNESCO-ACIN 2001, 7)

The correspondence found at ACPO archives also ratifies the importance of ACPO work to the formation and consolidation of the indigenous movement in the 1970s. For instance, various letters show a slow but firm consolidation of ACPO since its arrival to Cauca in 1963. That year, in Guambia,[6] the Lauritas nuns and José Antonio Almendra, a member of the Misak community, founded the first two radio schools (RS) in this indigenous territory. These initial experiences endured the substantial prejudice about indigenous cultures from ACPO staff and mistrust from the Misak population. For instance, the letter's exchange between ACPO's leader in Guambia, Ángel Piedrahita, and ACPO's staff member, José Antonio Rodríguez, exemplifies how the first ACPO leaders regarded the Misak as not much more than disrespectful and negligent. On a letter signed on 13 September 1964, Piedrahita explained to Rodríguez that 'all are Indians who do nothing but drinking aguardiente, and one goes to their home, and they start talking in their language, leaving you with your mouth open' (ACPO 1964). As a response, Rodríguez wrote:

> We ask God to help you in your job as leader, despite the pressing difficulties of working with indigenous who use a different language, which (illegible) are extremely suspicious and desperately apathetic following directions for their improvement.' (ACPO 1964)

Some letters also show ACPO's bias against indigenous spiritual practices. For instance, on December 8th, 1964 ACPO leader Ricardo Ledesma reported a Catholic ceremony that sought to replace syncretic Misak religious traditions:

> a ceremony in the *vereda*[political division of municipalities' rural areas]. La Campana was organized yesterday, only with the purpose of blessing an image of our holy virgin in order to prevent that the indians continue worshipping a spot on a rock that they say is the Blessed Virgin. (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1964)

The low literacy levels among Nasa and Misaks also made ACPO's work in this region very challenging. For instance, a letter of ACPO's leader Benicio Ledesma (March 30, 1964) explained that illiteracy, in addition to poverty and cultural differences, had made working with the Nasa people from Toribio very difficult (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1964). Three years later, Ledesma reported a similar situation among the Misaks, stating 'There is dismay for the situation of the people (Misak) since they do not know Spanish' (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1964).

Similar to many other rural Colombian areas (Roldán 2017), technical and infrastructure difficulties also affected ACPO intervention into these indigenous cultures. Many letters indicated hardships in acquiring the proper radio equipment needed to tune in to Radio Sutatenza:

> The majority of the peasants are from the tribe Páez [of the Nasa]. Although I advise them to acquire the radio, they are not convinced. Since the parish is not selling radios, it is difficult for them to afford the radio set and the transportation to buy it in Popayán. (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1964)

Also, there were reports of the difficulties the Misaks and the Nasas faced in the acquisition of ACPO pedagogical material – pamphlets, books, and the weekly newspaper *El Campesino* (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1964, 1966).

Some of the letters show that, despite all these initial human and technical difficulties, there were successful outcomes from the ACPO's work in these indigenous communities in later years. For instance, I found five letters dated more than 12 years after the initial arrival of ACPO to Cauca between Taita Javier Calambas,[7] his brother Felipe, and ACPO leader María Del Pilar Aristizábal. Javier Calambas is recognized as one of the leading figures of the indigenous territorial recoveries, the construction of the first indigenous organizations, and the overall indigenous movement in the last fifty years in Colombia (Espinosa Arango 2007; Tunubala and Pechene 2010).

In the first of these letters, dated February 1976, Taita Javier claimed to be an active listener and a student of the five ACPO essential education books. He also thanked ACPO's visiting staff, explained that some of his relatives were also RS participants, and assured that ACPO's RS had contributed to building a better future for his community. Aristizábal, in turn, replied on 30 March 1976, thanking Taita Javier for his letter and his active participation in the program, and asking him about the whereabouts of his brother Felipe.

These two letters show the incredible efficiency with which the ACPO team operated. They were able to answer thousands of letters from peasants, such as Javier and Felipe Calambas, in a relatively short time – there was only one month between Javier Calambas' letter and ACPO's answer. But more than merely responding, the ACPO staff in charge of answering the letters aimed to establish an intimate and personalized relationship with its students, to encourage them to continue working towards personal and social change. In one of her responses, Aristizábal explained to Taita Javier:

> (..) we should not think that we can only make progress when a leader is next to us. No, we should believe we can be ready for any sign of progress and use it in the best way. (ACPO 1976)

As Taita Javier verified in a personal interview, ACPOs' encouragement and education were fundamental for the formation and consolidation of the modern indigenous organization in this region. ACPO was one of the few institutions that provided educational opportunities for the Misaks, not only by learning basic skills but also by exposing them to modernist theories, behaviors, and technologies. All these actions had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, various indigenous individuals became empowered by having access to these new educative and social experiences. For instance, Calambas' brother and many other members of the Misak and Nasa communities had the opportunity, for the first time in their lives, to travel away from their territory and meet people from around the nation, a factor that became fundamental during the formation in 1890s of the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC), the first national indigenous organization of Colombia (personal communication 2015). On the other hand, this promotion of modernization involved the denigration of indigenous cultures and the introduction of problematic technologies, as shown in the next subsection.

Participants in the ACPO radio schools: views on positive and negative interventions

It is still possible to find former ACPO participants within the indigenous communities of Cauca, even though the organization closed its operations more than 30 years ago. Regardless of the issues related to accuracy and precision involved in oral history (Yow 2015), the testimonies of these former participants verify the legacy of ACPO in the indigenous movement of Cauca.

The testimony of Mariano Cuchillo, a member of the Misak community who participated for more than ten years in ACPO educational programs, confirms some of the evidence found in ACPO's correspondence mentioned above. According to him, the Lauritas nuns founded the first RSs in Guambia, and some Misak *comuneros* organized the second in early 1964. These first RSs, according to his testimony, focused on agriculture and home improvement.

In their agricultural program, ACPO trained the participants in modern technical strategies unknown by the Misaks, such as the use of horizontal ditches for cultivation. According to ACPO's technicians, these ditches were better than the vertical ones made by the Misak, preventing erosion and land desertification, especially in corps located on hills and slopes. ACPO complemented the promotion of horizontal ditches with an intensive focus on irrigation techniques and the use of chemical fertilizers. These techniques, according to Taita Mariano, initially increased agricultural production and allowed the use of the land in times of drought. However, these positive outcomes were progressively overshadowed by longer-term negative consequences, which included the dependency on external products for agricultural production, the disappearance of autochthonous seeds, the appearance of unknown respiratory sickness, and the desertification of farming areas within the Misak territory. In addition to the pros and cons of the adoption of these modern agricultural techniques, Taita Mariano noted that one of the leading contributions of ACPO agriculture program was the promotion of measuring instruments, geometry, and math. According to him, the initial positive results aroused people's curiosity for learning, which in turn motivated more people to organize and participate in the ACPO's RSs (personal communication 2014).

ACPO also sought to change attitudes and patterns of life through its home improvement campaign. This campaign promoted, among other things, using bricks to build houses instead of materials such as adobe and bahareque (construction made with sugar canes tied together and walls covered with a mixture of soil, water, and twigs), employing systems of tubes and slopes to bring running water to people's homes, making block made stoves, and replacing animal skins with cotton made beds. According to Taita Mariano, ACPO promoters never bothered to know the reasons behind the use of such materials, their advantages, or the cultural significance of these practices. As result, rather than beneficial, many of these changes represented a severe disruption for the Misak culture, since (personal communication 2014).

The Misaks started to see brick houses as manifestations of prosperity. According to Taita Eduardo Almendra, who participated in the ACPO's RSs and ACPO's training school at Sutatenza, Boyacá, during the 1980s, many people began to replace houses built in adobe, straw, and clay, for homes made of brick and cement promoted by ACPO and other developmental programs. The desire for brick houses increased in the following years at the point that many acquired debts and even started to cultivate illicit crops, especially opium poppy, to afford the building of their homes on those expensive materials. This problem worsened to the point that, during the 1990s, the Misak territory became one of the areas with the highest poppy production in Colombia (Perafán 2015).

The use of 'modern' construction materials also produced some severe health problems. Brick houses are much colder than homes made of adobe and bahareque. This situation was very problematic, since Guambia is located 3000 meters above sea level and its weather is very humid and rainy. Traditional Misak doctors, such as Taita Vicente Tróchez, former Governor of Guambia (the highest position within the Misak self-internal government) and coordinator of Guambia's hospital of autochthonous medicine, Sierra Morena (2014–2015), assured that the arrival of the brick houses coincided with an increase in cases of rheumatic and respiratory diseases that were previously rare among the Misak people (personal communication 2015). Ironically, researchers have found that adobe and bahareque can be superior to brick in several aspects, including affordability, durability, flexibility, and waterproofing (Duque Escobar, Robledo Castillo, and Muñoz Robledo 1999).

The Misak also perceived the change from cooking on traditional campfire to brick made stoves as a dramatic cultural and spiritual change. According to Taita Mariano Cuchillo, ACPO's personnel expressed their concern and their pity when they saw the Misak women bent over to cook. This cooking style required squatting next to fire at unventilated spaces for long periods of time. But, in addition to health concerns, ACPO representatives saw it as a signal of poverty and shame, disregarding that the *nachack* (campfire) represents the family's warmth and unity in the Misak worldview. According to the Misak tradition, families gather around the fire during meal hours to share daily experiences and to listen to the elders.

> It is in the campfire where thought gets structured from the knowledge imparted by elders. Also, according to tradition, the newborn's navel is buried on the right side of the fire, as a symbol of union with the baby's territory and family[. . .]. Traditionally, there are three learning places: the field, where the Misak learn how to work the land; the kitchen (NakChack), while the elders prepare food; and the moments when the elders teach us how to weave. (Velasco 2012)

Despite the symbolism and significance of wood fire as an object of family unity, studies have confirmed that indoor wood stoves, especially in confined spaces, can potentially cause severe lung problems such as chronic bronchitis, bronchial obstruction diseases, and acute respiratory infections (Pérez Padilla, Regalado Pineda, and Moran Mendoza 1999).

Regarding ACPOs' literacy project, the testimony of Taita Mariano Cuchillo coincided with those collected in the Catedra Nasa, and the testimonies and letters of Taita Javier Calambas, both previously cited. He assures that the ACPO's literacy program was key for the foundation and strengthening of the indigenous movement in Cauca. In the 1960s, the vast majority of the Misak youth did not have access to schooling for many different reasons, including the scarcity of schools, discrimination, and segregation at the schools located in the municipality of Silvia (the closest to the Misak's territory), the lack of economic resources, the lack of dominance of the Spanish language, and the dominant semi-slavery production system called *terraje*,[8] among other difficulties.

For years, Radio Sutatenza represented the only accessible way for the Misak to access education since it was free – only at the cost of the required reception equipment and its batteries – and its classes were broadcast at different times of the day. Similar to the case of the Nasa community located in Toribio mentioned before, ACPO's RSs empowered various Misaks who would later become critical political agents for the Colombian indigenous movement. We can grasp this importance in a letter from one of the Lauritas nuns dated on 4 May 1977, who explained that ACPO formed many leaders from the Misak community:

> My struggle for the Integral Adult Education has focused primarily on the creation of the radio schools in the municipality of Silvia's rural areas. The peasants from Guambia are the most enthusiastic participants. Among the former participants, there is the governor, Anselmo Muelas, (THE MOST IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THIS COMMUNITY), two university's students, and over 15 educators from the Center of Education for Adults. (ACPO (Acción Cultural Popular) 1976)

Despite this empowerment, however, there was also a negative aspect around ACPO literacy program. For ACPO, illiteracy was synonymous of ignorance and sin. This point of view fostered problems on people's self-esteem that continue affecting many members of the Misak community. For instance, I was part of a working group composed by three students from the Misak University who took on the task of interviewing some community elders to learn about and document through drawings the most critical events in the history of the Misak community (Cortés 2017). Many of those interviewed had participated in the reconstruction of the Misak territory back in the 1960s, organized indigenous mobilizations, and participated in the foundation of their first regional and national organizations, among others accomplishes.

Despite their extensive knowledge and experience, many of the elders interviewed – especially those who had not been in positions of power within or outside the community, such as the case of María Elena Tombé Almendra and Sebastiana Guazá – questioned why we wanted to interview them. They believed that they 'did not know anything' because they had never received formal education (*si nunca he ido a la escuela*) (personal communication 2014). However, after their initial doubt, the elders, most of them who speak little Spanish and cannot read or write, shared with us many

stories about their lives. They explained the hardships of growing up in the Misak's male-dominated society, the discrimination they have endured for being Misak, some of their knowledge on medicinal plants, the meaning of some symbols of the Misak philosophy, the relationship between agriculture and the moon's stations, and how the Misak territorial recovery happened, among others things. Unfortunately, ACPO's developmental orientation missed the value of this indigenous knowledge, primarily due to the lack of recognition of other cognitive forms of memory and knowledge beyond reading and writing.

Empowerment and ACPO

During the interviews, various Misaks and Nasas participants in ACPO leadership training in Sutatenza explained that this educational experience was one of the most enriching in their lives. Many of them are now professionals in areas such as construction, agriculture, adult literacy, and school teaching. Some have also participated in different activities that have benefited countless of people within the Misak community. Even though ACPO did not directly intervene in their later work, ACPO's educational program – its educational campaigns, radio schools, and leadership training classes at the institute at Sutatenza – represented a significant start for those who have contributed to the lives of other members of their community.

Among the community organizers, religious leaders, and many teachers who were inspired by ACPO to start their community work, the case of María Rosa Tombé Tunubala, a Misak elementary school teacher recognized nationally for her pedagogical contributions in the teaching of Misak language, is notable. When she was in 7th grade, Mama Rosa Tombé participated in her first leadership training experience at ACPO's women institute in Sutatenza, Boyacá, in 1983. This training focused on community work, adult-oriented teaching techniques, and agriculture. According to her testimony, this experience opened her mind because it was the first time she left her hometown, learned about different agricultural techniques, met several people from all around the country, and realized the importance of discipline and order for success She described how her experiences motivated her to organize a weekend school, where 15 Misak women combined literacy training with the practicing of organic agriculture in their house's gardens. Her primary objective was to teach these women how to read and write their names. In a historical and social context significantly marked by exclusion and patriarchy, having that knowledge represented a significant change in these women's lives. This experience motivated her to sign up for a boarding school at Cauca's capital, Popayán, to become a teacher (personal communication 2015).

In 1991, Mama Rosa returned to Guambia and started working at the San Pedro del Corazón School, one of the 19th schools organized by the Misaks within their territory. After 20 years of work, she received one of the most prestigious national awards for teachers in Colombia, The National Compartir Award for Maestra Ilustre in 2011. Mama Rosa was selected, from a group of more than 500 candidates, for her pedagogy on bilingual education with Misak children. She based her methodology on Misak linguists and intellectuals who argue that education must focus on connecting students with the territory, must use pedagogical material related to the context, and must rely on the oral tradition (Nomos 2011).

There is no doubt that pedagogic experiences, such as those led by Mama Rosa Tombé, have contributed to improving the life of Misak youth. Misak elders continually stated that the majority of external school teachers did not allow them to speak in their first language. Consequently, many Misak students felt ashamed of their culture and many parents opted to teach only Spanish to their kids. As a consequence, the Misak language was dying. Mama Rosa Tombé encountered this situation in 2007:

> Lucía, the smallest girl in the living room, stood out among his peers for being noble and active. She was (..) the only one [who] expressed [herself] in her language (Namui Wam) all the time. She shared classes with Luis Álvaro and Dieguito, who were very 'funny.' They mocked Lucía for speaking in her native language. They were also ready 'to correct' her when she spoke in Namui wam:
>
> Lucía: *Na Kucha pyro pantriku porwa* (I also want to write on the board).
> Álvaro and Diego: Ha ha ha! Don't say '*pirpantrik*'; you should say 'yo quiero escribir en el tablero.'
> Mama Rosa Tombé: It's correct expression because Lucía is expressing in Namui wam.
> Lucía: Kuahe (good morning).
> Mama Rosa Tombé: *Kepam* (follow).
> Álvaro and Diego: Ha ha ha! Do not say '*kuahe*,' you should say, 'Buenos dias.'
> Mama Rosa Tombé: it is correct to say '*kauhe*.'
> Lucía: *Unkua* (bye).
> Álvaro and Diego: chaoo.
> The other children: Nos vemos mañana. (cited in Nomos 2011)

Mama Rosa Tombé received the 2011 Compartir award after consultants from that foundation verified her effectiveness of her teaching methodology.

In addition to Mama Rosa Tombé and the others previously discussed, many other Misaks benefited directly from the work of ACPO. Javier Morales Almendra, for instance, also spoke gracefully about his experience at ACPO. He participated in two training programs at ACPO's institute in Sutatenza, Boyacá, when he was finishing 4th grade of elementary school at the age of 27. Upon his return to Guambia, he became ACPO's RS leader for 35 illiterate adult students in his home area, La Campana, while he was finishing high school in a fast-track program in the municipality of Silvia. Months later, ACPO transferred Taita Javier Morales to different towns in the departments of Antioquía and Risaralda. He worked there as ACPO visitor teacher for more than one year and returned to Guambia to continue working within his community. Once back, he founded the Association of Music from the Andes, ASMUANDES, which continues providing musical and dancing training at the Misak area of La Campana (J. Morales, personal communication, 2015).

Conclusions

Through the analysis of letters, documents, and several interviews, this article shows the complexities of the intervention of the Catholic developmental pre-SVC program ACPO into the Misak and Nasa communities in Cauca. ACPO was one of many Catholic social programs that resulted from the encyclical Rerum Novarum that sought to motivate disenfranchised sectors of the population to become active towards their progress.

These type of initiatives attempted to neutralize the advances of secular political ideologies, especially communism, that threatened the status quo and the Church's privileged position. However, I suggest that ACPO was one of the few initiatives that exposed indigenous people to modernist educational and social connections beyond their community for the first time. Due to the involvement of local leadership in ACPO modernizing campaign, some positive outcomes resulted for these indigenous communities – i.e., the training of community members who later became fundamental for the development for the modern indigenous movement in Cauca.

The case of ACPO challenges traditional views in literature on Latin American social movements that tend to only focus on the contributions of liberation theologists and other progressive minority sectors of the Church in the creation of the modern indigenous movement in Latin America. Such traditional academic views disregard the role of non-SVC Catholic branches in the formation of these movements. As shown here, despite the lack of a radical revolutionary language of traditional leftist organizations that sought profound structural political-economic transformation in the 1960s, ACPO offered real educational alternatives and social connections that had a significant impact on the lives of several indigenous people. In turn, such programs led to increased political participation and the improvement of these communities in the years following ACPO interventions. In the context of extreme exclusion endured by indigenous people during the 1960s, ACPO, in fact, represented a very revolutionary opportunity for those communities.

In sum, ACPO's intervention brought positive as well as negative consequences into the indigenous world. On the one hand, ACPO was one of the first programs that targeted the historically disenfranchised Colombian rural populations, including the indigenous people. As the testimony of the Misak people Javier Calambas, the collected information by the Catedra Nasa, and the data from the letters found at the ACPO's archives all show, ACPO was one of the first training schools in which the indigenous leaders acquired the necessary educational tools, especially in literacy and mathematics, that were fundamental for the formation and consolidation of the indigenous movement after the 1970s. In addition to these pioneer organizers, ACPO also contributed to the formation of many other organic leaders, such as Mama Rosa Tombé, who ended up working in programs such as bilingual education and other programs that have invigorated the Misak culture.

Also, ACPO offered access to modern ideas and technologies for the first time to the Misak population. This included knowledge on house improvement, agricultural production, and recreation. Even though many of these modernist ideas were disruptive to their cultural practices, as was the case of the modernist agricultural techniques, it is important to note the significance of the introduction of this knowledge regarding new opportunities and choices for the Misak and Nasa.

On the other hand, despite these significant contributions, ACPO's work had substantial negative repercussions. Due to its horizontal structure, modernist approach, and missionary spirit, ACPO's staff was not capable of understanding the richness of the Misak and Nasa cultures. Their language, spiritual practices, and modes of life were seen not as significant cultural assets, but rather as impediments to progress and modernization. Even though the letters show how ACPO leaders developed a progressive sympathy towards indigenous people over the years, they demonstrate how they

maintained a perception of indigenous traditions as something needed to change until its closure. Due to this approach, ACPO's staff did not realize that many of the indigenous cultural and technological traditions that they wanted to replace, such as the construction of houses with adobe and bahareque, were more convenient and affordable than the practices that ACPO was promoting.

The problems brought by developmental programs to indigenous communities were especially dramatic in the case of agriculture. Although ACPO's focus changed in later years to promote organic agriculture techniques, many elders stated that the damage of the agrochemicals was already done by the 1980s: the land in areas abused with agrochemicals, such as Puente Real, Guambia, became highly infertile; harvests had significantly diminished; many farmers had started developing skin and lung problems; and many organic and autochthonous seeds had disappeared.

Perhaps, one of the most problematic consequences of ACPO's modernist approach was the disempowerment of those who were label as ignorant for not knowing how to read and write in Spanish. Even though those skills are critical, it is also important to remark that a lack of reading and writing does not necessarily signify inferior cognitive capacities. In the case of indigenous communities, the elders who do not dominate those skills have developed other cognitive abilities that allow them to become essential figures for their communities. Despite its limitations, the Catholic educational program ACPO represented one of the few opportunities that indigenous people had to acquire the necessary abilities to organize and consolidate the indigenous movement of Cauca, a pioneer political movement in Colombia.

Notes

1. According to Gramsci, organic intellectuals are those who belong to oppressed social groups. Their knowledge, in great part, comes from the hardships involved with their social condition (Ramos 1982).
2. In turn, some scholars criticize the 'essentialism' of the inculturationists approach (Durston 2004).
3. Common folks and the media called conservative paramilitary groups '*pajaros*' (birds) in the 1940s for their ability of disappearing after attacking political and ideological opponents of conservatism such as liberal leaders, protestants, and communists (Quintero Restrepo 2009).
4. There is not official agreement on the number of casualties in this conflict. For instance, the estimates range from 140,000 (Pécaut 2001) to 200,000-300,000 (Roldán 2017).
5. There was some criticism against ACPO work even within the Catholic establishment. For instance, Father Camilo Torres, one of the researchers that initially praised ACPO in 1961, became one of its main critics in 1962. Among his criticisms, Torres condemned ACPO's lack of commitment in the promotion of necessary structural social and economic changes and ACPO's role in defusing slanders that linked popular leaders with communist organizations (González 2012).
6. Guambia is the historical and largest Misak territory. It is located at the municipality of Silvia, at the Department of Cauca. Legally, this territory is called a *resguardo*, which is the denomination given to territories where indigenous self-governments, or cabildos, can exercise some administrative autonomy.
7. 'Taitas' is the nickname for males who serve in the internal Misak government. The Misaks also have other denominations: 'Mama' is used to refer to female elders with and without participation experience in their administration, 'Tatas' are those men who are currently

serving in the Misak administration, and 'Kasuco' and 'Kasuca' are the young males and females without this experience.

8. Landowners used the *terraje* system to have access to free labor. Since those landowners dispossessed the Misak from their land, the Misak were forced to lease them a small plot in exchange of days of free labor in their haciendas. The labor conditions at those haciendas were close to slavery – long shifts, physical punishment, and no payment. Also, landowners forced the Misaks to give a percentage of whatever they produced in their leased land (Archilla and Garcia 2015).

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