

Science in the Jungle: The Missionary Mapping and National Imagining of Western Amazonia.

My dissertation project is concerned with the production, circulation, and reception of missionary cartography that permitted the systematization of geographical and ethnographical knowledge about the Amazonian region now shared by Ecuador and Peru and historically known as Maynas. Since missionaries took a vital role in the process of knowledge making on this Western Amazonian region, I will focus on the period in which the Maynas missions were under the jurisdiction of the Jesuits of Quito (1638-1767) and the Franciscans of Ocopa (1802-1824). This region became an important area of inquiry and evangelization for members of these religious orders. Yet, the process of knowledge making on Western Amazonia depended precisely upon the relationships missionaries established with local indigenous societies, which were the target of their evangelizing enterprise.

In relation to the crafting of missionary knowledge about Maynas, I am interested in analyzing the process by which concepts such as territoriality, ethnicity, and culture have been formulated, recreated, and discussed with regard to Western Amazonian peoples and space. In colonial times, missionaries were in charge of the codification of Amazonian geographical and human landscape. Of fundamental interest for the missionary work and their evangelizing goals was the mapping of their missions as well as the location of “nations”—as indigenous societies were called by the friars—or “ethnic groups”—as anthropologists and other social scientists have labeled them in recent times. Amazonian territories and societies thus became situated phenomena, that is, a conglomerate of regions and social groups whose cultural, political, and spatial boundaries were presumed to be clearly demarcated.

More recently, social scientists have been debating about the cultural and spatial patterns that distinguish Amazonian ethnicities. Following the missionary trend, it was common among anthropologists and archaeologists to use the distribution of languages and material culture as clear-cut spatial markers of ethnicity in Amazonia (Lathrap 1970). Current studies, however, emphasize the permeability of ethnic identities as a characteristic of the indigenous societies of pre- and post-conquest

Amazonia (Jorna, Malaver, and Oostra 1991; Roosevelt 1994; Hill and Santos-Granero 2002).

Nonetheless, scholars still rely on those spatial or “territorialized” categories that permit the understanding of ethnic conglomerates. Neil Whitehead, for instance, has mentioned that, although the conventional tool of linking one language to one culture is inadequate for understanding the complexity of indigenous societies, anthropology is still “wedded to the idea of language as a cultural substrate that produces social continuity through time” (2002, 67). Thomas Myers (1997), on the archeological side, has disputed the idea that linguistic patterns match cultural boundaries in the Ucayali basin. Yet, he does so by introducing another category—clothing style and ornamentation—as an additional ethnic marker that, in this case, does not coincide with linguistic boundaries. Fernando Santos-Granero has argued, with regard to the Arawakan societies of Amazonia, that underneath differences in form and structure, there are “common elements” in form of a “loosely organized network” that suggest “the existence of a common Arawakan matrix” (2002, 42).

These scholars certainly emphasize that language, material culture, and other elements that characterize a “cultural matrix” should be understood not as stagnant but as historical and ever-changing products; not as clearly defined sets but as loose networks. Nevertheless, these recent explorations on culture and ethnicity still rely on patterns of classification and ascription, though in more uneven terms, signaling territorialized human groups. The situatedness of culture is still there. Whereas language, pottery, and clothing, among others factors, have been analyzed in relation to the formulation of ethnic categories in Amazonia, one of the most evident spatial elements—the mapped location—has not been fully revised. Historians and geographers have emphasized the contingency and complexity associated with processes of mapping and geographical construction (Winichakul 1994, Edney 1997, Burnett 2000, Harley 2001, Craib 2004). Yet, these studies have fundamentally focused on the process of geographical exploration and surveying as well as on the making of geographical and topographical maps. My research seeks to include the mapping of indigenous peoples—the mapping of “cultures”—into this puzzle. In general, mapping has been defined as “a graphic register of correspondence between two

spaces” (Cosgrove 1999, 1) or as “an authoritative tool for the production and exploration of relatedness” (Gugerli 2004, 210). My objective now is to historicize that relatedness, in this case, between the indigenous peoples of Amazonia on the one hand, and the spaces mapped by local Jesuit and Franciscan friars on the other.

Missionary mapping, as part of the friars’ scientific activities, were first situated and contextualized within their own realm (Harris 2009, 214). Later, this knowledge would move beyond the religious sphere, adopting on its way out new meanings and applications. My aim is thus to study “science in action” (Latour 1987) and the “significance for science” of “the places where knowledge is generated” (Livingstone 2003, 3). As a result, my project seeks to: (1) establish the importance of the location or context for the production of scientific knowledge and (2) trace the transference of scientific knowledge of Western Amazonia from tropical/missionary areas to urban/secular spaces. In this respect, it is important to mention that the missions established in Maynas by Jesuits and Franciscans were part of a network of knowledge and communication. Those villages were connected to centers of political and cultural authority such as Quito and Lima, where Jesuits and Franciscans, respectively, taught at universities and missionary colleges, and collaborated with scientific journals (Arbesmann 1945, Heras 2001, Keeding 2005, Vásquez 2005). My project will then assess how these religious orders helped reconfigure and circulate the knowledge on Western Amazonia, which missionaries had previously constructed thanks to their involvement with scientific and academic institutions in these two cities. My hypothesis is that through their mapping and scientific activities, Jesuits and Franciscans not only sought to improve their evangelical enterprises but, most important, provided the analytical tools with which local secular societies understood Western Amazonia and included it into their cognitive world.

Missionary knowledge making, however, was a two-fold process. On the one hand, Jesuits and Franciscans codified the human and geographical landscape of Maynas through the production of maps, travel accounts, and natural histories. As a result, Maynas became a distinctive place that could be located on a map, and whose peoples acquired particular ethnic traits. On the other hand, Maynas became

a national place. By the late eighteenth century, the monopoly of missionary knowledge making of Western Amazonia experienced a transition. After the Jesuits, including those located in the Province of Quito, were expelled from the Spanish Empire in 1767, the region of Maynas was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Franciscans of Ocopa, in present-day central Peru. As a result, Maynas came to be imagined, first, as part of the Audiencia of Quito and, soon after, as part of the Viceroyalty of Peru. This transition paved the way for the creation of two different but parallel versions of Amazonia as a national space, later generating a conflict between Peru and Ecuador. My project seeks to study how Western Amazonian peoples and space were systematized and classified through missionary reports and maps, and how this region and its peoples came to be considered either Ecuadorian or Peruvian.

Missionary cartography in Western Amazonia has already received scholarly attention. Yet, this scholarship is somewhat problematic. First, scholars' working frameworks have for the most part tended to be narrow—concentrating on Jesuits or Franciscans, Peruvian or Ecuadorian territories, colonial or postcolonial periods—which does not permit them to fully grasp the historical significance of missionary mapping. Most important, these scholars have not exhaustively studied the Indians' role in the cartographic process that resulted in the crafting of the geographical and ethnographic knowledge on Maynas as well as the intellectual structure and mechanical instruments that permitted missionaries to map this region. André Ferrand de Almeida (2003a, 2003b), for instance, has analyzed the cartographic production of father Samuel Fritz, a Jesuit mapmaker of the Maynas missions, providing new clues on his early manuscript maps and his famous 1707 map of the Amazon. Rudolph Arbesmann (1945), Mariano Cuesta (1992, 1997) and Julián Heras (1992) have studied the Franciscan contribution to the geographical knowledge of South America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although these scholars have correctly traced the development of Franciscan cartographic production in Amazonia, their works tend to focus on the cartography of the Ucayali basin in central Peru, underestimating their mapping activities in the Marañón and Amazon Rivers when Maynas came to be under Franciscan jurisdiction. They also do not trace connections between missionary mapping and the postcolonial process of nation

making. Neil Safier (2008) also studies missionary cartography and accounts, in particular those of the Jesuits Samuel Fritz and Juan Magnin. Yet, his research is concentrated on the series of actions by which Charles-Marie de La Condamine, head of the French Geodetic Commission to South America, appropriated and profited from the previous scientific knowledge of the Maynas missionaries. Safier's work, nonetheless, represents a useful approach to understanding the process by which scientific truth is established through appropriation and negotiation, a process that I seek to further demonstrate, historicize, and theorize in this project.

Missionary cartography of Maynas has also been analyzed by scholars such as Carlos Larrea (1963), Octavio Latorre (1988), and Nelson Gómez (1999). These valuable works, however, are not sufficiently engaged with recent cartographic theoretical concerns, occasionally undermined by the use of nationalistic language, and mostly focused on the eighteenth century. In a more theoretical vein, Sarah Radcliffe's study on state formation and ideas of territoriality in postcolonial Ecuador correctly exposes the idea that "the project of Latin American nation building has been a profoundly *spatial* project" and that, in this project, state territoriality is "not a given but rather something to be worked for," whose objective is to produce "the effect of a sovereign state" (2001, 124-126). But her work solely concentrates on the role of state agents in the process of territorial formation of postcolonial Ecuador, thus it downplays the function of missionary cartographers in the course of imagining the national space. For Peru, Heidi Scott's study of spatial representations in early colonial Peru argues that geographical "representational practices" were contested, negotiated, and "shaped by their local contexts," in which both colonizers and colonized participated (2009, 5 and 161). Scott is one of a few scholars who emphasize the indigenous participation in the mapping process. Yet, she argues that cartography "appears to have been of limited relevance for a majority of Spaniards and Spanish Americans" and that "Peru's landscapes were portrayed and contested through the production of written texts rather than of maps" (9). While this might have been true for the period and region she analyzes, my goal is to demonstrate that, between the late seventeenth and the early nineteenth century, missionary maps—which cannot be

disassociated from their accounts—provided the foundational picture through which Quiteños and Limeños imagined, experienced, and contested their territories in Western Amazonia.

Unlike previous scholarship, my research pursues not a simple national comparison; instead, it is by definition transnational. My purpose is not to study the “Ecuadorian” or the “Peruvian” Amazonia but to analyze how a mapped space or analytical fragment of Amazonia became either Ecuadorian or Peruvian. I seek to move beyond protonational perspectives that assume the idea of national territory and peoples as quasi-preternatural or organic entities, having had a life of their own since times immemorial. In contrast, the theoretical framework of my research project engages with scholarly trends that underline the contingent nature of nation and space as well as the social and cultural imperatives that shape these notions (Anderson 2006, de Certeau 1994, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Harvey 1989, Soja 1989). I argue that the crafting of national spaces in Western Amazonia was not a consequence of deliberated protonational policies and desires, but rather the contingent result of the circulation of missionary knowledge about Maynas in urban centers such as Quito and Lima.

In this respect, my project will first seek to study the dissemination of the results of missionary cartographic productions about Maynas. During preliminary research I conducted between June and September of 2010 (thanks to a Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council) and between July and August of 2011 (thanks to the History Department at the University of Florida), I came upon documents that will help me examine the network of knowledge established by Jesuits and Franciscans that connected Western Amazonia to Quito and Lima. For instance, thanks to inventories of Jesuit holdings executed after their expulsion from the Spanish Empire—which I was able to examine in the Aurelio Espinosa Pólit Library in Quito and in the archive of the Central Bank of Ecuador—I will be able to trace the circulation and consumption of Jesuit maps and natural histories in their academic institutions such as the University of San Gregorio and their *Colegio Máximo*, both in Quito. Franciscans, on the other hand, had their travel accounts published in *Mercurio Peruano*, the most influential scientific journal in late-eighteenth-century Lima. From these and other

similar kinds of records, I will be able to study the process by which notions about territory, ethnicity, and nationhood were proposed, discussed, and ultimately established in relation to Western Amazonia.

Furthermore, my research seeks to contribute to the growing field of the history of science in the Spanish Empire by focusing on the body of instruments and theories that guided the Jesuit and Franciscan cartography of Western Amazonia. As David Buisseret has pointed out, in relation to the Jesuit cartographers of Spanish America, “we know curiously little about their intellectual formation” (1997, 114). In this respect, my project seeks to trace the scientific means that permitted missionaries to map Maynas, that is, to study the methods and theories about the geographic and ethnographic knowledge that missionaries brought to Amazonia. This information can be found in some of the missionary reports and travel accounts held in the Jesuit archive of Quito at the Aurelio Espinosa Pólit Library, the Jijón y Caamaño Collection at the archive of the Central Bank of Ecuador, the Vargas Ugarte Collection at the library of the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University in Lima, the Jaén y Maynas Collection at the archive of the Archbishopric of Lima, and the archive of the Convent of San Francisco in Lima. Additionally, books on astronomy, cosmography, geography, and natural history, held in the old Jesuit and Franciscan libraries, have been preserved both in Quito and in Ocopa. I read some of these books in the library of the Franciscan Convent of Descalzos in Lima last summer and now I plan to study how they influenced the geographic and ethnographic knowledge acquired and applied by Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries in Western Amazonia.

My project will also examine the participation of indigenous peoples in the process of cartographic construction and geographical exploration in Maynas. Although missionary maps might have shaped and fostered knowledge of the territory and peoples of Maynas as well as their incorporation into the spatial imagination of the nation in Peru and Ecuador, these maps were not merely a reflection of missionary viewpoints. Anne Godlewska states that the vastness of missionary territories forced friars to rely on indigenous sources for the completion of their geographical surveys. As a result, “in some of their maps... there is a distinct indigenous presence” (1997, 107). Likewise, other studies focused on South

America have emphasized the “indigenous traits” found in the Jesuit and Portuguese cartographies of colonial Paraguay and Brazil, respectively (Barcelos 2010, Kok 2009). In a similar vein, John Rennie Short has analyzed the mapping of British America, not as the result of “a simple cartographic appropriation by Europeans,” but as a process of “cartographic encounters” based on “the exchange of information between newcomers and indigenous people” (2009, 9 and 127). In this respect, it is important to mention that there is no detailed study of the indigenous participation in the missionary cartography of Maynas and that the literature on this topic and my own preliminary research do not show, for instance, the existence of indigenous maps used by missionaries. However, according to Neil Whitehead, “in discussing the incorporation of native spatial ideas into European maps, it is important to appreciate that geographical information may be transmitted in many ways other than graphic representation, such as gestures, words, songs, and so on” (1998, 322). My goal is therefore to look at missionary maps, official reports, travel accounts, natural histories, and correspondence written by local Jesuits and Franciscans for signs of “cartographic encounters” that indicate indigenous participation in the process of knowledge making about the human and geographic landscape of Maynas.

My plan is now to continue my research activities in the archives and libraries I have not yet visited. Between July and August of 2012 I plan to visit the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, which preserves most of the records concerned with the boundary dispute with Peru over Western Amazonia, from 1543 to 1923. These include documents from both ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Maynas. Between September and October I plan to conduct research at the Eugenio Espejo National Library and the library of the Central University of Ecuador, which preserve books from the old library of the Jesuit College of Quito as well as some of the books held in the libraries of the Maynas missions. Between November and December I plan to visit the National Archive of Ecuador, which holds documents regarding missionaries, indigenous peoples, and civil officials in Amazonia.

In January of 2013 I plan to carry out research at the National General Archive in Lima, which holds materials related to boundary and land disputes from some regions located in Maynas. Between February

and March I plan to visit the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru, which holds the most impressive cartographic collection in Peru as well as several documents from the Jesuit missions in Maynas and from the Convent of Ocopa, the headquarters of the Franciscan missionary activities in central Amazonia. In April I will conduct research at the archive of the Riva-Agüero Institute, in Lima, which contains documents related to missionary activities in Western Amazonia in its Maynas and Denegri Collections. Between May and June I plan to visit the old library of the Franciscan Convent of Santa Rosa in Ocopa, Peru, which hold the books from which missionaries learned topics such as astronomy, physics, mathematics, geography, and natural history.

Time and money permitting, I will also visit the National Archive of Colombia and the Library and Historical Archive of the Pontifical Javeriana University, in Bogota. In the former I will mostly revise ecclesiastical and foreign affairs records, from the Colonial and Republican sections. In the latter I will examine records related to Jesuit activities in Western Amazonia, particularly around the Putumayo River. Since Quito was under the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of New Granada and the Republic of Colombia from 1739 to 1830, some documents related to Quito's missionary and bureaucratic activity in Maynas are now preserved in those institutions.

All these archives and libraries contain documents that will constitute the basis of my research project which, in turn, seeks to enrich the study of the missionary cartography of Maynas. My research aims to contribute in two important ways to the historiography on Latin America and, in general, to the literature on science and nation making. On the one hand, my project understands both the cartographic and ethnographic production of Maynas as part of the same missionary scientific project. To retrace the intellectual framework that permitted Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries to map Western Amazonian territories and peoples is an important and necessary step toward fully embracing their scientific activities. In addition, my project understands missionary cartography as a multilayered process in which both missionary and indigenous actors participated. Maps, therefore, are sites of scientific inquiry, interpretation, and consensus. As a result, my research is based upon the understanding of the production

of scientific knowledge as a process of compromise between “scientists” and the “objects” of scientific analysis.

On the other hand, Amazonian spatial-cultural traits formulated by missionaries came to be associated with colonial administrative units centered around Quito and Lima that would eventually become independent states by the early nineteenth century. Yet, it is not my intention to convert Jesuits and Franciscans into protonational champions of Ecuador’s and Peru’s territorial rights over the Amazon and, as a result, repeat teleological stories with respect to the forging of national spaces in Western Amazonia. Instead, my project emphasizes the contingency associated to processes of nation making and imagining. In this respect, Benedict Anderson has pointed out that the idea of “nationness” came as a result of “largely unselfconscious processes”; however, “once ‘there,’ they could become formal models to be imitated, and, where expedient, consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit” (2006, 45). My research notes that missionary maps functioned in a similar way: while Jesuits and Franciscans consciously tried to demarcate their missionary territories on a map, they unconsciously helped provide the analytical tools that permitted the incorporation of Amazonia into the spatial imagination of Ecuador and Peru.

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