ANTON BRUCKNER
PRIVATUNIVERSITÄT
OBERÖSTERREICH

Jorge Eduardo Garzón-Pavez

Música de Gaitas from the Colombian Caribbean region of Montes de María:

As a witness , victim and path of transitional justice inside the Colombian armed conflict.

Masterarbeit

KMA Wissenschaftliche Arbeit

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Master of Arts

des Studiums KMA Violine

an der

Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität

Betreut durch: Prof. Dr. Carolin Stahrenberg

Zweitleser*in: Mag. M.A. Roman Duffner

Linz, 5.9.2024

Abstract

The present written work seeks to explore Musica de Gaitas from the Colombian region of Montes de María, with the aim of understanding its role within the armed conflict in Colombia. To achieve this, a review of the historical and social context of the area was conducted, as well as an overview of its musical genres, before focusing on the war victims in the region and their relationship with their musical practices. It was evident the connection between music and the territory, considering the constant struggle of peasants for land rights in the face of violent events that lead to forced displacement to large cities. It is concluded that, as a consequence of the war, the relationship between daily life and music has been broken. However, culture can still be reaffirmed as a vehicle for victim reparation, reconciliation in the conflict, and memory in the construction of a more just society.

Key words: Música de gaitas; Montes de María; Armed conflict; victims; Peace

Contents

List of Abbreviations

ANDI: Asociación Nacional de Empresarios Industriales (National Association of Industrial Entrepreneurs).

ANUC: Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (National Association of Peasant Users).

AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defenders of Colombia).

CNMH: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historical Memory).

CTI: Cuerpo técnico de investigación (Technical Investigation Corps).

Convivir: Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada (Private Security and Surveillance Cooperatives).

DPS: Departamento para la Prosperidad Nacional (Department for Social Prosperity).

ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army).

EPL: Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army).

FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

NGOs: Non-Gubernamental Organizations .

PTR: Partido de trabajadores de la Rev0olución (Workers' Revolutionary Party).

UP: Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union).

Preface

I didn't experience the war firsthand. I grew up as an ordinary citizen of the capital, shielded from the reality that my own territory experiences, a reality that sometimes knocked on the doors of my own neighborhood but hid behind the media, which sometimes pretentiously covered up the atrocities of the war to keep us passive in the face of the cruelty of the conflict happening just a few kilometers from our homes. I trained as a musician in this context, learning to play the violin and seeking perfection in the technique of interpreting European repertoire, studying at the National University of Colombia, an institution that, due to its state character, is always vulnerable to the political and social changes of the country, a university whose public character makes its students individuals who appropriate social realities. In this context, I had my first contact with gaita music.

Fridays at the end of my week of long practice sessions were often interrupted by the deep sounds of the “Tambora”, the insistence of the “Tambor Alegre” beats, and the melodies of the Gaitas, whose echo was impossible to ignore from the music faculty classrooms where the old windows were barely enough to stop the noise of the city. Faced with the difficulty of concentrating with the noise of the music coming from outside, one day I chose to put away my instrument and leave the building to find out where such revelry was coming from. Surprisingly, the sounds were not coming from inside the music faculty, but they echoed throughout the university campus (a campus consisting of many buildings and faculties that make up the University, including naturally the music conservatory). Upon finding the origin of those sounds, I realized that those who played them were not conservatory students and most likely not regular university students, but they were always in the main square of the institution to hold their "Ruedas de Gaita" (Gathering where Gaiteros (gaita players), Tamboleros (drummers), and sometimes dancers come together sporadically to perform well-known songs and improvise over traditional rhythms), sometimes accompanied by a communal pot set up over an improvised fire, ready to offer a hot drink or sometimes a plate of food to the participants and listeners in the square. It is important to say that this square is outdoors and is surrounded by the central library, the nursing faculty, and the León de Greiff auditorium, the latter being the main venue for concerts by the Bogotá Philharmonic

Orchestra, which offered concerts on the same Friday nights while such revelry was happening just in front of its main entrance.

This scene of festivity characteristic of the “Rueda de Gaitas” that accompanied my Friday nights under the sky of the central square of the National University of Colombia, in front of the entrance to the León de Greiff concert hall, is for me a vivid representation of the contrast experienced by Colombian society, whose development has taken place in contexts sometimes so absurd that they are only recounted through the arts. That is why I would like through this thesis to use the Gaita Music as a portrayal of the conflict in Colombia: Gaita music as that social element that was recognized and listened to very late in history, just like the voices and experiences of many victims of the absurd armed conflict that Colombia has not yet overcome. That conflict that I never experienced firsthand, but whose consequences, stories, and victims were and will always be around me.

1. Introduction

How can we understand the armed conflict through Musica de Gaitas in Colombia? What does this music have to tell us about war and the social issues of its environment? What relationship does it have with the victims of the Montes de María region? What does this music represent today for the inhabitants and native migrants of the region?

To answer these questions, we need to go beyond ethnomusicological or comparative musicology studies and explore the anthropological particularities that encompass cultures and their environments.[1] In this case, by analyzing the social conditions of the Montes de María region. Despite Colombia being a country with great diversity of cultures, languages, and musical genres, there is an evident lack of knowledge in large cities about these realities, as demonstrated by the results reported by Colombian anthropologists Friedemann and Arocha in surveys conducted in 1981, which sought to understand how much upper-class professionals of the end of the 20th century knew about Colombian indigenous groups:

> "None of the respondents even knew the number of indigenous people in the country. Furthermore, they showed total astonishment upon learning that in Colombia, 78 languages are spoken that do not belong to the Indo-European family, and from which 280 dialectal varieties derive."[2]

This is also the reality in research on Afro-Colombian musical genres; just until the second half of the 20th century, North American and English ethnomusicologists focused on the in-depth study of Colombian music, especially on the genres of the Caribbean coast.[3]

For this reason, I would like to start by looking at the historical and social context of the inhabitants and performers from the Montes de María region, whose cultures have always remained outside the spectrum of social development, which in Colombia happens in a very

[1] Leonor Convers & Juan Sebastián Ochoa, *Gaiteros y tamboleros: Material para abordar el estudio de la música de gaitas de San Jacinto, Bolívar (Colombia),* primera parte*,* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2007), p. 11.
[2] Nina Friedemann & Jaime Arocha, *Heredero del jaguar y la anaconda,* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1985), p.85.
[3] Egberto Bermúdez, "*La música tradicional colombiana y sus estructuras básicas: Música afrocolombiana"* (Parte 1)*,* In: *Ensayos: Historia y teoría del arte*, N°10,(Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005), p.7.

centralized manner in large cities. Thus, Música de Gaitas, like other artistic expressions, tends to fall into "otherness"[4] which distances us from the sense of belonging and the ability to feel their stories as our own.

Continuing in this context, I will analyze how the musical activities of African and indigenous cultures were always victims of stigmatization and racism stemming from colonization and its project of Christianization (Catholic or Protestant), which excluded and demonized expressions that were not in line with the religious values established by the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church.

To understand music beyond folklore, it is necessary in this case to see its relationship with violence and territory.[5] To establish this relationship, I will focus on one of the most tragic phenomena that the Colombian population has had to endure due to the violence of the armed conflict: massacres. Specifically, the one that occurred in February 2000 in the El Salado district in Montes de María, where unfortunately, Gaita music took on a completely contrary role to usual; it was instrumentalized by paramilitaries to humiliate their victims in the midst of torture and turn the massacre into a "blood festival".[6] Although massacres in Colombia are not solely a topic of the last decades, it is important to highlight that only between 1999 and 2001 and just only in the Montes de María region, the violence cyclone materialized in 42 massacres that left 354 fatalities.[7] This war strategy, based on the use and spread of terror as an instrument of territorial and population control, not only leaves behind fatalities but also indelible traces in communities that, among other things, decide to escape violence by leaving everything behind. Thus, another of the great tragedies evidenced during the war in Colombia is constituted, which I will analyze in this writing: forced displacement to large cities.

[4] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.12.
[5] Jonathan Caro Parrado, "*Un fuego de sangre pura, música de gaitas, territorios y paz en Los Montes de María",* In: Revista Cambios y Permanencias, Vol. 9, N°1, (Universidad Industrial de Santander , 2018) p.809.
[6] Revista Semana. "Fiesta de Sangre: así fue la masacre de El Salado". Last modified February 16, 2020. https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/masacre-de-el-salado-como-la-planearon-y-ejecutaron-los-paramilitares/557580/.
[7] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *La Masacre de El Salado: esa guerra no era nuestra* (Bogotá: Taurus-Ediciones Semana, 2009), p.15

Entering the context of war and displacement, we can understand how Bogotá, as a core receiver of the migrant population in Colombia, becomes a place of cultural expressions as numerous and diverse as the territories of those who arrive seeking new opportunities[8]. A few decades ago, it was a great novelty that gaiteros coming from San Jacinto travel to the capital. Today, due to violence and other factors related to the intensification of the armed conflict, direct heirs of these cultures are forced to move to large cities.[9]

Finally, having seen and analyzed the facts, we can move on to listen to the narratives from the point of view of the same social actors, all this to understand their realities considering the subject as an expert in his own world,[10] knowing that the music they evoke is a territorial imaginary of places to which many may not return but will continue to inhabit from the immortality of their rhythms and melodies. It´s here where we will take a look at the Gaita festivals and other initiatives that emerged in the region, with the aim of paying tribute to the genres and performers who seek to approach their interpretation, thus helping to keep alive the stories, traditions and culture surrounding Musica de Gaitas, turning it not only into a cultural heritage but also into a vehicle for reparation and resilience for the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia.

[8] Jéssica Rosalba Villamil Ruiz, "*La reconstrucción del territorio en la ciudad: un estudio de la música de gaita en la Costa Caribe Colombiana en Bogotá".* In: *Cuadernos de geografía, Revista colombiana de geografía*, Nº18 (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2019), p.130.
[9] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.15.
[10] Villamil (2019), p.131.

2. Social context of Montes de María

2.1. Cartagena: Gateway of the African Slave Trade

It is important to start by highlighting Cartagena (which is not part of the vicinity of the Montes de María) as the city where those groups of people first made contact, which originated what we know today as Musica de Gaitas. This coastal city, located in the northeastern corner of Colombia with an average climate of 30°C, was the birthplace of Cumbia during colonial times, from where it spread to the mountains and plains of the current departments of Bolívar and Córdoba, ascending into the Sinú Valley and filling the departments of Atlántico and Magdalena.[11]

Today, Cartagena is a city of contrasts: on one hand, it is a development hub around tourism with economic dynamics exclusive to foreigners, but at the same time, it is a scene of inequality in which its inhabitants live, many of them exposed to permanent natural and social risks.[12]

Although the slave trade by European colonies was not an activity initiated with the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the continent we now know as America, it reached gigantic proportions during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries due to the demographic catastrophe among the indigenous. By the early 1600s, 80% of the native population of the southern region of the continent had disappeared.[13] Those who survived the epidemics from Europe and colonial oppression escaped to hide and settle in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the highlands of Cundinamarca and Boyacá, preferring to flee rather than become slaves.[14] Consequently, the slave trade became an organized economic activity and continued until the

[11] Delia Zapata Olivella, "*La Cumbia: Síntesis musical de la nación colombiana reseña histórica y coreográfica*", In Revista de Folclor, N°7, 2ª (Bogotá, Época, 1962), p.193.
[12] Villamil (2019), p.135.
[13] Egberto Bermúdez, "*La Música Colombiana, Pasado y Presente.*" A Tres Bandas: Mestizaje, Sincretismo e Hibridación En El Espacio Sonoro Iberoamericano, (Madrid: Eds. Albert Recasens, Christian Spencer SEACEX, 2010), p.252.
[14] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.25.

mid-19th century through sea routes leading to the new continent.[15] Cartagena (whose walls were built by slaves from the coasts of West Africa) was then the main port of the slave trade, a large market from which Africans from present-day Guinea, Cape Verde, Angola, Sierra Leone, Arará, Mina, Carabalí, and the Congo were distributed.[16] These were destined for labor in the mines inland, due to the inability of the native indigenous people to withstand the harsh forced labor.[17]

These captive Africans had a single obsession: escape. Those who managed to escape their masters would retreat into the mountains and jungles, becoming maroons (Cimarrons) free from slavery. Bencos-Bihio led the first great escape, and his rebellion led to the first settlement of free maroon blacks on the continent, in the foothills of the Montes de María, which is still known as Palenque:[18] an African nucleus where rebellious men gathered to claim and fight for their freedom and independence.

2.2. Geography and Economy

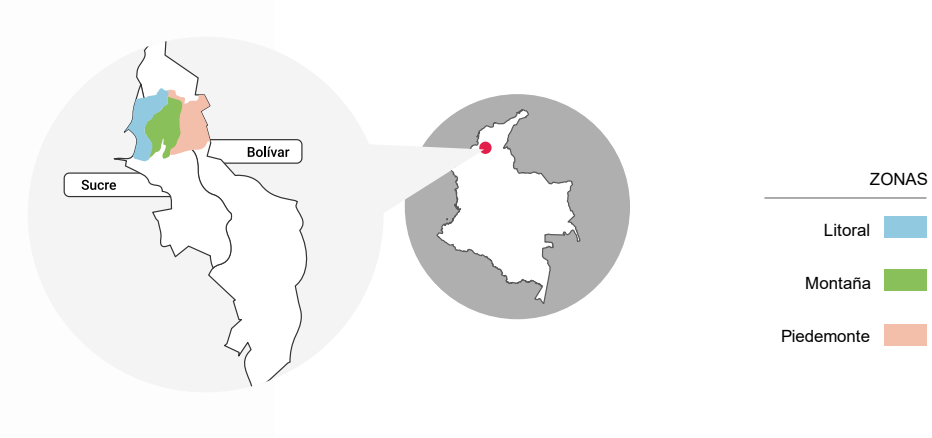

Fig. 1: Montes de María Location in Colombia [19]

[15] Zapata (1962), p.191.
[16] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.26.
[17] Zapata (1962), p.192.
[18] Zapata (1962), p.192.
[19] Centro de Memoria Histórica: "Montes de María" Accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/recorridos-por-paisajes-de-la-violencia/img/mapas-svg/montes-maria-nav.svg.

The Montes de María is a subregion located in the northwestern Caribbean area of Colombia, specifically in the San Jacinto mountain range, a hilly system with significant bodies of water of vital importance. Covering an area of 2,677 km², it consists of fifteen municipalities in the departments of Bolívar and Sucre with a population of 438,119 inhabitants according to the 2005 census, of which 55% are urban and 45% are rural. The area has low literacy levels, limited access to healthcare, and significant deficiencies in public service coverage.[20]

Its economic activity revolves around agricultural production with a tradition in cattle ranching and peasant farming of maize, rice, cassava, yam, plantain, tobacco, coffee, and avocado. Recently, business crops of hot peppers, cocoa, and oil palm have been introduced.[21]

2.3. Historical Context

During the colonial period, the region remained isolated from the economic development of the coastal area, a situation that did not change significantly throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries despite the progress of Caribbean ports.[22] Only in the 1920s was the "Liga Costeña" formed by regional economic elites who pressured the government to favor local interests. This unification, along with the consolidation as a banana zone exploited by the "United Fruit Company," required extensive labor, attracting people from various places on the Atlantic coast.

The consolidation of the region as a banana zone in the early 20th century helped establish it as an important cultural, social, and musical center of a community imagined by narratives among different areas of the Caribbean coast.[23] This was further highlighted in December 1928 when over 1000[24] workers of the "United Fruit Company" were massacred by the Colombian army after staging the largest strike in the country's history (around 25,000

[20] Caro (2018), p.810.
[21] Ibid., p.811.
[22] Oscar Hernández Salgar, *Poder y emoción en las músicas colombianas 1930-1960,* Casa de las Américas, Primera edición (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2014), p.170.
[23] Ibid, p.171.
[24] The number of fatalities is undefined, diverse sources indicate numbers between 13 and 3000.

refused to work until an agreement was reached with the U.S. company and the national government).[25] This event remained anonymous until denounced in Congress by Jorge Eliecer Gaitán,[26] who was assassinated in 1948 during his presidential candidacy, exacerbating the already bloody period known as "La Violencia." The Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez described that massacre in his novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude," helping reconstruct the region's reality through his magical realism literary style.

Gaita music is thus nourished by the notion of territory constructed from such events that made the region an epicenter of the largest peasant mobilizations for land access.[27] This struggle for territory generated tension that challenged the system inherited from the colony, resulting in direct attacks on peasant movements by political and economic elites. This situation led to the creation of armed groups in the region.

2.4. Creation of Armed Groups in the Region

The Montes de María was one of the main scenes of land struggles in the 1970s through the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC): National Association of Peasants,[28] prompting landowners and large estate owners, well-represented in Congress, to create private armies in response. This was compounded by the appearance of guerrillas in the region in the late 1960s, whose main objective was to gain social support for their revolutionary struggle. These guerrillas, Ejercito Popular de Liberación (EPL): Popular Liberation Army and Partido de trabajadores de la Revolución (PTR): Workers' Revolutionary Party, demobilized in the 1990s, creating a vacuum that was exploited by the growing Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC): Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. This demobilization followed the peace agreements of the 1990s, leading to the current Colombian political constitution of 1991.[29]

[25] Comisión de la Verdad. “La Masacre de las Bananeras” accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/la-masacre-de-las-bananeras.
[26] Hernández (2014), p.171.
[27] Caro (2018), p.810.
[28] León Zamosc, *La Cuestión Agraria y el Movimiento Campesino en Colombia: Luchas de la asociación de usuarios campesinos ANUC, 1967-1981,* CINEP-UNRISD, (Bogotá: Institut de recherche des Nations Unies pour le développement social, 1987), p. 57.
[29] Centro de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.173.

The peace agreements between the national government and guerrillas of the time led to the creation of the political movement Unión Patriótica (UP): Patriotic Union, whose main members were signatories of the agreements and ideological leaders of the guerrillas, who had laid down their arms to join a new national agreement. However, the apparent peace was marred by the extermination of nearly all its members who were already exercising political representation.[30] This extermination questioned the peaceful resolution of the conflict and polarized the left in Colombia. The Ejercito de Liberación Nacional (ELN): National Liberation Army, and FARC guerrillas decided to continue their armed struggle and radicalize. Control of the territory became a key factor for destabilizing the economy and financing the war through extortion and kidnapping, leading to intensified attacks on the region's economic elites.[31]

This point of conflict broke the relationship between peasants and large estate owners, transforming the agrarian structure of the Montes de María through several events: a) Small and medium landowners were forced to sell their land at very low prices. b) Peasants living on leased land were forced to vacate by large landowners. c) Those who never legalized their properties lost their land rights to usurpers with the legal and financial resources to seize the land.[32]

Before the 1980s, the Montes de María was a marginal region in the country's development, a situation that changed with the improvement of its road system and its opening to the Caribbean port system. However, the growing drug consumption boom of the 1980s and 1990s turned the region into a key point for drug traffickers using its routes to transport cocaine from southern Bolívar and Lower Cauca to overseas[33] (mainly the United States and Europe). Drug trafficking played an important role in the war, being one of the main sources of financing for illegal groups and private armies.

[30] Ibid, p. 172.
[31] Ibid, p. 81.
[32] Ibid, p. 83.
[33] Jiménez Ahumada, Rosa. *"Desarrollo y paz en los Montes de María. Una propuesta desde la región"* in: *Dimensiones Territoriales de la Guerra y la Paz* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2004), p.506.

In addition to the drug trafficking problem, the FARC increased kidnappings of local ranchers in the 1990s. These ranchers joined the political elites to fight the subversion through private armies. Thus, the controversial Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada (Convivir): Cooperatives of Vigilance and Private Security, were created, whose initial function was to provide information to the public force to improve its effectiveness under the regulatory framework of decree 356 of 1994.[34] Due to the laxity of this decree and the inability of the military forces to combat the guerrilla's hard blows, the Convivir extended their functions to the use of long weapons, eventually replacing the national army's functions. By March 1997, there were 414 Convivir in Colombia, of which 7 operated in the Montes de María and its surroundings.[35]

In 1997, after the national debate generated by the Convivir, the constitutional court declared them lawful but prohibited them from carrying weapons and conducting intelligence work. In response, many of these cooperatives publicly announced their transition to clandestinity, giving rise to the paramilitary groups of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC): United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia. In the Montes de María, local elites acted as illegal armed structures protecting the assets of large economic groups from guerrilla extortions and kidnappings. Thus, the war in Colombia and particularly in the Montes de María became a struggle for territorial power, being a strategic point for conflict financing.[36]

By 2000, the paramilitaries intensified their actions, not only in their fight against the guerrillas and subversion but also in causing panic by assassinating political activists, peasant leaders, and human rights defenders. The tactic of terror also focused on massacres against the civilian population.[37] One of the worst massacres of the last decades in the Montes de María region occurred in El Salado in 2000, having a profound impact on its community, where gaita music and its people suffered, besides forced displacement, terrible instrumentalization in the war, as we will see later.

[34] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.192.
[35] *"Convivir o no convivir"* El tiempo, Bogotá, March 27, p. 9ª.
[36] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.192.
[37] Caro (2018), p.812.

3. Historical Context and Structural Generalities of Música de Gaitas

3.1. Early Indications

Archaeological research throughout Colombia reveals the presence of man-made artifacts dating back approximately 13,000 years. Among these are flutes constructed from bone and stone with an air entry and finger holes. Bermudez tells that, according to the continuity of oral tradition, these were also made from various types of native reeds and canes, similar to those used today. Additionally, evidence of rattles or shakers has been found, consisting of gourds or closed tubes filled with small stones or seeds that produced sound when shaken. Likewise, rings from drums and pottery that could have been used as instruments for war and communication have been discovered.[38]

Fig.2: Representation of flute use in archeological evidences : Zenu walking stick head (Remate del bastón zenú). [39]

[38] Egberto Bermúdez Cujar, "Música indígena colombiana", *Maguaré*, Nº 5 (January 1987), p.87.
[39] Jonathan, Corzo, Remate de bastón zenú. Museo del Oro de Bogotá-Colombia, Photography, In *"La Gaita Larga De Los Montes De María Como Instrumento Simbólico. Una Apreciación Sobre Su Lógica Compositiva En El Repertorio Zoomorfo."*, Música e investigación 29, 2021, p.56.

3.2. First Written Evidence

Beyond archaeological evidence of indigenous instruments, there is very little written documentation about their folkloric and cultural origins due to the stigmatization and prohibition of indigenous music during the colonial period (which will be analyzed later). This music has been transmitted through oral tradition. Convers & Ochoa studies suggest that the instruments known today as Colombian Gaitas originated from the indigenous groups of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.[40]

The indigenous ensemble of two gaitas with a maraca and the African musical bow are first mentioned in Tenerife (Rio Magdalena) in 1580 and in Pamplona in 1633, respectively.[41] These same gaitas and their accompanying instruments were also described in the early 19th century by Swedish military officer and Darwin correspondent Carl A. Gosselman (1799-1843), who visited Colombia in 1825-1826, and by American military officer R. van Rensselaer in 1829.[42] Descriptions of dances around these instruments were also provided by British officers Charles S. Cochrane and John P. Hamilton during their travels in the region in 1829, as well as by Colombian travelers such as José M. Samper (1828-88), who documented in Europe these dances observed in the village of Regidor on the Magdalena River.[43]

In terms of notation, some attempts to notate Colombian music of African heritage were made by French Count De Gabriac, who visited Colombia and other Latin American countries around that time.[44] Although interest in notating Colombian music began in that era, it was much later, in the 20th century, that violinist and composer Narciso Garay (1876-1963)

[40] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.32.
[41] Bartolomé Briones de Pedraza, *"Relación de Tenerife II",* In: Victor Manuel Patiño, *Relaciones geográficas de la Nueva Granada,* Suplemento 4 de *Cespedecia,* nums 45-46, ene.-jun.
[42] Antonio de Ulloa & Jorge Juan y Santacilla, *"A Voyage to South America",* London: L. Davies and C. Reymers, 1760, p.39; José Palacios de la Vega, *Diario,* ed. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, Bogotá; C. A. Gosselman, *Resa i Colombia, aren 1825 och 1826,* Stockholm: J. Horberg, 1830, p.56; Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, "Letters", In Catharina van Rensselaer Bonney (ed), *A Legacy of Historical Gleanings,* Albany (NY): J. Munsell, 1875, pp. 465-468 .
[43] José M. Samper, quoted in José J. Borda, *Cuadros de costumbres y relaciones de viaje,* Bogotá, 1875, pp. 143-144.
[44] *Tradiciones y cantares de Panamá: ensayo folklórico*, Bruxelles: Presses de l'Expansion belge, 1930.

transcribed examples of musical genres with African roots common in Colombia and Panama, such as cumbia and tamborito.[45]

3.3. Organology

The Gaita is the characteristic instrument of this music. It is a wind instrument where air is introduced by the performer through blowing. It consists of a duck or goose feather tube mouthpiece, embedded in a head made from a mixture of beeswax and ground charcoal. The body is traditionally[46] the heart of a cactus that grows in the Montes de María (Pachycereus pringley) or the Pitahaya (Hylocereus undatus).[47] Ancestrally, they come from the Cunas, Koguis, and Zenues indigenous groups,[48] and are known to them as "Suaras," "Kuizi," and "Chuanas," respectively.[49] The name "Gaita" was assigned by the Spaniards due to the resemblance of its sound to the Scottish bagpipe.

Gaitas are played in pairs. The "Gaita Hembra" (with five holes) always carries the melody (the performer is called a gaitero/a or hembrero/a and is accompanied by the "Gaita Macho" (with one or two holes),[50] which usually doubles the melody or plays notes in harmony with the "Gaita Hembra", suggesting modal or functional harmonies. Its performer (machero/a) also maintains the rhythm with the maraca or maracón (a shaker made from a gourd filled with seeds on a wooden handle). The gaita is also often played solo with a set of drums and idiophones in a version of the small gaita known as the "Gaita corta" or "pito cabec´ecera".[51]

[45] Bermúdez, (2005), p.219.
[46] Nowadays, the mouthpiece and body are usually made of plastic materials due to their durability and the difficulty of obtaining pitahaya or cactus heart in other parts of the country.
[47] Jonathan, Corzo*, "La Gaita Larga De Los Montes De María Como Instrumento Simbólico. Una Apreciación Sobre Su Lógica Compositiva En El Repertorio Zoomorfo."*, Música e investigación 29, 2021.
[48] Villamil (2019), p.133.
[49] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.33.
[50] Corzo (2021), p.62.
[51] Egberto Bermúdez, "Los Bajeros de la Montaña". *La acabación del mundo: Música de gaitas de los Montes de María (Bolívar)*, [*Booklet*] Villa de Leyva: Fundación de Mvsica, 2006 , p.13.

Fig. 3: Pair of gaitas and Maraca.[52]

Along with the gaitas, a group of three drums known as llamador, tambor alegre, and tambora are traditionally played. The llamador (whose function is to mark a rhythmic pattern and determine the entry of the other instruments along with the maraca) and tambor alegre (which has a close improvisational relationship with the female gaita) are conical drums with a construction and tuning system using laces and wedges, similar to those used until the mid-19th century among the Tenme and Mende of Sierra Leone and Liberia in West Africa. The tambora (whose deep register helps perceive the metric and allows greater improvisational freedom for the other instruments) originally belonged to sung dance ensembles where bullerengue, chandé, chalupa, etc.,[53] were performed (also Afro-Colombian genres). The voice, like the tambora, would be included in the traditional gaita music ensemble in recent times (mid-20th century). According with Convers & Ochoa, many attribute this to Toño Fernandez, who had great talent for composing verses.[54]

[52] *"Gaitas Macho y hembra y maracas",* Accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.aacademica.org/edgardo.civallero/260.pdf .
[53] Bermúdez (2006), p.14.
[54] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.43.

Fig. 4: Gaita ensemble.[55]

3.4. Point of Syncretism: The Cumbia

Before discussing the genres that comprise gaita music, it is important to highlight the starting point of cultural syncretism that occurs through cumbia. Although research indicates it is not the oldest genre, it is considered a cultural meeting point.[56] The construction of the walls of Cartagena would have increased this mestizaje: the enslaved society of the colonial era would have brought together indigenous and Africans on the same social level, where they gathered to dance and play their instruments around bonfires. Over time, musicians would become the center of gatherings in a tradition known as "Rueda de cumbia".[57] According to Delia Zapata, cumbia "had a cradle of stone," referring to its origin during the construction of the walls of Cartagena.[58]

The only similar term to cumbia that the Spanish academy accepts is Cumbié: -"a certain dance of blacks and music for this dance" and "cumbes" (without an accent) refers to the black inhabitants in Bata, Spanish Guinea[59]. It can be said that cumbia is of mestizo origin and subjected to the Hispanic influence of the colonial masters of the time. The submission of the Spanish enslavers led to the fusion of expressions: the melody of the indigenous gaita

[55] "*Conjunto de gaita",* Accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.aacademica.org/edgardo.civallero/260.pdf.
[56] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.29.
[57] Ibid., p.31.
[58] Zapata (1962), p.193.
[59] Ibid. p.189.

contrasting with the rhythmical resonance of the African drum. It was originally instrumental music that over time and Spanish influence would add singing through elements of Hispanic style and form, such as rhymed verses similar to Spanish poetry.[60]

Cumbia took a primary role in the Atlantic region, becoming the center of popular festivities,[61] not only for its music but also for its dance as part of its definition. In the words of musician Rafael Pérez:

> "For my concept, I say that cumbia is the original, the base, and from there all the other rhythms come. But now it is said that there is cumbia, there is porro, there is gaita corrida; all those genres exist within cumbia. Cumbia is everything: cumbia, gaita corrida, porro, respecting their differences. Everything is cumbia: you put a couple to dance, and they dance cumbia... well, let's dance gaita, then the dance is faster. But everything is cumbia".[62]

As Zapata describes it, the dance is a fundamental part of the cumbia and symbolizes the blending of influences from three cultures: Indigenous, African, and Spanish. The woman traditionally dances with gentle movements, often holding candles, which is associated with Indigenous customs. The man, who actively engages with the woman during the dance, incorporates dynamic movements that reflect African musical traditions, emphasizing expression and rhythm. The attire showcases Spanish influence, with women wearing wide skirts and ruffled blouses, often adorned with flowers in their hair, while men wear white outfits, red handkerchiefs, traditional conca hats, shoulder bags, and machete sheaths..[63]

3.5. Approaching the Genres

Lotero highlights the difficulty of pinpointing the origin of musical genres surrounding Gaita music due to the uncertain terrain of oral tradition and the absence of other types of ancient memory.[64] However, academics as Convers & Ochoa suggest that discrete characteristics can

[60] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.31
[61] Zapata (1962), p. 173.
[62] Rafael Perez, Interview by Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.32.
[63] Zapata (1962). p.194.
[64] Amparo Lotero, *"El porro pelayero: de las gaitas y tambores a las gaitas de viento"* In *Boletín Cultural y bibliográfico,* Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango del Banco de la República, Vol. 26, N°19, 1989, quoted in Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.29.

be established among the following genres: Gaita, Cumbia, Porro, and Puya. We have already seen how Cumbia can be considered the starting point of cultural syncretism; however, Fredy Arrieta, in interview by Convers & Ochoa, says that Gaita[65] would be the oldest rhythm:

"Gaita is one of the oldest rhythms that exist, one could say that the mother is the gaita. The Indians played to weave {...} The gaita is instrumental, and the cumbia is a bit more cadenced but includes singing."[66]

Without delving into many details, we can differentiate between the fast and slow genres that constitute this music:[67] the slow and cadenced genres are cumbia, porro, and gaita (also known as gaita corrida). These use more or less long stanzas combined with choruses created by repeating some of their verses in a responsorial form. In the faster genres (puyas and baile de negro), coplas with choruses are formed by repeating the last two verses, sometimes with textual variations. There are also other denominations such as sones de Maya, also known as Acabaciones, which are sad and melancholic pieces generally used in funeral contexts. In the current repertoire of the San Onofre region, the term “son de gaita” is still used, linked to the previous ones.[68]

All the genres in the repertoire are based on specific types of scales for the melodies of the singing and the gaitas, and on rhythmic patterns for each of the instruments. These have varying degrees of freedom, being less variable or fixed for the maraca and the llamador, and more free for the singing, the “Gaita Hembra”, and the Tambor alegre. The patterns used by the “Gaita Macho” and the Tambora have an intermediate degree of freedom, although it undoubtedly depends on the skill and creativity of their performers.[69]

[65] It is important to clarify that the term "Gaita" is used with two meanings: gaita as an instrument and gaita as a genre (gaita corrida).
[66] Fredy Arrieta, Interview by Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.30.
[67] For a detailed analysis of the genres, the book "Gaiteros y Tamboleros" by Leonor Convers & Juan Sebastián Ochoa is recommended.
[68] Bermúdez (2006) , p.15.
[69] Ibid., p.17.

In figures 6 and 7 we can see simplified schemes of the rhythmic patterns used in this music, according to the conventions used by Leonor Convers and Juan Sebastian Ochoa for their analysis in their book "Gaiteros y Tamboleros".

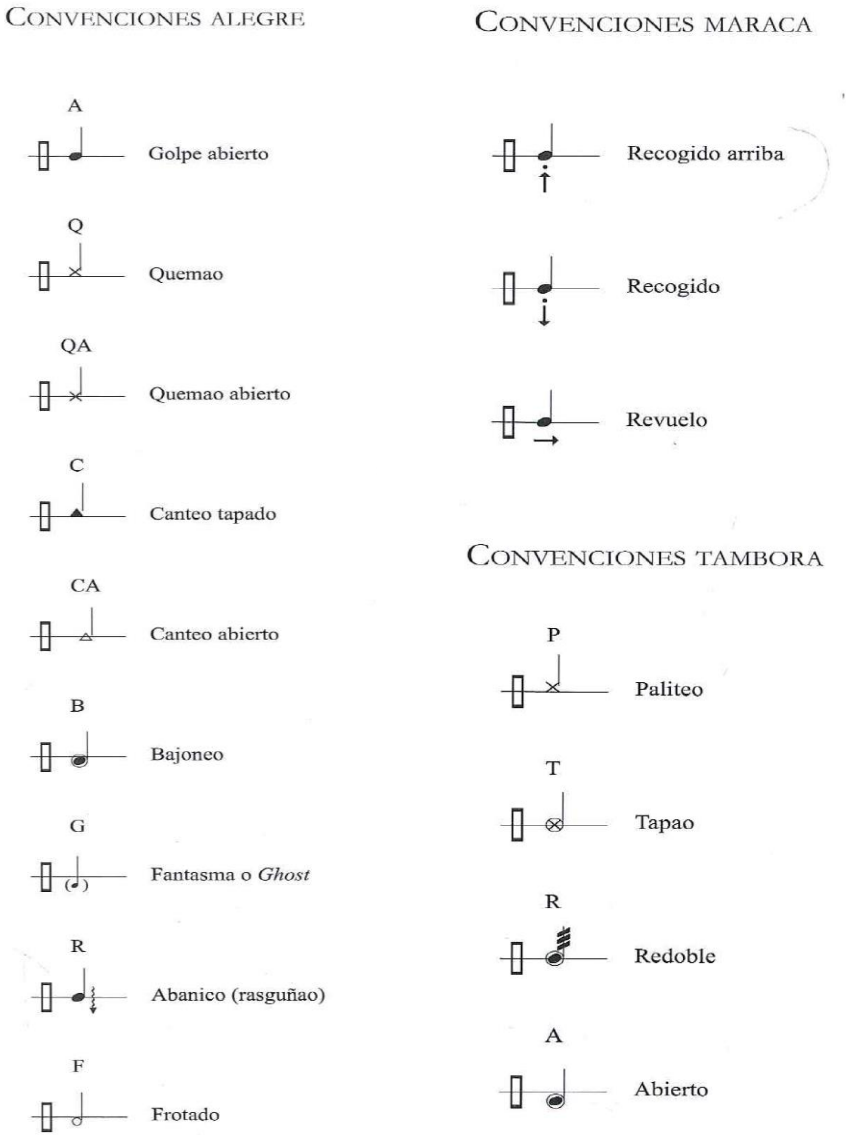

Fig. 5: Conventions for Tambor Alegre, Maraca and Tambora by Leonor Convers and Juan Sebastián Ochoa.[70]

[70] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.48

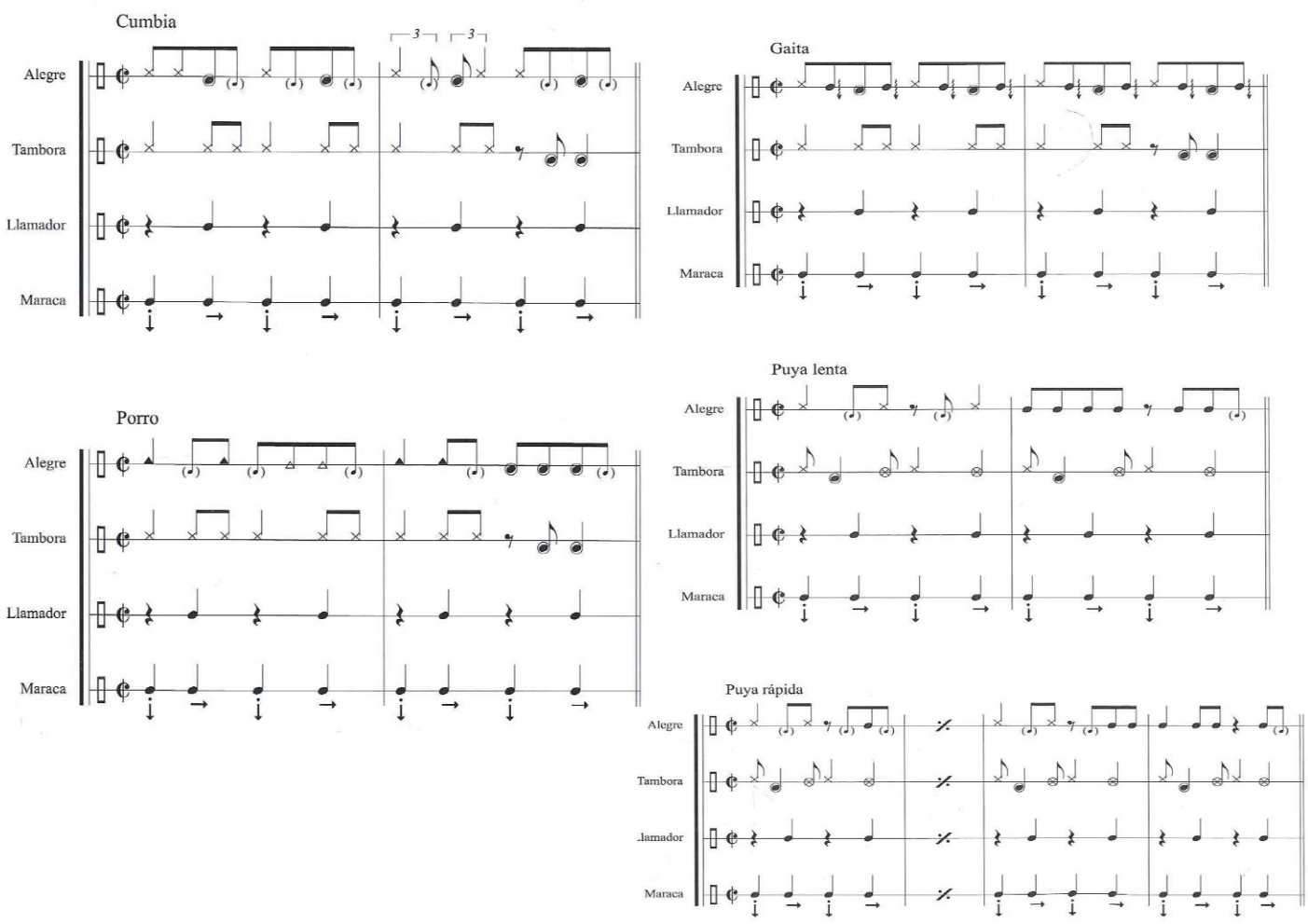

Fig. 6: Basic rhythmic patterns of the main genres.[71]

3.6. Language

Beyond analyzing the genres and their basic structures, it is crucial to explore the language of gaita music to fully grasp its cultural context and the stories it tells. At first glance, it may seem challenging to reconcile the dual realities of a society affected by conflict, exclusion, and violence with the festive nature of these musical genres. For this reason, it is necessary to take a look at the roots that gave rise to these genres.

[71] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.48

The Koguis and Ijkas perform songs with onomatopoeic syllables, especially related to hunting and the control of some animals.[72] Considering the indigenous elements that compose gaita music, we can see the importance of their songs to peasant tasks: the significant value of their labor and the enjoyment of their own territory.

Looking at the relation with African music, sub-Saharan genres have also developed from the importance of singing as a generative model of their musical styles, we see the presence of responsorial songs understood as an essential aspect of musical organization, more colloquially called "call and response."[73] Similarly, there is the presence of African tuning patterns in several of these genres, which can be characteristically perceived not only in Colombia but in other regions of Afro-American denomination in music[74]. Regarding the rhythmic part, we also see the presence of crossed rhythms or compound rhythms, as well as the inadequately used term of syncopation, which becomes common when talking about African and Afro-American music from the perspective of theoretical assumptions to describe the use of simultaneous rhythmic patterns in a musical ensemble or in the performance of an instrument[75]. These elements are key in the relationship between music and language, considering that for African genres there is also a close relationship between song and the model of expression (this added to dance); There is evidence that certain rhythmic patterns may originate in linguistic patterns, and in the words of Egberto Bermúdez:

> "This indication has immense value when brought to the terrain that concerns us where many Afro-American populations still use survivals of African languages in the way they use colonial languages (Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, etc.) and that in rare occasions have a living African lexicon in creole languages such as that of the San Basilio Palenque."[76]

All this relationship between rhythmic, melodic resources and language results in the use of romances, coplas, and décimas in much of the national territory, and naturally, for the topic that concerns us, in gaita music. The décimas that captivate the country people comprise

[72] Bermúdez (1987), p.92.
[73] Bermúdez, (2005), p.234.
[74] Ibid. , p.236.
[75] Ibid., p.232.
[76] Ibid., p.239.

themes native to the region.[77] This important element, combined with the constant presence of a clear metric reference performed by the maraca and the Llamador, providing a scheme on which motifs from the Tambor Alegre and the Tambora are added, weave a base from which the expressive and leading melodies of the gaitas build interpretative styles of a unique emotional expression of the region.

The danceable character is related to the fact that all the sound elements produce a high level of activity and are related to a positive valence.[78] Many songs from the region (beyond Musica de Gaitas) not only express joy through their rhythmic elements but also denote carefree through the simplicity of their harmony, the flexibility of their text, and form. A happy atmosphere is created that appears as something natural, and in the midst of which emotions like sadness or fear could only appear due to other elements such as an accident, bad news, a bad memory, etc[79]. Songs like "Cero Treinta y Nueve" by Alejo Durán (It is not a song native to gaita music, but its genre, vallenato, belongs to the original genres of the Caribbean region of Colombia) serve as an example of the possible differences in interpretations according to different listening contexts, to understand how the same song can accompany and reinforce contradictory emotional experiences such as a party and a mourning process. Despite the evident negative valence of its text, "Cero Treinta y Nueve" became a dance hit throughout the country[80]:

"When I was traveling, I was traveling with my dark-skinned girl
And when we got to the road, she left and left me crying.
Oh! It hurts me, it hurts me, it hurts me
/Oh my God
Zero thirty-nine, zero thirty-nine, zero thirty-nine
/Took her away
My girl left crying and that thing hurts me

[77] Hernández (2014), p.130
[78] Ibid,. p.183
[79] Ibid. p184
[80] Ibid. p.185

The damn car zero thirty-nine took her away".[81]

Original lyrics by: Alejo Durán
Translation by the author

3.7. Role of the Gaita in the Society of Montes de María Region

Villamil says that the nowadays gaita groups format began to configurate when gaita players came down from the mountains to the towns surrounding the Montes de María. They used to join in the streets with the tamboleros, creating the instrumental format known today.[82]

Toño Fernandez, born in San Jacinto, would include the voice with his verses and lyrics over the cumbia rhythms that the others played. His great ability to improvise would give voice to the group "Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto" who, with initiative of Delia Zapata and Manuel Zapata, would come to Bogotá for the first time in the fifties.[83] Catalino Parra, a humble fisherman from Soplaviento in northern Bolívar, who made all kinds of music, would be invited to join this ensemble to enrich it with his décimas and would implement the use of the tambora in the traditional gaita music ensemble. By the 1980s, Catalino Parra and José Lara would come to Cartagena to open for the first time spaces for teaching this music in educational institutions. This is how the seed of gaita would start to be planted in schools and universities in the city of Cartagena.[84]

This is how cumbia would begin its journey, and thanks to the arduous work of Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, it would become known nationally in the format we know today and would spread for the first time to other towns, also starting a sad journey through the violence of recent decades. Its influence in the big cities would be thanks to these emblematic groups,

[81] Alejo Durán, "Cero trenta y nueve", *Los Campeones del Festival Vallenato,* Discos Fuentes, Track 2, 1968, MP3. Translation by the author.
[82] Villamil (2019), p.133.
[83] Ibid., p.133.
[84] Ibid. p.134.

but also due to the need to migrate because of the conditions generated by social inequality, caused by economic and armed conflicts that affect this region but also all of Colombia.

4. Stigmatization and Violence surrounding Afro-Indigenous Music in Colombian History

4.1. European Colonialism

Upon the arrival of the Spanish in the territory that now comprises the American continent, a dispute arose over whether the inhabitants of these new lands had the right to be considered descendants of Adam. Under this concept, they were legitimately enslaved for being considered soulless.[85]

The use of indigenous instruments and dances, as well as those of the newly arrived Africans to Colombian territory, were prohibited from the beginning of the Spanish colony. The demonization of Amerindian music was first recorded in the writings of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1478-1557), who visited the Darién region of Colombia in 1510. In these writings, he describes the indigenous chants (along with their instruments and dances) that accompany indigenous rituals and compares shamans (ritual specialists) to the Christian devil. Unfortunately, in the subsequent years, followers of this view would justify the systematic destruction of Amerindian musical culture.[86]

Missionaries like the Jesuit Pedro Claver would seize instruments in exchange for ransom money after it was forbidden around 1573 in Cartagena for black people to dance with their

[85] Hernández (2007), p.247.
[86] Egberto Bermúdez, (2010), p.251.

drums in public. In the following years, only the presence of gaitas would be noted among the indigenous people who retreated into the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta.[87]

Such persecution and stigmatization made it virtually impossible to find documentation on the musical practices of indigenous population and Africans brought as slaves during the colony.[88] The imperative of evangelization positioned the Spanish at an unquestionable zero point from which they based their efforts to transform the customs of the colonized peoples, steering them away from "barbarism" and towards what they considered the "true" religion.[89] In this sense, music was no more than a pretext for idolatry and for consuming beverages like "Chicha"[90] to stray from Christian customs, as described by Father Juan Rivero:

> "These Giraras are great drunkards; they sit in their drunken revelries for eight days and nights, using their musical instruments and designating hours for the musicians to play them. (...) And playing violently twenty or thirty together, you can imagine the horrible confusion it causes and how it leaves their heads, especially when drums accompany them, so horrible in their noise that their echoes and bangs are heard four to six leagues away. (...) The effort to moderate these drunken revelries and to prevent the fights and disputes that follow costs the Fathers infinite work" (Rivero 1956:118).[91]

The only acceptable music for worship was European Catholic polyphony, which is why missions were carried out to intensely teach "plainchant and organ" singing and to form polyphonic choirs. The Jesuit Mercado, who was invited to celebrate Mass in the town of Cajicá, describes the first indigenous people who learned to read music by note:

> *"*My Father, I am very consoled and have given a thousand thanks to Our Lord for hearing these children because I consider it a miracle that this endeavor of having the Indians know how to sing has succeeded."[92]

[87] Ibid., p.252.
[88] Hernández (2007), p.247.
[89] Ibid., p.7.
[90] Chicha is a fermented (alcoholic) or non-fermented beverage of indigenous communities, emerging from the Andes and Amazonia regions, whose consumption and commercialization were banned in Colombia in 1948.
[91]Juan Rivero, *Historia de las misiones de los llanos de Casanare y los ríos Orinoco y Meta,* (Bogotá, Empresa Nacional de Publicaciones,1956), p.118.
[92]José Ignacio Perdomo Escobar, *Historia de la Música en Colombia*, (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1945), p.19.

4.2. Independence

The wars of independence were carried out in the early 19th century by the Creoles (Sons of Spaniards born in the new kingdom), suggesting a rebellion of Spanish power in America against the central power of the crown.[93] This rebellion of the Creole son against his European father signified the rise of a new elite that would govern the territory, using expressions and symbols from indigenous cultures to turn them into national pride and patriotism in flags, coins, hieroglyphs, speeches, poetry, music, and dance. However, the reality for indigenous and African communities was that despite the abolition of slavery in later years, they continued to be militarily and economically pressured, forcing them to flee to the periphery where they maintained their languages and cultures until being "rediscovered" throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In these centuries, the relationship between music and politics would define the concept of "Colombianity"[94].

The subsequent phenomena in music can be understood through what Aníbal Quijano addresses as the notion of the Coloniality of Power, where the colonized gradually naturalized European forms of knowledge production and transmission as the most evolved, refined, seductive, and ultimately the only possible ones for those who wanted to be in power.[95] Thus, the preference for genres alluding to European music like waltzes and polkas persisted through the mid-19th century.[96]

In this context, the racist discourses of superiority inherited by the Creoles were consolidated, where people tried to hide any mixed blood from their past.[97] Communities in cold climates felt superior to those in warmer or jungle areas, considering their intellect greater.[98] The Atlantic coast, being the country's entry point, had greater coverage regarding the description of instruments and dances. However, possibly in a racist stance, Daniel Zamudio (1885-1952)

[93] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.28.
[94] Bermúdez (2010)., p.254.
[95] Aníbal Quijano, *"Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social"*, In *Journal of World System Research*, (New York: Special Issue, 2000, p.343.
[96] Ellie Anne Duque, *La música en las publicaciones periódicas colombianas del siglo XIX (1848-1860),* (Bogotá: Fvndacion de Mvsica,1998).
[97] Hernández (2007), p.250.
[98] Ibid., p.250.

did not include transcriptions of Afro-Colombian music in his work on the country's traditional music, presented as a conference in 1936 and published only in 1949.[99]

The shift in economic dependency and the independence wars of the early 19th century created a patriotic identity with national music, where the piano became the bourgeois instrument par excellence.[100] It wasn't until the mid-20th century, and only after suppressing non-European instruments as much as possible, that bambuco became national genre. The choice of this music as the nation's emblem was thus influenced by the need for a sound less Andean and more European, or in other words, whiter.[101] Consequently, despite independence, racist and classist attitudes of "blood purity" extended beyond skin color to a "whitening" of legitimate music.[102]

4.3. Whitening of Music

In 1701, Joseph Sauver published his research on the "natural chord," now known as the series of natural harmonics. This paved the way for Jean-Philippe Rameau to write his first Baroque treatise, *Traité de l'harmonie, réduite à ses principes naturels.*[103] The same author writes in his preface:

> "Music is a science that should have defined rules; these rules should be deduced from an evident principle, and this principle cannot really be known to us without the help of mathematics."[104]

In this sense, where music should not be separated from mathematics, black, mestizo, and indigenous genres strayed even further from the European scientific study zero point. According to this theoretical assumption, they were in an "intuitive stage."[105] This zero point became a new argument to exclude any expression not based on theoretical composition

[99] Bermúdez (2005), p.219.
[100] Bermúdez (2010), p.255.
[101] Hernández (2007), p.251.
[102] Ibid., p.247.
[103] Ibid., p.252.
[104] Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Treatise on Harmony*, (New York: Dover, 1971), xxxv.
[105] Hernández (2007), p.253.

parameters and, in subsequent effects, the exclusion of any non-European music from the programs of the National Conservatory of Colombia. Even the construction of indigenous or African instruments would be considered deficient to approach the scientific parameters of music.[106]

In Colombia, there is a sense of "otherness" toward sound manifestations that have not undergone this process of "sonic whitening," and these colonial imaginaries were naturalized not only by the Creole elite but by the majority of the population during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.[107]

The music of the Atlantic coast fulfilled all these conditions to be excluded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: Cumbia, for example, was associated with the mixing of indigenous and African races, seen as primitive and unintelligible, its basic and rustic construction instruments carrying repetitive melodies of simple structure.[108]

4.4. First Consumer Society

The geopolitical reorganization caused by World War I shifted the dominant white center, making the United States the leading military power. The formation of the first consumer society, the invention of the phonograph, and the popularization of the radio (which happened in Colombia in the 1930s) were key factors in changing musical preferences in Caribbean countries. Cuban music experienced a notable international boom in the 1920s, making its genres the most favored by the Colombian elites. Barranquilla became the main entry port for the phonographic industry in the country, now subordinate to North American preferences. The new hegemonic music displaced the old European dances.[109]

[106] Ibid., p.253.
[107] Ibid., p.256.
[108] Peter Wade, *Música, raza y nación: música tropical en Colombia*, (Bogotá: Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, 2002), pp. 80-85.
[109] Hernández (2007), p.258.

Colonial imaginaries of music adapted to new political and social conditions, where coastal elites, "proud of their whiteness, in contrast to the blackness and indigeneity of the popular sectors," sought to "re-signify their own music as a genuinely regional but also modern product, a rhythm with black roots, but now dressed in a tuxedo, that is, respectable and whitewashed."[110] This phenomenon made African influences and lexicons in the music of Palenque de San Basilio attract the attention of the industry and researchers.[111] As we have seen before, the free meter and other structural characteristics of Caribbean genres made the task of transcribing and describing work songs difficult according to academic methods. However, the rise of foreign genres required this necessary transformation to be part of the joy and celebration that signified progress and modernity. By the 1940s, these connotations of joy and celebration were linked to Cuban and North American genres, while Cumbia and Porro were still conceived as peasant music.[112]

The rise of Big Bands filled the spheres of the high elites with groups dedicated to fashionable foreign repertoires. Dances and parties were held around the "Rumba." High-class hotels and clubs were the stage for these groups, which eventually filled the programs of national radio stations. At this point, Colombian coastal music gradually joined their repertoires, not before being "made up" and "arranged" for the new formats. It was then that Porro and Cumbia were considered "national rumbas." However, this denomination did not refer to traditional groups with Gaita and Tambores but to those performed by orchestras in Big Band formats, such as the *Orquesta Sosa* and the *Jazz Band de la Emisora Atlántico*, or the of *Anastasio Bolívar Jazz Band* and the orchestra of Efraín Orozco in Bogotá.[113]

The advance of coastal music in high-class environments scandalized intellectuals of the time, who saw it as an "Africanization" of the country that endangered the "national spirit."[114] However, the new "national rumba" aimed to create an image of progress and positivism and

[110] Wade (2002), pp.135-136.
[111] Bermúdez (2005), p.4.
[112] Hernández (2014), p.125.
[113] Ibid., 125.
[114] Renán Silva, *Sociedades campesinas, transición social y cambio cultural en Colombia. La encuesta folclórica nacional de 1942: aproximaciones empíricas y analíticas*, (Medellín: La Carreta Social, 2006), p.94.

participation in dances that allowed experiencing moderation and, at the same time, desire through the body, an experience not expressible through words.[115]

In Colombia, there was then a pressure to generate joyful music within the industry for consumption by the upper classes, who in the 1940s sought to approach the carefree image of mambo and rumba that represented the American society of the time. It was thus that Lucho Bermúdez, amid the tension between the national and the foreign, between tradition and modernity, emerged with his orchestra on radio broadcasts like "la hora costeña" after signing a contract at the "Club Metropolitan" in Bogotá in 1944. The program "la hora costeña" convinced Bogota citizens that they also had very joyful music, envying nothing from the foreign genres from Caribbean islands like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, or Puerto Rico.[116]

The apparent success of Cumbia and Porro in the mid-20th century is, however, another point to analyze within the racism and stigmatization of the original Música de Gaitas from the Montes de María region: In the same mid-century, Delia Zapata (a folklorist, dancer, and promoter of Afro-descendant dances from the Caribbean) could not move freely within her beloved homeland. In 1953, she attempted to present "Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto" at the Teatro Colon in Bogotá, generating great controversy due to the refusal of director Fernando Arbeláez, who maintained that this was a space for operas and symphonic music and not for popular dances. Finally, Delia Zapata, along with her brother Manuel Zapata, were the ones who took this group (with tickets paid on credit) and many other icons of Afro-Colombian folklore (like Toto la Momposina and Leonor González Mina) to perform on international stages after their investigative work in the Colombian Caribbean and Pacific.[117]

At this point, we can see how the genres of cumbia and porro, originally from gaita music, had their rise and popularity throughout the country, not out of a desire to exalt their origins, society, or culture, but due to the instrumentalization of their rhythms by the industry and

[115] Hernández (2014), p.128.
[116] José Portaccio Fontalvo, *Carmen tierra mía. Lucho Bermúdez*, (Bogotá: authors edition,1997), p.66.
[117] José Luis Garcés González, "Hermanos Zapata Olivella, íconos de la tradición afro en Colombia," *Revista Semana,* 10th June 2024, ISSN 2745-2794.

the birth of a consumer society with new aspirations for social ascent.[118] Their joyful and festive character appropriated by the great orchestras hid behind their joy one of the most violent stages in Colombian history. The era known as “La Violencia.”

4.5. "La Violencia" and Cultural Industry

The 1930s were characterized by strong tension between economic liberalism and interventionism. The revolutionary tint of those years and the strong presence of leftist sectors (including unions, the Communist Party, and the National Revolutionary Leftist Union UNIR led by Jorge Eliecer Gaitán) awakened fears among conservatives, the church, and liberal elites. The attempt to nationalize radio in 1936 generated strong resistance from private stations, forcing the government to drop the project. The commercial broadcasting model imported by the United States aimed to attract mass audiences to facilitate commercial exchanges in an industrializing economy.[119]

World War II hit large industrial economic sectors, forcing stations to accept government intervention, re-founding the National Broadcasting of Colombia (Radiodifusora Nacional de Colombia). Its primary objective was cultural diffusion as an educational tool. Its audience was limited, and although there are no clear statistics, it is known that there was stiff competition from private stations that exerted enough pressure to regulate broadcasting on principles similar to those existing in the United States.[120]

The assassination of political leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán on April 9, 1948, during his presidential candidacy, after his significant denunciations against oligarchic excesses, led to the violent reaction of the people and brutal government repression in the episode known as "El Bogotazo." This intensified the period known in Colombia as "La Violencia."[121] According

[118] Hernández (2014), p.132.
[119] Ibid., p.144.
[120] Ibid., p.147.
[121] Según Daniel Pécaut: “No hay una cronología precisa que pueda asignarse a *La Violencia*. No hay ningún acontecimiento que habiéndola impulsado constituya un origen, y proyecte sobre *La Violencia* el distintivo de su significación"(1986).

to Paul Oquist, only between 1948 and 1953, bipartisan violence resulted in more than 140,000 deaths, representing 1% of the Colombian population at that time.[122]

During the days of "El Bogotazo," the radio took on a fundamental role. The Emisora Panamericana radio station took microphones to one of the capital's main avenues to broadcast what was happening, while the National Broadcasting of Colombia was taken over by poet Jorge Zalamea Borda and Captain José Phillips to issue revolutionary messages, and the conservative party's main broadcaster "Voz de Colombia" was looted and burned by demonstrators. This situation was used by President Ospina to exercise absolute control over radio and communications in the country, also seeking not to affect industrial interests. For this reason, the intervention laid the foundations for "self-censorship" of programming, seeking "objectivity and political neutrality."[123]

In 1949, despite the dire conditions left by "La Violencia" in the country, the president of Asociación Nacional de Empresarios Industriales (ANDI): National Association of Industrialists, declared: "the Colombian situation is today the best it has ever been."[124] The good performance of macroeconomic indicators would be the pretext to insist on not stopping interventionism and fostering free competition.[125] These apparent indicators of economic progress went hand in hand with the growth of the phonographic industry in Colombia. Economic interests were directed to project a positive image promoted by a cultural policy stemming from private industrial initiatives. The music disseminated had to pass through this filter of positivism and regional or patriotic pride. Violence was conspicuously absent in musical production, and those songs that became national symbols came from areas with significant industrial development accompanied by a strong regionalist sense. Only some later songs, like "A quien engañas abuelo," would make some allusions to the violence of past years.[126]

[122] Daniel Pécaut, *Orden y violencia. Colombia 1930-1953*, (Medellín: Universidad EAFIT, 2012), pp.501-502
[123] Reynaldo Pareja, *Historia de la radio en Colombia: 1929-1980*, (Bogotá: Servicio Colombiano de Comunicación Social, 1984), pp. 69-70
[124] *El Siglo* Newspaper, 3th December 1949, quoted in Hernández, *Los mitos de la música nacional* (2014), p.156
[125] Pécaut (2012), p.522
[126] Hernandez (2014), p.165

The advancement of the phonographic industry created a separation between the romanticized image of the Colombian peasant and the daily reality of rural areas in the 1950s. Egberto Bermúdez expresses it this way:

> "The hat, white trousers, and red neckerchiefs of 'Los Tolimenses' of the late 1950s only look grotesque against the backdrop of the thousands of real peasants who died only in their own region (Tolima) in the years of LA VIOLENCIA. Peasants (and by extension Colombian Indians and the descendants of Africans) and their voices were very poorly represented in Colombian popular song; the disguises of performers and dancers and their imitations of vernacular language always managed to fool the majority of the public. In the very few cases they made it to radio stations and recording studios, they were underpaid and their rights swiped and registered in others' names, generally those of the producers and industry owners. And, as many sad cases illustrate, they died in poverty."[127]

The country was going through a huge loss on many levels, and the hope for a popular government had vanished with the death of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán. However, the economic moment demanded this proud attitude promoted by those who encouraged political confrontation through sectarian and demagogic positions.[128]

Lucho Bermúdez emerged in this context, seeking to break the racial and cultural barriers that separated the interior of the country from the Caribbean regions. However, by becoming the musician who "dressed in a tuxedo" the Porro and Cumbia, he also created a paradisiacal imaginary of coastal life for the consumption of the interior society, seeking that imaginary escape from the reality of bipartisan violence in Colombia. This argument allows us to understand the differences in the emotional characteristics contained in different repertoires of the atlantic coast.[129]

In this context, Música de Gaitas still had no voice for listeners from other regions. The Montes de María region was still far from the industrial and phonographic development of the whole country. Violence was beginning to morph into the creation of communist

[127] Bermúdez, Egberto. "From Colombian "National Song" to "Colombian Song"". *Lied und Populäre Kultur* No. 53. (2008): 259.
[128] Hernández (2014), p.167.
[129] Ibid., 169.

guerrillas and paramilitary groups in the service of private interests. The civilian population remained in the middle of the war.

5. El Salado Massacre

To discuss the armed conflict in Colombia, it is necessary to refer to the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH): National Center of Historic Memory, a public national institution in Colombia attached to the Departamento para la Prosperidad Social (DPS): Department for Social Prosperity. Its principal aim is: “to collect, recover, preserve, compile, and analyze all documentary material, oral testimonies, and any other evidence related to the violations that occurred during the Colombian internal armed conflict. This is achieved through research, museum activities, educational initiatives, and other efforts that help to establish and clarify the causes of such phenomena, uncover the truth, and contribute to preventing their recurrence in the future”.[130]

In the context of war, the victims have always been filling the loss statistics, and it was only after the Holocaust of World War II that, at least normatively, their protection, recognition, and reparation were given importance.[131] However, the reality of the civilian population in the Montes de María is one of invisibility and stigmatization after suffering threats, forced recruitment, forced displacement, enforced disappearance, murder, torture, among other crimes by all armed actors.[132] In this case, as analyst Stathis Kalyvas asks, "to what extent do populations under the control of one or another armed actor have different options other than collaborating with the dominant one?"[133] In the context of the Colombian conflict, and particularly in the Montes de María, there is a succession of stigmas against the civilian population: they are stigmatized as guerrillas by paramilitaries and state authorities, as

[130] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, “Contexto”, *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*, Accessed September 19, 2024. https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/contexto/.
[131] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.8.
[132] Ibid., p.10.
[133] Stathis Kalyvas. “*La violencia en medio de una guerra civil: esbozo de una teoría”*, in: *Revista Análisis Político*, N° 42,(2001).

traitors by the guerrillas, and even after suffering the terrible El Salado massacre, they are called "paracos" or collaborators of paramilitary groups.[134]

Understanding this phenomenon that affects the civilian population, we can see how their entire social cohesion is reconfigured. Not only are deaths, disappearances, displacement, and the devastated territory evident, but also a profound transformation of acquired social and community organizations. As described by the CNMH: "the expressions of cultural life silenced."[135]

The El Salado massacre was characterized, among other things, by the silence of its victims due to the risk that words represented, but also because the mass media first gave voice to the perpetrators, who instead of showing remorse or confessing the truths of the war, took the opportunity to justify the events and revictimize the residents of this district. Silence became a survival strategy for its inhabitants and a clear obstacle to processing the events: The inhabitants do not speak directly about the massacre but rather refer to it as "when that happened," as the cruelty of the events seems to defy the ability to narrate them.[136]

5.1. Prelude to the Massacre

El Salado is a district of the municipality of El Carmen de Bolívar, within the Montes de María, known for being the tobacco center of the Colombian Caribbean. The fertility of its lands led to significant economic development around the cultivation, production, and commercialization of tobacco. Thanks to its prosperity, it had its own aqueduct, electricity, public lighting, a health center with staff and adequate equipment, a school, and a high school. All this served its approximately 7,000 inhabitants in the period before the massacre.[137] At that time, "Competencias de portón" (sporadic gatherings of musicians in front of house gates to showcase their skills playing their instruments and singing) were common, filling the streets with vallenato, porro, and cumbia. El Salado was described by the

[134] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.11.
[135] Ibid., p.14.
[136] Ibid., p.16.
[137] Ibid., pp.21-22.

journalist Gómez Alonso in her article for the Journal “El Espectador” as a town full of dance, music, and festivities surrounded by farming activities and promising prosperity.[138]

The constant attacks by the 35th and 37th fronts of the FARC on the town's police post forced the withdrawal of the only officers serving in the district in the mid-90s. The guerrilla's dominance in the area allowed for extortion and robberies against wealthy ranchers, businessmen, and landowners in the area, among them Santander Cohen, who was killed in 1995 for refusing to pay extortion. His murder occurred during a guerrilla ambush where 27 marines and a lieutenant colonel who were trying to protect him during his escape also died. This event marked El Salado with the stigma of a guerrilla town, blaming its inhabitants for allowing the attack. The consequence was a first massacre perpetrated in 1997, where an armed group, apparently sent by local ranchers, killed five people. The victims, including a teacher, were accused of collaborating with the guerrilla. The terror caused the first displacement of families, who timidly returned in the following months when the army made their presence in the area.[139]

The tension grew when, at the end of 1999, the inhabitants saw the guerrilla herding around 450 cattle through the town's streets, which had been stolen from Enilse Lopez, a powerful businesswoman with strong political influences in the area (whose father had been kidnapped and three of her brothers killed by the guerrilla). Although the animals never reappeared, the police accused the guerrilla of distributing the cattle among El Salado's inhabitants. On December 23, 1999, an unknown helicopter flew over the town, dropping threatening leaflets over the urban area saying: "Eat the chickens and cattle and enjoy everything you can this year because you won't enjoy it anymore."[140]

[138] Gabriela Gómez Alonso, “El Salado: historia de una resiliencia musical”, *El Espectador,* (June 22, 2018), https://www.elespectador.com/el-magazin-cultural/el-salado-historia-de-una-resiliencia-musical-article-795903/.
[139] Marta Ruiz, “Fiesta de sangre: así fue la masacre de El Salado”, *Revista Semana*, (Last modified February 16, 2020), https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/masacre-de-el-salado-como-la-planearon-y-ejecutaron-los-paramilitares/557580/.
[140] Ibid.

5.2. The Events

The investigation carried out by the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH): National Center of Historic Memory, defines that the massacre extended from February 16 to 21, 2000, considering the victims from the nearby districts and villages of El Salado. "A total of 60 fatal victims were identified,[141] 52 men and 8 women, among them three minors under 18, 12 youths between 18 and 25 years old, 10 young adults between 26 and 35 years old, 23 adults between 36 and 55 years old, and 10 elderly adults (...) two survivors of episodes of sexual violence were also recorded."[142]

The massacre was perpetrated by 450 paramilitaries divided into three groups who surrounded El Salado on three of its four access routes. The first victims were recorded on February 16 on the road leading to El Salado from the urban area of El Carmen de Bolívar, where a paramilitary checkpoint stopped a car and, after interrogating its occupants, killed Edith Cárdenas Ponce and Carlos Eduardo Díaz Ortega, leaving health promoter María Cabrera (who would later be killed by the FARC) and her husband free. They ran to the town to warn their relatives and friends, triggering the first mass flight of the town's inhabitants to the surrounding mountains.[143] During the first day of the massacre, on their way through the nearby villages and while heading to the urban area, the paramilitaries killed 24 people.[144] Many of the peasants who fled their homes could not withstand the harsh conditions of the surrounding mountains and decided to return on February 17, according to testimonies collected by the CNMH, fearing death from hunger and thirst, perceiving the risk had ceased, or convinced they had done nothing to justify their flight.[145]

These testimonies also account for the overflight of a ghost plane on the night of their return (February 17), which contrasts with the questioned withdrawal of a marine infantry battalion on February 15, 2000, deployed to provide security to El Salado. This change in the military

[141] Since 2008, the nation's attorney general's office has recognized more than 100 fatalities and 23 missing people.
[142] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.28.
[143] Ibid., p.28.
[144] Ibid., p.31.
[145] Ibid., p.33.

disposition occurred due to a report of an apparent new theft of 400 cattle from businessman and politician Miguel Nule, who reported this to the battalion command responsible for the area. The movement of the armed forces to another area left the town without military presence on the eve of the massacre and curiously allowed the paramilitaries' entry without any resistance from state forces.[146] This fact is relevant for the CNMH considering that previous violence events had already been recorded, and their severity warranted the consolidation of a constant military protection device. The only resistance the paramilitaries encountered on their way to El Salado came from the guerrilla camps in the vicinity, which were easily overcome by the support of an armed helicopter and the paramilitaries' strong concentration.[147] By February 18, the hostilities inside and outside the urban area only generated panic among the inhabitants, who hesitated between fleeing or hiding in their homes. The paramilitary incursion with the support of the armed helicopter impacted a house on the town's main street, killing the first victim from the town: Libardo Trejos Garrido.[148]

On February 18, when guerrilla hostilities ceased, the paramilitaries entered the town, going door to door, kicking in doors, and forcing all inhabitants to go to the main square. All this was amid insults and shouts accusing the inhabitants of being guerrillas. Those who resisted or refused to comply were killed on the spot. Many of those who chose to flee encountered the paramilitary blockade and were also killed. Meanwhile, a group of perpetrators went to the Casa de la Cultura, stole musical instruments, and took them to the central square, the epicenter of what the CNMH categorizes as the "Spectacle of Horror."[149]

They gathered the people in the main square and asked them to separate the men from the women. The men were placed on one side of the soccer field, and the women and children were locked in the house of Margoth Fernández Ochoa, located right in front of the field. The women were forced to cook for the paramilitaries while they began the selective torture and killings in front of the present people. The first chosen victim was Eduardo Novoa Alvis. The event was testified by a survivor to the CNMH:

[146] Ibid., p.31.
[147] Ibid., p.33.
[148] Ibid., p.34.
[149] Ibid., p.37.

"In the field, they told us 'men to one side and women to the other,' and they threw us face down there. They immediately took aside a young man, told him, 'you stay here with us because you escaped from Zambrano, but this time you won't escape,' they said. He was the first they killed in the field. They put a bag over his head and cut off an ear first, [...] they laid him down and put the bag over his head, he screamed not to kill him, they hit him in the stomach, kicks, punches in the face, they broke his entire face first, and they told us 'look so you learn, so you see what will happen to you, so start talking,' they said. Then we told them 'what are we going to talk about if we don't know anything?.' After they threw him in the field, they shot him [...] his death took a long time. It is terrible to see how someone complains during that agony[…]"[150]

After the torture and execution of Eduardo Novoa Alvis, the paramilitaries who had taken the instruments from the Casa de la Cultura began playing a Tambora, while the atrocities continued in front of those present. There are testimonies collected by Historical Memory that also indicate the manipulation of Gaitas:

"They took some Tamboras, accordions, there was a Gaita group over here. They sent those instruments to be played by the youngest ones, they took control over everything. That football field, back then, whenever someone died, they were playing the Tambora, they were playing the accordion and everything. If they had tape recorders, because there were good tape recorders in the houses, they would even take the tape recorders and play music with all that. When they killed, they played. It was like a party for them."[151]

The subsequent murders occurred by chance, as they did not find the people they were looking for with a list in hand. They searched among the crowd for any sign of being guerrillas, such as shoulder marks from heavy backpack use, absence of hair on the calves due to wearing boots, or marks on the hands indicating the use of weapons. A lottery was held to select the victims, claiming that all men were obligated to cooperate. They were forced to line up, and those who had a pre-assigned number were forcibly taken, tortured, and subsequently murdered.[152] The following two testimonies come from survivors who recounted to CNMH the cruelty of the events:

[150] Testimony N°7, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.36
[151] Testimony N°2, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p. 36
[152] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.37.

"When they said: 'We are going to do here some questions, those who speak are saved, those who doesn't , you already know what does it come'. The question was if the guerilla was living here, if the guerilla had women here, if the guerilla was dancing here, if there was someone cooking for the guerilla and so many other questions. 'If they pass here or there, we don't know'. So they said 'don't you know?, so you are going to have to talk'. They began in that way, […] that guy El Tigre arrived, he stood in front of me, he raised the hand and said 'Let's begin, whoever gets the number 30 dies'. there was the man who got the number 30 [Ermindes Cohen], my number was 18. I just said: 'My god, it's not me'. The number 30 was over there […] he was a man of around 60 years, he was killed with knifes, he was tortured […] they told him: 'where is the guerilla to save you?, tell them to come'[…]".[153]

"Around two in the afternoon, they said, 'Well, now we are going to do a tough draw here. Here are all the men, let's count from 1 to 30. The one who gets 10 will not be spared,' and they counted, one, two, imagine my brother there; then from 1 to 30, they counted 30 and it fell on a man, my brother was about two people away, they killed him".[154]

The massacre in El Salado continued throughout the day while music played in the central square, only stopping when one of the perpetrators received a radio message to halt the killings, emphasizing that enough people had already been killed.[155] The paramilitaries decided to distribute goods they had looted from stores among the survivors, instructing them to return home and have food ready. They also ordered them to keep their doors open and prevented them from collecting the bodies of their family members, neighbors, or friends who lay on the ground after the massacre. While the survivors remained in distress, the paramilitaries spent the rest of the night consuming alcohol and wandering through the town, painting graffiti on the walls with messages such as "Pharisees. Swindlers, Thieves of Colombia", "The guerrillas only bring mourning", "Guerrilla. If you want peace, join the AUC".[156] Historical Memory states that on February 18th, the massacre ended with 28 victims: 23 men and five women. Seventeen were murdered on the sports field, six in their own homes, and five in the mountains.[157]

[153] Testimony N°4, Centro de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.38
[154] Testimony N°2, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.38.
[155] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.42
[156] Ibid., p.43.
[157] Ibid., p.42.

On February 19th, around 5 p.m., the paramilitaries withdrew from the town, and it was only an hour later that the marines arrived in El Salado. Only at this point could the inhabitants collect their dead, who were laid out on tables inside the church to be mourned overnight. The marines warned the survivors to stay in the town, arguing that they could not guarantee their safety outside of it.[158] Despite the army's presence, the tragedy continued until February 21st, 2000, as the perpetrators remained in the surrounding area where they carried out more murders of civilians.[159]

The CNMH questions the irregularity of the Marine Infantry's actions in the presence of more than 450 paramilitaries in the area, who retreated through different main routes to El Salado without being detected, fought against, or captured by the public force during the days of the massacre.[160] Initially, after the withdrawal of the paramilitaries, the Marines did not allow the International Red Cross or the relatives of the townspeople to enter the area, as they arrived in the village to find out the whereabouts of their loved ones. According to the Marines, the roads were supposedly mined. Investigators from the Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación (CTI): Attorney General's Office, were only able to enter between February 21st and 22nd, encountering a crime scene deeply altered. The displacement of more than 4,000 people and the profound fear of the few inhabitants who remained there prevented the collection of statements from survivors.[161]

After the massacre, constant persecution by the paramilitaries forced many survivors to move between several major cities. The El Salado district would be turned into a ghost town.[162]

5.3. The Music Amidst Terror

The El Salado massacre showcases the paramilitaries' strategies for displaying violence in the Montes de María. Their crimes in the region were characterized by using the cultural symbols

[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., p.45.
[160] Ibid., p.46.
[161] Ibid., p.214.
[162] Ibid., p.49.

of the inhabitants to perpetuate torture and by gathering people in the main squares with the explicit intention that everyone be "punished" for their alleged complicity. According to the CNMH report, terror with an audience aims to prolong the suffering of survivors by forcing them to witness these atrocities.[163]

The terror reconfigured socially constructed places for sociability in El Salado. The church, the soccer field, and the central square were places that residents used for religious services, popular festivals, public acts, and assemblies. Gatherings around play, celebration, and music were reinterpreted by the atrocities that took place there. Not only these acts of cruelty but also their inscription in a kind of staging where the gaita music instruments sounded after the death of each victim. The sound systems that the paramilitaries turned up loudly in the stores and houses they looted led journalistic chronicles and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) reports to label the massacre as a "blood festival" or "paramilitary dance of death".[164]

According to CNMH, the use of celebration and music, even if unplanned, channels messages to their enemies and the community: the subjugation of the population constitutes a victory over the adversary, and the music proclaims with its festive sense the violation of the enemy's order. This resource is part of a practice of extreme cruelty that deepens the degradation of the victims' dignity and intensifies the humiliation suffered by the survivors. The suppression of empathy for others is evident in forcing people to be spectators of martyrdom, agony, and destruction.[165]

The terror and brutality of the paramilitaries in El Salado sought not only the physical destruction of its inhabitants but also an attack on their symbols of sociability and peasant life. Not only was music instrumentalized in their torture, but also other valuable and significant elements were subjected to extreme violence. The looting of homes, the death and disappearance of animals, the stripping of clothing, and the graffiti on the walls of houses all constitute an attack on the peasant symbols of the community.[166]

[163] Ibid., p.62.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., p 63.
[166] Ibid., p.73.

The murders of community leaders were aimed at intimidating the community into taking leadership roles, as well as attacking the emotional circles of alleged guerrillas through violence against women (including sexual violence) simply for being mothers or partners of supposed subversives. Forcing women to cook also represents another humiliation for them, as they not only had to witness atrocities but also provide food to their own victimizers.[167]

The immense terror employed between February 16th and 21st, 2000, transcends any intention of "long-term population control". According to MH, the intention behind these atrocities was to end the town, empty the territory, and expel the inhabitants forever.[168] It can be understood through analyst Eric Lair: "In Colombia, some violence perpetrated against populations is rather designed to provoke lasting paralyzing terror. In other words, Colombian armed actors seem to integrate the capacities of terror inherent in their often long-term strategic purposes."[169]

5.4. Memory

It is important to highlight that the massacre was initially obscured, and at first (February 17-21), the media gave voice to the Colombian Armed Forces, who claimed that fifteen civilians had died in clashes between the FARC guerrillas and paramilitary groups. Following this (February 22-March 1), the Attorney General's Office of the Nation stated that what had happened was a massacre. In response to this accusation by the judicial entity, the paramilitaries issued a statement questioning the veracity of these declarations, and although they assumed responsibility for the events, they framed what happened as a “precise” anti-subversive operation and placed responsibility on their enemy for hiding among the inhabitants of the district.[170]

[167] Ibid., p.72.
[168] Ibid., p.74.
[169] Eric Lair, *“El Terror, Recurso Estratégico de los Actores Armados”* In: Análisis Político No 37, IEPRI, (Bogotá, 2000), pp.70-71
[170] Colombia Libre. Autodefensas Unidades de Colombia. *Carta Abierta a Pablo Elías González. Director Nacional del CTI*, (Colombia, February 23, 2000), quoted in Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, p.85.

The paramilitaries' media campaign included the appearance of the AUC commander, Carlos Castaño, for the first time on television, granting an interview to journalist Darío Arizmendi on the national broadcast program "Cara a Cara". In that interview, the paramilitary leader delivered a discourse legitimizing counter-insurgent war and framed what happened as a "precise military operation". He also stated that "with an incursion like this, a greater evil was being prevented". When questioned by the journalist about acts of barbarism in the presence of community members themselves, selective torture, and killings, Carlos Castaño responded: "I think that the stories of torture are horror novels, misinformation from witnesses in the area. No... the tortures of the AUC forces, that's a lie. In some cases, shooting a person, it's possible. For us, guerrillas are a military target, whether they are in civilian clothes or in uniform."[171]

CNMH asserts that the memories of the victims are marginalized, not so much because they were not recorded in the media, but because the versions of the perpetrators and state institutions were always prioritized. Their voices only came to light when the events were no longer current for mass media.[172] However, the perpetrators openly continued to invalidate and minimize the victims, omitting the atrocities and emphasizing what was not done. An example of this is the statements made in voluntary testimonies before the judiciary by John Jairo Esquivel, alias "El Tigre", one of the main responsible for the massacre: "Nothing extraordinary was done, they were normal deaths, there were no hangings, no looting of stores or cattle steal. These people must be more serious in saying what happened."[173]

The stigmatization caused by the perpetrators' statements only exposed the residents to becoming new targets of the war, in which they were already victims due to pressure from the FARC. The inhabitants of El Salado blame the guerrillas for the meetings they were forced to attend in the central square, where political harangues were made. For the residents, it

[171] Carlos Castaño, interview by Dario Arizmendi, *Cara a Cara,* Canal Caracol, March 1, 2000, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INvkzJUgn4k&t=610s
[172] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.86.
[173]John Jairo Esquivel Cuadrado alias “El Tigre”, Voluntary testimony, quoted in Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, p.86.

was the FARC who exposed them to a paramilitary incursion and they blame them for fleeing at the time of the massacre.[174]

The terror had such a profound impact on the memories of the residents that they ended up internalizing the discourse of their perpetrators. They blame themselves for being survivors, for allowing themselves to have links with the guerrillas, for being complacent with them, others for their hesitation in not leaving the town in time, or for not confronting the members of the community who identified with the subversives. All these guilt feelings increase the pressure to remain silent.[175]

Violence as a process in the memory of the victims not only occurs before and during the massacre: The return of some of its inhabitants in 2002 was marked by constant pressure from the Colombian Armed Forces, who carried out arbitrary detentions and illegal raids on displaced farmers returning home.[176] The violence did not cease with their return. The residents of this district of Montes de María reclaim their resistance to surviving under such conditions.[177]

According to CNMH, only a critical analysis of the barbarity of the events allows us to understand how victims bear the dimensions of the tragedy. The paradox of war turns the civilian population into victims of all armed actors, without allowing them space to process the events and their consequences. The victims had to settle for being ignored and rely on passive discourses of biased information. Today, both society and the state still do not fully acknowledge what happened. The voices of the victims continue to be sidelined, while the statements of the armed actors have greater echo than the atrocities narrated by the survivors. According to the CNMH report, it is clear that it is a duty to first give voice to the silenced victims, to reconstruct the stories of what happened based on their testimonies. It is a societal need to listen to the victims.[178]

[174] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.108.
[175] Ibid., p.109.
[176] Ibid., p.112.
[177] Ibid., p.113.
[178] Ibid., p.87.

5.5. Impacts on Music in El Salado

The everyday life collapsed for El Salado. The social vacuum created by the massacre led to a dissolution of the elements that defined its inhabitants' identity. The abandonment of the territory shattered the long history of musical traditions passed down through generations. Music as a daily practice was the most affected. The town turned to be a silent place, and the survivors show their inability to regain the joy of their festivities characterized by music and dances of coastal identity.[179]

According to Gabriela Gómez Alonso's article, inside homes, foreign genres replaced the traditional Montemarianos that were once heard in the streets of the town before the massacre.[180] For the CNMH, the main square, once the epicenter of music, became a place mixing the survivors' pain with the difficulty of restoring the lost everyday life due to war.[181] As indicated by Carlos Andrés Muñoz López, the impact of using instruments like flutes and drums amid torture and murder is immeasurable. These instruments, originally donated to the House of Culture to instill a love for the region's traditional music in the youth, ended up as tools of torture during the massacre.[182]

The wound to the region's culture is further highlighted by Gómez Alonso, who in her document presents statements from one of the victims:

> "That's why the paramilitary actions in El Salado transformed the way of life and daily sounds, because they desecrated the sacredness of the territory: music. Soraya Bayuelo, journalist and victim from El Carmen de Bolívar, asserts this: 'They used their perversity to violate that essence of music. They knew hitting the heart of the town would be more painful, more resounding in their memory when they heard a tambora.'"[183]

[179] Ibid., p.158.
[180] Gómez Alonso (2018).
[181] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.159.
[182] Carlos Andrés Muñoz López, (2021). *"La música como elemento de reparación integral en el post conflicto armado, caso El salado, Colombia",* In: *Revista Estudios Socio-Jurídicos*, N°23(2), (November, 2020), p.70, https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/sociojuridicos/a.9515.
[183] Gómez Alonzo (2018).

According to psychiatrist Álvaro Romero, such events develop symptoms of rejection in victims, expressed in anxiety towards elements reminding them of traumatic events; in this case, music, drums, and flutes.[184] The suppression of feelings, guilt, isolation, and decreased empathy are, for forensic psychiatrist Charry-Lozano, "clinical symptoms compatible with post-traumatic stress disorders,"[185] evident in this case as fear of stigmatization, loss of trust in the state apparatus, difficulties in establishing social relationships, and a tendency to avoid community participation spaces.[186]

Corredor Gonzales also emphasizes the use of instruments as a tool of war, affecting their cultural attachment to music: "The social significance of music in communities is influenced by its use in space. In El Salado, flutes and drums were used as devices of violence and torture."[187]

Based on Cusick's assertion that "the common premise is that sound can harm humans, without killing us, in a wide variety of ways,"[188] we can understand that in El Salado, the aim was not only physical torture but also the destruction of identity and subjectivity through personal, sexual, and cultural humiliation, destabilizing survivors psychologically.[189]

5.6. Outcome of the war in Montes de María

According to testimonies from paramilitaries compiled by CNMH, the massacre in El Salado did not affect the military structure of the FARC. It was found that the emptying of the

[184] Universidad de la Sabana [Redacción de reportajes TV Unisabana], *Arte, catarsis del conflicto,* (November 21,2014), https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=ZopJZw3vyqQ.
[185] Liliana Charry-Lozano, (October, 2016), *"Impactos psicológicos y psicosociales en víctimas sobrevivientes de masacre selectiva en el marco del conflicto suroccidente colombiano en el año 2011"*, In: *Colombia Forense*, Vol.*3, N*°2, (Popayán: Instituto de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses, Seccional Cauca, 2016), p.58, https://revistas. ucc.edu.co/index.php/ml/article/view/1756.
[186] Muñoz, López (2021), p.71.
[187] Lina María Corredor González, *Montes cantores: música de gaitas-tambores y construcción de paz. Estudio de caso: Ovejas, Sucre.* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2016), p.27, https://repository. javeriana.edu.co/handle/10554/35652.
[188] Suzanne G. Cusick, *"La música como tortura / La música como arma"*, In: *Trans*, *Revista Transcultural de Música*, N°10, (Barcelona: Sociedad de Etnomusicología, 2006), p.10, https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/article/153/la-musica-como-tortura-la-musica-como-arma
[189] Muñoz López (2021), p.72.

territory and subsequent establishment of the paramilitary front "Héroes de Montes de María" were insufficient to diminish the guerrilla. On the contrary, it demonstrated their high capacity to move easily in the territory to reconfigure and strengthen themselves.[190] The real impacts were on the civilian population. The guerrilla fronts in the area would only begin to weaken later under sustained military offensives by the Marine Infantry and the fall of Commander "Martín Caballero" during a bombing carried out by the Colombian Armed Forces on October 25, 2007, in Zambrano.[191]

Up to now, only 31 former paramilitaries out of a possible 450 perpetrators of the massacre have been prosecuted. The Colombian Supreme Court confirmed the conviction of a member of the security forces for complicity in the events. In 2019, the 13th Administrative Court of Cartagena declared the Colombian State responsible for the failure in protecting the violated rights.[192]

Additionally, the free versions of several paramilitaries and former members of the armed forces exposed in the CNMH report indicate military complicity in the events:
"For example, the free version of paramilitary Juan Vicente Gamboa Valencia (alias 'Pantera'), a volunteer Marine Infantryman belonging to Company Ballesta of Battalion Counter-Guerrillas No. 33 at the time of the events, who acknowledged his participation. Mr. Gamboa stated that he prevented the entry of the Red Cross into the El Salado district and recounted that several officers of the Marine Infantry, including the Commander of the First Brigade, the Chief of Staff of the First Brigade, and the Commander of Battalion Counter-Guerrillas No. 33, allegedly participated in planning the massacre. He also indicated that about 25 members of the Navy allegedly participated in the material commission of the events."[193]

According to CNMH, the silence and omissions in the case of El Salado deeply affect "the effective guarantee of rights to justice and reparation." Even though several perpetrators involved in the events have been captured, their sentences have been limited to aggravated

[190] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009). p.207.
[191] Ibid., 208.
[192] Muñoz López (2021), p.77.
[193] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.239.

homicide and conspiracy to commit crime, omitting other serious crimes such as kidnapping, torture, sexual assault, personal injuries, psychological disturbances, property damage, theft, and forced displacement.[194]

CNMH concludes in its report that there was no moral condemnation against the perpetrators. The ignorance of the magnitude of the events and the imposition of versions by the perpetrators prolong the massacre in the memory of the victims. The events are considered part of the consequences of the stigmatization of a town, causing the complete obliteration of its long collective history. CNMH questions not only the Colombian state's omission but also its actions during the events, as it cannot be understood how the public force failed to prevent, combat, or neutralize 450 paramilitaries present in the area for five days without any military response. It also concludes that the El Salado case illustrates the extent of degradation in warfare where armed actors exterminate both physically and morally the civilian population, aiming to empty the territory. This degradation is not only attributed to paramilitaries, as the FARC also attacked civilian populations they considered social and family circles of their enemies. Warfare shifted from combat to massacres.[195]

"Of the 2,505 massacres with 14,660 victims provisionally registered by MH, 680 massacres producing 4,142 victims occurred between 1999 and 2001. The most critical year for massacres in contemporary Colombian war history was 2000, with 260 massacres and 1,577 victims."[196]

[194] Ibid., p.224.
[195] Ibid., p.254.
[196] Ibid., p.205.

6. Migration and Forced Displacement to Major Cities

El Salado is just one of the cases in the Montes de María region that exemplifies the complete transformation of the territory due to the dynamics of war. One of the most profound consequences for the community was the forced displacement to large cities. In 1997, its 7,000 inhabitants left the town, and after a timid return of 4,000 people, they had to flee again following the massacre in 2000.[197] According to the census conducted by the "Subdirección de Atención a la Población Desplazada de la Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional" in April 2009, out of those 4,000 displaced people from El Salado, only 730 returned.[198] Some of the displaced settled in the municipality of Ovejas, while the rest moved to major cities.[199]

According to CNMH, the arrival of the displaced people to large cities is marked by the hostility of the urban world, where they must survive in precarious situations surrounded by indifference and lack of solidarity. Their knowledge of rural life is hardly useful in the new conditions where monetization is crucial for economic subsistence. Their lives in Montes de María, where they lived on their own land, cultivated crops, and raised animals, and supported each other as neighbors, contrast sharply with the urban life: money became essential for paying rent, food, transportation, and more.[200] The difficulty in acquiring knowledge for new jobs led them to informal employment, such as street food vending.[201]

Despite the emotional burden of living as a displaced person amidst indifference and poverty, most victims decided to stay in the cities for the relative safety it offered. According to testimonies collected by the CNMH, older adults had the most difficulty adapting to urban life. They express the most longing for the everyday life of their village, the affection of their social interactions, and the tranquility of subsistence based on their own animals and crops.

[197] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.103.
[198] Ibid., 149.
[199] Ibid., 150.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., 151.

The testimonies also show that the situation made them feel like "prisoners," sometimes prompting them to risk returning:

"*How was life for you and your family in displacement*? : Bad. I couldn't get used to the city, even though we were together, because they (Children) never left us, never, but I was not comfortable where I was, because I have been always my own boss, I always did what I could and we lived in that way, I provided for all seven of them (Children), we never had to do wrong to anyone, we had our own little animals, we lived off that, we lived good, and I realized that in the city all children were working, I'm not going to say I was working, they came home every fortnight and I had to ask them for money, damn, that broke my heart, I was just sitting there, they had to provide for me […]. If there's a return, I'm going back to El Salado. This is not the life I'm looking for; I haven't killed anyone to be locked up permanently […] I have to return to El Salado."[202]

The previous testimony demonstrates the frustration of an elderly person who is unable to adapt to the dynamics of the city after suffering forced displacement. The abrupt change from a rural lifestyle with his family, and his inability to be economically self-sufficient, shapes the mood of this person, whose words express his determination to return and reclaim his former life. Additionally, the lack of State support to help him overcome his condition is evident, and he emphasizes the economic burden he represents for his children, who must work to support him financially. It is also clear that he feels a deep sense of injustice, being a victim of a conflict in which he is not a perpetrator. This testimony not only illustrates individual suffering but also highlights the difficult social dynamics that are perpetuated in the Colombia due to violence.

Many who eventually adapted to city life began to shed their displaced status, without psychosocial support or a supportive environment to help them cope with the trauma of the massacre and forced displacement. According to the CNMH, this situation led them to silence or postpone grieving that was never resolved, leaving deep wounds they try not to evoke to survive in extreme poverty and urban hostility.[203]

[202] Testimony N°18, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histrórica (2009), p.152.
[203] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.154.

This silence adds to the painful social void and the collapse of everyday life, transforming the collective identity of a world built by the elders. Music, like all practices involving the survivors' daily life, was reconfigured by the war. Displacement also carried the Gaita Music to other settings where Caribbean genres, as we have seen before, moved into commercial consumption spheres where the urban industry's entertainment enforced their production.

6.1. Bogotá as a Place of Collective Reclamation Through Music

Initially, Cartagena was the main destination for many migrants, where most gaita players tried to form folkloric music groups to earn an income. The high number of inexperienced groups in the coastal city lowered the price people were willing to pay for musical services. This, coupled with the city's lack of support for cultural activities, led many to migrate again, mainly to Bogotá.[204]

According to Convers & Ochoa, a few decades ago, it was unusual for gaita players from San Jacinto to travel to the cities, but due to the intensification of the war, it is now common to find performers of these instruments playing, for example, on Bogotá's Carrera 7 (one of its most emblematic streets in the city center). These performers are often apprentices of older musicians who migrated from Montes de María.[205]

As Jessica Rosalba Villamil expresses, "The city of Bogotá, as the main receiver of migrant population in Colombia, becomes a particular case, as it evidences forms of distribution and reproduction of traditional cultural practices as diverse as the communities' territories of origin."[206] Considering the reconstruction of the territory as a fundamental process occurring with migration, Villamil identifies three key points in this process regarding musical practices: the reclamation of a collective identity, the adaptation of musical practices to the city's dynamics, and the city's approval processes that establish "Gaita" sectors in Bogotá.[207]

[204] Villamil (2019), p.136.
[205] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.15.
[206] Villamil (2019), p.130.
[207] Ibid.

Collective reclamation occurs mainly through the reproduction of cultural practices where music represents identity and builds a sense of belonging and emotional attachment. This is where musical language acts as a bridge between the territory of origin and the receiving territory. Traditional music becomes a cultural legacy with strong emotional ties linked to the past's territory and daily life.[208]

Secondly, the adaptation of musical practices to the city happens amid a favorable reception in Bogotá, as Caribbean genres had already penetrated urban consumption patterns in previous decades, creating a sense of national belonging among Bogotá residents towards Caribbean genres. Thus, there is an appreciation in both cultural and economic senses. This receptivity also arises from Bogotá musicians, who blend academic languages with traditional gaita music, creating study materials, teaching proposals, and new sounds that include components like tuning, urban lyrics, or more defined rhythmic patterns.[209] On one hand, Bogotá musicians are interested in venturing into the traditional gaita music world, while on the other hand, some coastal musicians integrate into the capital's academic training programs, enriching their academic knowledge and applying it to traditional music.[210]

As a third key point, Villamil describes the city's approval through the insertion of gaita music in specific neighborhoods of the capital, which symbolically consolidate as "Gaita" sectors for musicians.[211] According to Camus, these consolidation processes occur through the search for social relationships, family ties, and kinship, which are crucial factors for urban insertion.[212] These sectors emerge from the search for housing in economical locations close to workplaces or easy socialization areas. The "La Candelaria" neighborhood became a "historic Gaita sector" as it was where the first gaita players in Bogotá arrived, invited by Delia Zapata, who hosted them in her own home.[213] The party sectors in Bogotá became workplaces, mainly bars where musicians are hired nightly or fixed to play on weekends. Although

[208] Ibid., p.136.
[209] Ibid., p.137.
[210] Ibid., p.138.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Manuela Camus, *Ser indígena en la ciudad de Guatemala*, FLACSO, (Guadalajara, Universidad de Guadalajara, 2002), p.73.
[213] Villamil (2019), p.138.

theaters are not residential places for musicians, they hold historical significance as venues for mass dissemination where the first gaita players stepped onto emblematic stages for Bogotá audiences. Universities also stand out for becoming main centers of reception and dissemination of traditional music, especially Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Universidad Santo Tomás, Academia Luis A. Calvo, and Universidad Nacional de Colombia, which presents significant activity around cultural practices.[214]

Villamil concludes that although migration breaks physical ties with the territory, it generates a reclamation of a cultural legacy that reproduces in new receiving places, whose development depends on adaptation processes. She considers that in Colombia, music is a crucial source of information to understand territorial relationships from the individuals' perspective and that traditional music, as a cultural legacy, is knowledge that migrates with the individual, generating particular forms of territorial reclamation.[215]

[214] Ibid., p.139.
[215] Ibid., p.140.

7. Música de Gaitas in the Context of Peace and Post-Conflict

7.1. The Return: The Recovery of Music

As the war passed, many inhabitants of the Montes de María fled, leaving everything behind or selling their lands at very low prices. Large companies established themselves in the ravaged territory and used a façade to "help" the farmers through programs under the new Land Restitution Law. According to Gabriela Gómez Alonso, only 20% of El Salado's inhabitants have been able to recover just a portion of what they once had.[216]

Those who embarked on the return found a place consumed by the jungle. The testimonies collected by the CNMH reveal the pain felt by those who returned to find a desolate town, almost unrecognizable to its own inhabitants:

> "When we started cleaning up the town, because it was overgrown, the town was like a mountain; there were so many thorn bushes that the Church couldn't be seen, I cried. When I arrived, I said, 'Oh Lord, this isn't my town, I'm in the middle of a jungle,' the church couldn't be seen, nor could the soccer field. We were there for four days, and I cried, but I said, 'We have to fight, we have to recover our town because this is our town, we have to recover it, we can't let it be lost.'"[217]

The return began with the physical recovery of homes and public places through the initiative of the community itself. There was a proposal to rename the town "Villa del Rosario," but it was decided to keep the name "El Salado" as a collective claim to not forget the victims of the traumatic past left by the war.[218] The community directed its efforts towards recovering the town that existed before the massacre.[219] One of the most important but difficult tasks

[216] Gómez Alonso (2018).
[217] Testimony N°21, Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.127.
[218] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.122.
[219] The CNMH report highlights the significance of resistance embodied in the return, which was driven by the surviving victims despite opposition from the State, including the Marine Infantry and the Bolívar Governor's.

for the inhabitants was to recover the spaces for social interaction that revolved around music and celebrations. However, this pursuit also strengthened the dynamics of collective reorganization.[220] For Colombia, victims play an undeniable role as political actors. All efforts toward collective memory also serve as a platform for regional, ethnic, gender-based, and specific victim groups' demands. All these efforts are a channel for generating civic practices and initiatives.[221] In this sense, and in the words of Jenny Pearce, "Conflict destroys possibilities for organization but also creates them."[222]

From all the questions raised by the victims, a map of historical memory reconstruction is created, framing the narratives of the displaced and those who returned, not just from the interpretations of the events but from a strengthening of identity. Questions like "What, why, and which were consequences of the events? Who were we before, and who are we now, after what happened? How was what happened confronted?" The search for answers also occurs through art, and specifically through music.[223]

Musica de Gaitas, being that social text that narrates the daily life of the farmers and their relationship with the land, allows us to understand in its lyrics the struggle for it and its empowerment, where everyday life is a story worth singing and transmitting as part of the collective identity. As an example of the relationship with the countryside and everyday life, we can observe a fragment of the song "Campo Alegre," a song performed by Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto:

"I live in Campo Alegre
In the middle of a savanna (repeat)
And when the cattle bellow
I sing to entertain myself (repeat)
I'm going, I'm going
To Campo Alegre

Office, and the El Carmen de Bolívar Mayor's Office, who argued that the security conditions for returning did not exist.

[220] Ibid., p.18.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Jenny Pearce, in *Hacia la Reconstrucción del País: desarrollo, política y territorio en zonas afectadas por el conflicto armado*, Ediciones Ántropos Ltda., (Cartagena, Universidad San Buenaventura, 2008), p.325.

[223] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p. 88.

And if I go to Campo Alegre,
But my love, don't stay behind (repeat)
At 5 in the morning, I go out to water my crops (repeat)
And then I spend the day calmly walking through the savanna (repeat)".[224]

Original lyrics by: Gaiteros de San Jacinto
Translation by the author

The strong differentiation that exists in Colombia between rural and urban areas makes their realities very distant from each other, so those living in cities perceive the experiences of the countryside as foreign. There is a significant challenge in generating social memory that is perceived as shared from the cities.[225] In Colombia, the pain of the victims is accentuated by the lack of acknowledgment by the perpetrators and the State, which is also responsible for allowing and, in many cases, being complicit in the violence against the civilian population, as was the case in El Salado. The lack of knowledge and visibility of the victims, coupled with the difficulties of processing violence and war, have led survivors to an existential struggle that is lived daily. Amid this struggle, some have also turned to artistic expressions as an alternative to release and express the traumas of the armed conflict.[226]

Gonzalo Sánchez G., director of the historical memory group, considers that: "Pain and individually lived memory become, through narration, pain and memory shared socially"[227] and in this sense, there is a social need and obligation in Colombia to know and understand the victims' stories to give them the meaning they deserve. The ability to tell these stories and create memory through art generates space for culture, which in many cases is the only element victims carry with them when forcibly displaced.[228]

For many, the return could only begin after many years, as was the case with Luis Torres, a musician and community leader who, in addition to being displaced from El Salado in 2000, had to seek asylum in Spain because of the war. He and his granddaughter returned to their

[224] Gaiteros de San Jacinto, "Campo alegre", *Así Tocan Los Indios,* Llorona Records, Track 2, 2012, MP3. Translation by the author.
[225] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.100.
[226] Ibid., p.162.
[227] Ibid., p.20.
[228] Muñoz López (2021), p.86.

town only in 2013, finding a silent place that contrasted with the music and festivity that once dominated the streets before the massacre. Luis would lead what would later be known as "The Return," a civil and peaceful resistance carried out with ninety-two men and eight women to return to their homes despite the danger posed by the presence of paramilitaries and guerrillas in the area and despite the lack of government security guarantees for returning to their homes.[229]

According to Gómez Alonso, music transformed as many of the adults who returned to El Salado had left when they were just children, like Michell, Luis Torres' granddaughter. Those adults who came back learned to live more in the city than in the countryside. The experiences of living and growing up in the city also changed the sounds and practices surrounding gaita music in the Montes de María.[230] Luis Torres is not fond of the new genres but believes that the youth returned with hope and a thirst for progress and is happy to see the joy that new generations bring to the town. Journalist and victim from Carmen de Bolívar, Soraya Bayuelo, agrees with Luis Torres and states: "The fact that the youth are singing other music doesn't mean they have abandoned the ancestral or territorial musical scene. These ensembles bear witness that music connects, intertwines, embraces, and transforms".[231] Gómez Alonso also presents the testimonies of traditional musicians who returned, like Samuel Ortega, who asserts that the exodus affected the musical roots of his town to the point where, according to him, the youth are not capable of applauding a décima.[232] However, Luis Torres rejoices every time he hears the youth band rehearsing at the House of Culture, a place that was violated during the massacre and played a key role in the town's reconstruction and reappropriation.

The traditional music group Los Gaiteros de Ovejas, from the Montes de María region, has embraced fusion with artists of urban genres and rhythms, such as the Bogotá-based artist

[229] Gómez Alonso (2018).
[230] Ibid.
[231] Ibid.
[232] A *décima* refers to a traditional poetic form consisting of ten-line stanzas , often used in folk songs and oral poetry. This structure is commonly used in genres of gaita music and other rural musical traditions. It typically follows a rhyme scheme of ABBAACCDDC and is often used for storytelling, satire, or expressing personal and social themes.

Beny Esguerra. Their latest album, released in early 2024, includes a song titled “Return.” In it, the lyrics say:

“I returned to the land where I was born
To the land I left when I was very young
To avoid being displaced, I disappeared
But I left my heart here
That's what returning is
Seeing my people at peace, that's returning
Healing wounds is returning
Feeling you is returning,
That brush of the hammock, that's returning
Hearing the drumbeats
Uncover the truth
That's what returning is
Look ahead without regrets
That's what returning is
Take the fresh fruit off the tree
Walking your streets, that's returning
To a town awake, I have returned”[233]

Original lyrics by: Los Gaiteros de Ovejas & Beny Esguerra
Translation by the author

7.2. Narratives of Violence through Music

Following Jonathan Caro Parrado's assertion that music is a social construct, a way of narrating and singing society, we can understand the gaitas music as a performative act whose songs and lyrics adapt to the different environments of the subject.[234] Music, therefore, becomes a social text necessary to understand the emotions of victims in both a subjective and collective manner. This is particularly important considering that, as the CNMH

[233] Los Gaiteros de Ovejas, “Return”, *Eterno,* Los Gaiteros de Ovejas, Track 3, 2024, MP3. Tanslation by the author.
[234] Caro Parrado (2018), p.814.

states, the feelings experienced by the witnesses and survivors of the El Salado massacre are difficult to identify, name, and describe.[235]

It is crucial to highlight that many of the inhabitants of Montes de María experienced a rupture with music due to the El Salado massacre. In this regard, journalist Alberto Salcedo Ramos recounts:

"For a long time, the inhabitants of El Salado avoided music as one would avoid a blow from a club. Having witnessed their fellow villagers agonize amidst the cumbiamba beats improvised by executioners, they felt that listening to music was perhaps equivalent to firing the murderous rifles again. For this reason, they avoided any activity that could lead to celebration: no social gatherings in the yards, no horse races."[236]

According to Caro Parrado, for the people of El Salado, gaitas music reactivated a significant emotional burden linked to violence that was re-signified at the moment of remembering. However, the residents themselves bet on music as one bets on life and hope once again.[237] Regarding the process of "exorcising the ghosts" of the traumatic event, Salcedo Ramos' account continues:

"[...] But on one occasion, a social psychologist who listened to their testimonies in a group therapy advised them to exorcize the demon. It was unfair that the tambores and gaitas of their ancestors, symbols of emancipation and delight, remained chained to terror. So that same night, they danced an apotheotic fandango on the site of the massacre. It was like a rebirth under that sky dotted with candles that announced a resplendent sun."[238]

In this case, music serves not only as a means to express what happened through metaphors but also as a reparative element, in a moment when one of the greatest difficulties was resuming the festivities and music that once took place daily in the main square.[239] It also served as a narrative for the unspeakable in a context where censorship is still a common

[235] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.164.
[236] Alberto Salcedo Ramos, *Textos escogidos,* (Cartagena de Indias: Alcaldía Mayor de Cartagena de Indias: IPCC, 2012), p.150.
[237] Caro Parrado (2018), p.818.
[238] Salcedo Ramos (2012), p.150.
[239] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.159.

practice.[240] These narratives are present as sung stories filled with sensitivities, subjectivities, political visions, and other diverse expressions of those who live with the consequences of the armed conflict in Colombia. An example can be found in the following unpublished song, featured in Caro Parrado's text, which speaks of forced displacement and the abandonment of territory due to violence:[241]

"Up in the mountains
The pickaxe no longer sounds
The homestead is empty
And no one lives in the shack.
No one says anything anymore
From the child to the mayor
And only old Emilia prays for the dog to bark

Let her cry
Let her cry
Don't fetch the water; it will flow on its own."[242]

Original lyrics: anonymous
Unpublished song
Translation by the author

Despite the tragic consequences that the inhabitants of the area are subjected to, the song continues to exalt the resilience with which the community works for peace:

„When these mountains were founded
There was purpose for us
God and cherubim descended
And settled in the center
And worked hard
With skill and melody
Creating beautiful poems
And also people capable

[240] Caro Parrado (2018), p.813.
[241] Ibid., p.818.
[242] "Allá arriba en la montaña," in: *Un fuego de sangre pura, música de gaitas, territorios y paz en Los Montes de María ",* In: Revista Cambios y Permanencias, Vol. 9, N°1, (Universidad Industrial de Santander , 2018), p.819. Translation by the author.

Of radiating love
And peace in the Montes de María".[243]

Original lyrics by: anonymous
Unpublished song
Translation by the author

We cannot forget that the community of Montes de María, and especially the inhabitants of El Salado, were not only victims of direct violence from armed actors but also of the stigmatization that led to the massacre. The victims emphasize the need to historically clarify their reputation and dissociate it from any connection with violent groups. This clarification of stigma must be part of the reparation process.[244] In response to stigmatization, Gerson Vanegas composed the following lyrics:

"I don't know if it's a sin
To be a child of this land,
But everyone keeps pointing
At whoever says they're from Ovejas.
They defame us, nickname us,
And label us as guerrilla men,
And no matter how much I reject that lie,
To them, we are violent.

No, sir, that's not how it is,
And that's why this song is to clarify
That the people of my town don't behave like that.
If in those mountains
There are discontented men hiding,
I swear to you, my friend,
They are not from here.

Because a person from Ovejas
Is peaceful by birth.
And if they say he carries a rifle,
It's surely a gaita with five holes.

[243] Ibid.
[244] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.171.

Many people live in fear
Of visiting Ovejas
And miss out on a beautiful folklore
That transcended borders.
The world only talks about
Massacres and tragedies,
But they never tell you what's in the soul
Of a gaita player from this land.
No, sir, that's not how it is,
And that's why this song comes out to ask you
Not to speak ill of my town".[245]

Original lyrics by: Gerson Vanegas
Translation by the author

7.3. Art as a Means to Repair Victims of the Armed Conflict in Montes de María

Thanks to the initiative of Father Rafael Castillo, the construction of a Monument was agreed upon in 2006, which was built with the participation of social organizations and the State. It was erected on the largest mass grave dug in El Salado, where the bodies of some of the victims still rest. 49 names of people who lost their lives at the hands of paramilitary violence and guerrilla forces during the massacres of 1997, 2000, and subsequent years during the return to the corregimiento and the La Sierra village. However, the names of victims from rural areas in the municipality of Ovejas are still not included.[246]

Additionally, the survivors themselves have taken the initiative to incorporate artistic expressions that also serve as memory: the Mujeres Unidas del Salado (United Women of El Salado) led the engagement of young people to paint various murals on the walls facing the football field and on the façades of the houses surrounding the main park (the epicenter of the massacre). According to the CNMH, the aim was to reclaim the violated space through

[245] Gerson Vanegas García, "Por qué nos llaman así", (Inspiración y folclor, 2021), MP3. Translation by the author
[246] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.132.

new symbolism, using public space to share memory with the community.[247] According to the CNMH, "The return is not just for the inhabitants of El Salado to return to a space; it is the recovery of a time that connects the past with the future in the horizon of action of the inhabitants of El Salado, and that is what the murals seek to remember."[248] The mural at the entrance of the town features a drawing of a peasant woman accompanied by the phrase: "Violence displaced us; may indifference not."[249]

In the midst of artistic initiatives, and also amid the silence that reigned for years, a surprising compendium of music, poetry, and narratives titled “Las Voces del Salado”(2010) emerged.[250] After its launch, research conducted by Zapata and Hargrave concluded that musical activities, as well as other artistic practices, promoted the cognitive component of self-esteem among the displaced, particularly in children. Children who had experienced displacement and engaged in artistic activities had a better perception of themselves.[251] The musician César López, who supported the creation of the album, recognized that encouraging art and returning to music was very complex due to the tragedy, so they brought the recording equipment to El Salado and recorded the residents in their own homes.[252]

The CNMH concluded that these acts of commemoration should be carried out through the voices of victims to preserve historical memory. Thus, the album begins with the song "Bienvenidos a El Salado" (Welcome to El Salado) sung by its author, Samuel Ortega, for whom, according to journalist Gómez Alonso, it was a mechanism for seeking forgiveness but also for fighting against forgetfulness. In an interview with journalist Gómez Alonso, Samuel Ortega expresses how through music he encouraged his companions: "We sang and encouraged the others, making them understand that men have always had to be resilient. The more resilient a man is, the more history he leaves behind."[253]

[247] Ibid., p.137.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Muñoz López (2021), p.82.
[251] Gloria Patricia Zapata and David J Hargreaves, “The effects of musical activities on the self-esteem of displaced children in Colombia”, *Psychology of Music, 46*(4), 540-550, July-17-2017, DOI: 10.1177/0305735617716756
[252] Muñoz López (2021), p.84.
[253] Gómez Alonso (2018)

„Welcome to El Salado
Anyone who believes in peace, and who loves to sing,
Come along with me, I want you to be my friend,
And I have something to teach you.

Ten years have passed since war came
From those interested in taking our lands (bis).

The Castaños came looking for the Cabelleros,
Who were in Tacaloa, Playoncito, and El Barguero,
And since they didn't find them, the town had to pay.

There were so many deaths here
That we lost count.
Some say a hundred, others say a hundred and fifty (bis).

We won't charge for them
Because they are priceless.
We only want peace and for progress to reach us (bis).

That's why, to our brothers,
May God have them in His glory,
And we, from El Salado, sing in their memory (bis)".[254]

Original lyrics by: Samuel Ortega
Translation by the author

For Muñoz López, music helps mitigate pain by restoring what neither legal orders nor high compensations can.[255] We can see how Lujan Villar also develops this idea:

"This case allows us to see how memory in relation to music can reach different planes of human experience. The ethnomusicological idea of conflict resolution can bring us closer to ways in which an ethnography of memory in situations of acute violence helps to seek mechanisms for dialogue, cooperative actions, and ultimately the transformation of violent situations into non-violent ones." [256]

[254] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, "Bienvenidos a El Salado", *Las voces de El Salado,* February 18, 2013, https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/podcasts/las-voces-del-salado/. Translation by the author.
[255] Muñoz López (2021), p.84.
[256] Juan David Luján Villar, "Escenarios de no-guerra: el papel de la música en la transformación de sociedades en conflicto". In: *Revista CS*, N°19, (Cali, Colombia: Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Icesi, 2016), p.179. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18046/recs.i19.2171.

The creation of the album Las Voces del Salado was, for Muñoz López, a piece for the emotional reconstruction of victims in Montes de María. Their union through music was a step toward recovering their strength and joy linked to the countryside. For Gómez Alonso, they managed to detach music from tragedy and give it back its form as a "Singing Warrior."[257] In the words of Colombian philosopher Diana Uribe, in an interview with Matiz from El Tiempo: "Culture changes the way a society views itself. That's why it is so important for peace."[258]

7.4. Cultural Initiatives for Education and Socialization of Gaita Music

It is important to highlight that the initiatives for return and reparation began with the victims themselves. Following this, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Colombia defined comprehensive reparation through its ruling T-083 of 2017 as a "State obligation aimed at restoring the victim to the state they were in before the harmful act."[259] Moreover, Article 141 of Law 1448 of 2011 defines symbolic reparation as "any benefit provided to the victims or the community at large that aims to ensure the preservation of historical memory, the non-repetition of victimizing events, the public acknowledgment of the facts, the request for public apology, and the restoration of the victims' dignity." [260]

According to Muñoz López, a deep reflection on the methods of reparation is necessary. These should not rely solely on monetary compensation or symbolic satisfaction measures but should also involve restoring culture, integrating all its elements, and emphasizing art as a crucial space to achieve the goals of reparation.[261] The CNMH makes several intervention and public policy recommendations, including one to the Bolívar Governor's Office and the

[257] Gómez Alonso (2018).
[258] Daniela Matiz,." La cultura cambia el chip en el postconflicto", *El Tiempo*, (May 20, 2014), https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-14013759.
[259] Muñoz López (2021), p.73.
[260] Law 1448 of 2011. "Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras.", Enacted on June 10, 2011, Article 11, Official Gazette No. 48.096.
[261] Muñoz López (2021), p.86.

Carmen de Bolívar City Hall to "allocate the necessary resources and take the appropriate administrative measures to reopen the Casa de la Cultura as a space for the integration and coordination of the multiple artistic expressions in El Salado, and to appoint a cultural manager for El Salado to coordinate and ensure the continuity of cultural activities."[262]

Through the initiative of the El Salado community and the Ministry of Culture, with support from the Fundación Semana, the Bolívar Governor's Office, and the municipal mayor's office, the Lucho Bermúdez Music School was established. Its director, Alfonso Cárdenas, expressed to Moreno the difficulty of resuming the musical tradition of gaitas due to the severe trauma left by the war and the massacre. However, one of its most significant goals is to recover the tradition through the band, choir, accordion, gaita, and tambores.[263] Thus, through the National Plan of Music for Coexistence by the Ministry of Culture (Plan Nacional de Música para la Convivencia del Ministerio de Cultura), funding was provided for the acquisition of instruments such as tambores, gaitas, and flutes, which accompanied the process of return and cultural restoration in the region.[264]

For Corredor Gonzales, artistic, musical, and cultural practices are key to peacebuilding in Colombia, as they provide the ability to imagine, create, and build—skills necessary for a country that must be rebuilt in the post-conflict era after a long history of violence.[265] Music, as a tool for community music therapy, helps victims discover their political potentials and stimulates creativity as a "social value."[266]

The Fundación Batuta has carried out the "Programa para la Reconciliación" program with resources provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Its purpose is psychosocial support for victims within musical spaces. It is important to say that this project operates in 131 musical centers across 84 municipalities in 32 departments of Colombia, including one

[262] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2009), p.261.
[263] Paola Moreno, "El renacer musical de los Montes de María", *Revista Semana*, (June 26, 2016), https://www.semana.com/musica/articulo/escuela-de-musica-de-lucho-bermudez-los-montes-de-maria-carmen-de-bolivar/49531/.
[264] Muñoz López (2021), p.86.
[265] Corredor González (2016)
[266] Diana Patricia Tovar Muñoz, *Memoria, cuerpos y música. La voz de las víctimas, nuevas miradas al Derecho y los Cantos de Bullerengue como una narrativa de la memoria y la reparación en Colombia* (Tesis de maestría, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2012), p.62, https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/ unal/48535.

located in El Salado, Bolívar, with a musical initiation program.[267] According to Fundación Batuta, musical education "helps stabilize children and adolescents in situations of poverty and vulnerability, as well as victims of violence, increasing levels of self-esteem, motivation, and leadership among the benefiting children and youth."[268]

7.5. Gaita Music Festivals

An important element in the dissemination of traditional Atlantic Coast music has been the festivals that have gained prominence in places such as San Jacinto, María la Baja, Cartagena, San Juan, and Ovejas, where Gaita and Bullerengue music are the main attractions. These festivals gather musicians from different regions, becoming a "showcase" for musicians of these genres.[269] The most influential and recognized festivals are the "Festival Nacional autóctono de Gaitas" held in San Jacinto, Bolívar, and the "Festival Nacional de Gaitas Francisco Llirene" in Ovejas, Sucre. The latter is the oldest (first celebrated in 1985). Its creation initially aimed to honor those gaiteros who took the tradition of gaitas and tambores to larger stages and disseminated it beyond the Montes de María. Gaiteros like Toño Fernández believed that the tradition of the gaita would disappear, but their genres are now more recognized than in their time.[270]

However, according to Convers & Ochoa, there is a generalized perception of blaming the festivals for removing the ritual character from the gaita. According to their research, many musicians claim that gaita music no longer occurs regularly; instead, all musicians wait for the festival moments to perform. There was a shift from the community function of the music to a competitive spectacle and desire for popularity.[271] Convers & Ochoa emphasize that this loss of ritual character did not happen solely because of the festivals. Displacement and other consequences of violence have destroyed the daily life in the Montes de María, while the

[267] Muñoz López (2021), p.89.
[268] Fundación Nacional Batuta, *Centros musicales, música para la reconciliación*, (2019). https://www.fundacionbatuta.org/archivos/Directorio-MPR_FundacionNacionalBatuta_2019.pdf
[269] Caro Parrado (2018)
[270] Convers & Ochoa (2007), p.34.
[271] Ibid., p.36.

festivals have managed to maintain this tradition, even making it popular in other regions of the country.

Other authors, such as Buelvas Diaz, discuss how transformations in agricultural production in the Montes de María directly affected musical production. The attempt at preservation isolated the music from its context by trying to depoliticize a peasant-gaitero practice, turning it into a museum piece.[272] "The gaita music, which originates from a moral, political, and economic ritual, is now assumed by institutions and endowed with new characteristics." For Adrián Villamizar and Nando Coba, interviewed by David Lara Ramos in 2019 for the independent news portal Las 2 Orillas, the depoliticized view of the festival was discordant with the political and social reality of the peasants, censoring songs that expressed current social situations:

"The themes narrated in songs like those of Adrián Villamizar were 'baptized' during the times of the struggle between paramilitaries, the public force, and the FARC guerrilla as 'protest' songs. Lyrics that were not well received by the judges who preferred those mentioning tobacco, maize, and plantain crops, or sang about a reality that did not exist in their lands. The preferred themes by the judges were those mentioning the songs of the sinzonte, the rosita vieja, or the azulejo."[273]

For Buelvas Diaz, although violence against the civilian population in the Montes de María increased towards the end of the 1990s, when festivals were even considered a response to the process of exile and symbolic and physical destruction, the music at these festivals was reduced to an aesthetic expression that was also a strategy for physical survival due to the real and deadly threat of speaking publicly about social issues.[274]

[272] Jaili Ivinai Buelvas Diaz, *A garganta da terra: musica, memoria e conflito agrario nos Montes de Maria, Colombia (1960-2000)*, (Fortaleza, Brasil: Universidade Federal do Ceara, 2019), p.163.
[273] David Lara Ramos, "Solo la verdá, gaitas sin pesares ni dolores", *Las2orillas*, (Last modified April, 2019), https://www.las2orillas.co/solo-la-verda-gaitas-sin-pesares-ni-dolores/.
[274] Buelvas Diaz (2019), p.164.

7.6. Gaita Music in the "World Music"

As we have seen, the Montes de María region synthesizes musical expressions of african, european, and indigenous origin, giving rise to genres such as Bullerengue, Son de Gaita, and Cumbia. The latter has come to be one of the most widely embraced rhythms across Latin America in recent decades.[275] Paradoxically, in Colombia, it exists within urban scenes under the label of "World Music."[276] Although many of these musical expressions remained isolated from the industrial apparatus, either due to not undergoing mediation processes or resistance to the onslaught of progress, they were eventually categorized by the industry. According to Ochoa, it was the industry representatives themselves who created the "World Music" category in the summer of 1987 in England.[277] Traditional musicians discovered that it was possible to enter the recording world while the industry was seeking new sounds that could have commercial impact. In this way, several traditional genres experienced a stimulus to move away from folkloric purism.[278]

For Hernández, the fact that genres which had been excluded from industrial exploitation for many years are now favored by consumers does not mean that they are suddenly understood by the public that had rejected them for centuries.[279] Music that becomes part of "World Music" begins to lose its essence as narratives of a society and territory. The mid-90s recording industry popularized genres like salsa and disco in a struggle for popularity where cumbia also sought to capture local media attention. The quest for Colombian cultural nationalism resulted in a range of fusions and "revivalisms" used by agents from the government to private companies to promote their agendas of "Colombianness."[280]

Internationally famous Colombian pop stars like Shakira, Carlos Vives, or Juanes emerge from the Latin Pop poles of Miami (Sony) and Los Angeles (Warner) and are often considered representatives of the Atlantic Coast and Antioquian regional cultures. However, for

[275] Caro Parrado (2018), p.809.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ana María Ochoa, *Músicas locales en tiempos de globalización,* (Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2003), p.30.
[278] Hernández (2007), p.260.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Bermúdez (2010), p.255

Bermúdez, their lyrics are far from articulating the realities of marginalized areas in Colombia marked by polarization, war, violence, and drug trafficking.[281]

The voices of the victims are far from achieving the popularity of artists like the Hermanos Zuleta (a vallenato duo) who won the Latin Grammy in 2007. However, months before their award, national press reported a widely circulated live recording where their singer encouraged paramilitary and drug-trafficking leaders from César, leading to a judicial investigation. Meanwhile, Afro-Colombian and indigenous minorities remain trapped in the crossfire of a conflict lasting over 60 years, where their voices are not part of the mainstream media agendas, which have nonetheless profited economically from regional musical genres.[282]

[281] Ibid., p.256.
[282] Ibid.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the armed conflict in Colombia through gaita music, specifically in the Montes de María region. The aim was to understand the phenomena of war through the stories that music can reveal, whether explicitly or by interpreting its transformations and representations. The focus has been on the war victims in the region and their relationship with music, given the lack of recognition they have faced throughout the conflict, seeking out their narratives embedded within their musical practices.

Considering the contexts of violence, stigmatization, and exclusion that have historically marked the communities of Montes de María since colonial times, we can understand the invisibility of the musical practices that originated in the region that were born from the interaction between African slaves and indigenous people of the area. We observed how the consolidation of the region as a banana zone at the beginning of the 20th century and the poor working conditions of its laborers led to a peasant struggle for land rights, marked by violence and anonymity. The accounts and narratives of atrocities from that era were expressed through literature, which gave rise to the imaginary of a forgotten people who rely on their artistic expressions to keep their memory alive.

Although the existence of instruments and musical practices in the region since ancient times is clear, the origins of each of the genres known today are highly uncertain due to the widespread rejection by the Spanish colony of the artistic expressions of African slaves and indigenous people. The consequence is the scant documented record that exists about the cultural practices of the area's inhabitants, who have relied on oral tradition to keep their culture alive from generation to generation. It is essential to recognize the limitation imposed by the lack of documentation for this type of study, and it is for this reason that it is crucial to highlight all efforts to keep their cultural expressions alive, whether through study, documentation, practice, dissemination, or teaching.

We can also conclude that the rise of musical genres like Porro and Cumbia during the mid-20th century was due to the commercial interest of the recording industry and its search for

national Caribbean rhythms in the early consumer societies, only after undergoing a process of "musical whitening," promoting a romanticized and joyful image of the Colombian peasant while thousands of people in rural areas were victims of bipartisan violence that claimed over 140,000 lives, leading the country into a metamorphosis of war that would give rise to a confrontation between guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and the national army.

We have also seen how this degradation of the armed conflict led to one of the most painful phenomena for Colombian society: massacres. We have been able to witness how, through war, music was instrumentalized to become a means of torture, leaving victims with an indelible mark of rupture with their own traditions and identities. The use of music during the El Salado massacre shattered the way survivors saw themselves. The displacement and exile that many of the inhabitants of Montes de María had to endure were marked by society's general lack of recognition and the lack of guarantees for their return and reparation. The pain of war, the omissions by the Colombian state, and the real threat that represents speaking out against violent groups impacted their daily lives, which were also tied to the musical practices surrounding their traditions and social spaces.

It was also evident that despite the physical rupture with the territory caused by forced displacement, there was a reclamation of cultural heritage in urban areas where strong emotional ties, longings, and a sense of belonging to the territory were emphasized, expressed through music. These ties helped consolidate “Gaita sectors” in the country's main cities, where gaita music was a key factor in seeking social relationships, kinship, and integration into urban life. Gaita music also served as an income for some of the migrants who came to the city in search of economic and job opportunities, using their instruments to survive economically in the city. The warm reception from residents of capitals like Bogotá reinforced interest in its study and dissemination, with universities being particularly important as centers for artistic expressions from all corners of the country.

Finally, we can see the significant importance of music for the reparation of victims and for building a society within the framework of peace and post-conflict. Despite the rupture that existed between the inhabitants of El Salado and the sounds of gaitas and drums, it was music that marked the return of many of its inhabitants, who have been able to break the silence

and tell their own story, creating with their artistic expressions a precedent of historical memory and a path to reconciliation.

As a society, it is our duty to listen to these stories and make their narratives our own history. It is essential to listen to the victims first, to build historical memory and the narratives that will shape our history. The victims are the ones who can tell us about the war, helping us understand the dead-end path that violence leads to. We can only take the true path to peace if we understand the reconciliation longed for by those who have lived the absurdity of war firsthand.

List of Images

Bibliography

Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. "Carta Abierta a Pablo Elías González. Director Nacional del CTI." Colombia, February 23, 2000. Quoted in Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *La masacre de El Salado, esa guerra no era nuestra.* (Bogotá, February 18, 2013), p. 85.

Camus, Manuela. *Ser indígena en la ciudad de Guatemala*. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2002.

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. "Contexto", Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. Accessed September 19, 2024. https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/contexto/.

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH). *La masacre de El Salado, esa guerra no era nuestra*. Bogotá D.C.: Taurus- Ediciones Semana, 2009.

Comisión de la Verdad. "La Masacre de las Bananeras" accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/la-masacre-de-las-bananeras

Convers, Leonor & Ochoa, Juan Sebastián. *Gaiteros y tamboleros: Material para abordar el estudio de la música de gaitas de San Jacinto, Bolivar (Colombia),* primera parte. Bogotá D.C.: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2007.

Friedemann, Nina & Arocha, Jaime. *Heredero del jaguar y la anaconda.* Bogotá D.C.: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1985.

Hernández Salgar, Oscar. *Poder y emoción en las músicas colombianas 1930-1960,* primera edición. Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2014.

Jiménez Ahumada, Rosa. "Desarrollo y paz en los Montes de María. Una propuesta desde la región." In *Dimensiones Territoriales de la Guerra y la Paz*, 506-525. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2004.

Ochoa, Ana María. *Músicas locales en tiempos de globalización*. Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2003.

Pareja, Reynaldo. *Historia de la radio en Colombia: 1929-1980*. Bogotá: Servicio Colombiano de Comunicación Social, 1984.

Pearce, Jenny. "Hacia la reconstrucción del país: desarrollo, política y territorio en zonas afectadas por el conflicto armado." In *Hacia la Reconstrucción del País: Desarrollo, Política y Territorio en Zonas Afectadas por el Conflicto Armado*, Ediciones Ántropos Ltda. Cartagena: Universidad San Buenaventura, 2008.

Pécaut Daniel. *Orden y violencia. Colombia 1930-1953*. Medellín: Universidad EAFIT, 2012.

Perdomo Escobar, José Ignacio. *Historia de la Música en Colombia*. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1945.

Portaccio Fontalvo, José. *Carmen tierra mía. Lucho Bermúdez*. Bogotá: edición del autor, 1997.

Quijano, Aníbal. "Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social." in *Journal of World System Research*, 6/2 (2000): 342-386. http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol6/number2/pdf/jwsr-v6n2-quijano.pdf

Rameau, Jean-Philippe. *Treatise on Harmony*. , New York: Dover, (1971).

Salcedo Ramos, Alberto. *Textos Escogidos*. Cartagena de Indias: Alcaldía Mayor de Cartagena de Indias: IPCC, 2012.

Samper, José M. quoted in José J. Borda, *Cuadros de costumbres y relaciones de viaje,* Bogotá, 1875, pp. 143-144.

Silva, Renán. *Sociedades campesinas, transición social y cambio cultural en Colombia: La encuesta folclórica nacional de 1942: aproximaciones empíricas y analíticas*. Medellín: La Carreta Social, 2006.

Ulloa, Antonio de & Jorge Juan y Santacilla. "A Voyage to South America", London: L. Davies and C. Reymers, 1760, p.39; José Palacios de la Vega, Diario, ed. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, Bogotá; C. A. Gosselman, Resa i Colombia, aren 1825 och 1826, Stockholm: J. Horberg, 1830, p.56; Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, "Letters", In Catharina van Rensselaer Bonney (ed), A Legacy of Historical Gleanings, Albany (NY): J. Munsell, 1875, pp. 465-468.

Wade, Peter. *Música, raza y nación: música tropical en Colombia*. Bogotá: Vicepresidencia de la República de Colombia, 2002.

Zamosc, León. La Cuestión Agraria y el Movimiento Campesino en Colombia: Luchas de la Asociación de Usuarios Campesinos ANUC, 1967-1981. Bogotá: Institut de recherche des Nations Unies pour le développement social, 1987.

Academic articles

"Allá Arriba en la Montaña." In Un Fuego de Sangre Pura: Música de Gaitas, Territorios y Paz en Los Montes de María. *Cambios y Permanencias*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (2018): 819. Universidad Industrial de Santander.

Bermúdez Cujar, Egberto. "La Música Colombiana, Pasado y Presente." *A Tres Bandas: Mestizaje, Sincretismo e Hibridación En El Espacio Sonoro Iberoamericano*, Eds. Albert Recasens, Christian Spencer, Madrid: SEACEX (2010): 247-54.

Bermudez Cujar, Egberto. "La música tradicional colombiana y sus estructuras básicas: Música afrocolombiana (Parte 1)". *Ensayos: Historia Y Teoría Del Arte*, N.º 10 (Enero, 2005): 215-39. https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/ensayo/article/view/44979.

Bermúdez Cujar, Egberto. "Los Bajeros de la Montaña". *La acabación del mundo: Música de gaitas de los Montes de María (Bolívar)*, [Booklet] Villa de Leyva: Fundación de Mvsica (2006).

Bermúdez Cujar, Egberto. "Música indígena colombiana". *Maguaré*, n.º 5 (enero, 1987). https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/maguare/article/view/14064.

Caro Parrado, Jonathan. 2018. "Un Fuego De Sangre Pura, Música De Gaitas, Territorios Y Paz En Los Montes De María". *Cambios Y Permanencias* 9, N°1 (2018) :807-23. https://revistas.uis.edu.co/index.php/revistacyp/article/view/8463.

Charry-Lozano, Liliana. "Impactos psicológicos y psicosociales en víctimas sobrevivientes de masacre selectiva en el marco del conflicto suroccidente colombiano en el año 2011." *Colombia Forense* 3, no. 2 (2016): 53-62. https://revistas.ucc.edu.co/index.php/ml/article/view/1756.

Corzo, Jonathan. “La Gaita Larga De Los Montes De María Como Instrumento Simbólico. Una Apreciación Sobre Su Lógica Compositiva En El Repertorio Zoomorfo.” *Música e Investigación 29* (2021).

Suzanne G. Cusick, “La música como tortura / La música como arma”, In: *Trans, Revista Transcultural de Música,* N°10. Barcelona: Sociedad de Etnomusicología (2006). https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/ article/153/la-musica-como-tortura-la-musica-como-arma

Hernández Salgar, Oscar. “Colonialidad y Poscolonialidad Musical En Colombia.” *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 28, no. 2 (2007): 242–270. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4499340. Published by University of Texas Press. DOI: 10.1353/lat.2007.0030.

Kalyvas, Stathis. “La violencia en medio de una guerra civil: esbozo de una teoría.” *Revista Análisis Político* no. 42 (2001).

Lair, Eric. “El Terror, Recurso Estratégico de los Actores Armados.” Análisis Político No. 37 (2000): 70–71. Bogotá: IEPRI.

Luján Villar, Juan David. “Escenarios de no-guerra: el papel de la música en la transformación de sociedades en conflicto.” *Revista CS* N° 19. Cali, Colombia: Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Icesi (2016). http://dx.doi.org/10.18046/recs.i19.2171.

Muñoz López, Carlos Andrés. “La música como elemento de reparación integral en el post conflicto armado, caso El Salado, Colombia.” *Revista Estudios Socio-Jurídicos* 23, no. 2 (2021): 61-99. https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/sociojuridicos/a.9515.

Zapata, Gloria Patricia, and David J. Hargreaves. “The Effects of Musical Activities on the Self-Esteem of Displaced Children in Colombia.” *Psychology of Music* 46, no. 4 (2017): 540-550. https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735617716756.

Zapata Olivella, Delia. “La Cumbia: Síntesis musical de la nación colombiana reseña histórica y coreográfica”. *Revista de Folclor*, N°7, 2ª (1962).

Newspaper Articles

Garcés González, José Luis. “Hermanos Zapata Olivella, íconos de la tradición afro en Colombia.” *Revista Semana,* (Last modified June 10, 2024). ISSN 2745-2794.

Gómez Alonso, Gabriela. “El Salado: historia de una resiliencia musical.” *El Espectador*. June 22, 2018. https://www.elespectador.com/el-magazin-cultural/el-salado-historia-de-una-resiliencia-musical-article-795903/.

Lara Ramos, David. “Solo la verdá, gaitas sin pesares ni dolores.” *Las2orillas*. Last modified April 2019. https://www.las2orillas.co/solo-la-verda-gaitas-sin-pesares-ni-dolores/.

Matiz, Daniela. “La cultura cambia el chip en el postconflicto.” *El Tiempo*, May 20, 2014. https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-14013759.

Moreno, Paola. “El renacer musical de los Montes de María.” *Semana*, June 26, 2016. https://www.semana.com/musica/articulo/escuela-de-musica-de-lucho-bermudez-los-montes-de-maria-carmen-de-bolivar/49531/.

Ruiz, Marta “Fiesta de sangre: así fue la masacre de El Salado”, *Revista Semana*. Last modified February 16, 2020. https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/masacre-de-el-salado-como-la-planearon-y-ejecutaron-los-paramilitares/557580/.

Audio-Visual Resources

Castaño, Carlos. Interview by Dario Arizmendi. *Cara a Cara*. Canal Caracol, March 1, 2000. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INvkzJUgn4k&t=610s.

Universidad de la Sabana [Redacción de reportajes TV Unisabana]. *Arte, catarsis del conflicto*. November 21, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZopJZw3vyqQ.

Audio Resources

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. “Bienvenidos a El Salado.” *Las voces de El Salado*. February 18, 2013. https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/podcasts/las-voces-del-salado/.

Gaiteros de San Jacinto, “Campo alegre*”, Así Tocan Los Indios*, Llorona Records, Track 2, 2012, MP3

Los Gaiteros de Ovejas, Beny Esguerra, New Tradition Music. “Return.” *Eterno*. Track 3. Los Gaiteros de Ovejas, 2024. MP3.

Vanegas García, Gerson. “Por qué nos llaman así.” *Inspiración y folclor*, 2021. MP3.

Theses and Dissertations

Buelvas Díaz, Jaili Ivinai. *“A garganta da terra: música, memória e conflito agrário nos Montes de Maria, Colombia (1960-2000)”*. Dissertação para a obtenção do título de Mestre em História, Universidade Federal do Ceará, Fortaleza, Brasil, 2019. https://www.academia.edu/43172608/A_GARGANTA_DA_TERRA_M%C3%9ASICA_MEM%C3%93RIA_E_CONFLITO_AGR%C3%81RIO_NOS_MONTES_DE_MAR%C3%8DA_COL%C3%94MBIA_1960_2000

Corredor González, Lina María. *Montes Cantores: Música de Gaitas-Tambores y Construcción de Paz. Estudio de Caso: Ovejas, Sucre.* Tesis de maestría, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, 2016. http://hdl.handle.net/10554/35652.

Tovar Muñoz, Diana Patricia. *Memoria, cuerpos y música: La voz de las víctimas, nuevas miradas al Derecho y los Cantos de Bullerengue como una narrativa de la memoria y la reparación en Colombia*. Tesis de maestría, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, 2012. https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/48535.

Government Gazette

Ley 1448 de 2011. “Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras.” Enacted June 10, 2011. Article 11. Official Gazette No. 48.096.