

An enclave in the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land: the invention of the municipality of Uiramutã and the update of colonialism

Um enclave na Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol: a invenção do município de Uiramutã e a atualização do colonialismo

Gabriel Tardelli

Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

ABSTRACT

The emergence of a federative entity can appear in a fetishized way, depending on the ability of the actors involved to hide the conflicts that occurred during that process. This is what happened during the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã, in the state of Roraima, which sought not only to erase the disputes surrounding the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land, but also to make the indigenous peoples of the region invisible. By reading the minutes of the commissions setting up the municipality, as well as documents produced by the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Council of Roraima and other indigenous organizations, this article describes and analyses the tactics and strategies adopted by political and economic elites to occupy and liberate indigenous lands for economic exploitation. I intend to demonstrate how the state is 'made' empirically and locally through the creation of bureaucratic structures, fostering exclusions and asymmetrical relations. We will thus see that the war of conquest continues to be reworked through the exercise of power over indigenous peoples and territories. In my view, colonialism should not be understood as a reminiscence of a distant past, but as a field of power that still structures inequalities.

Keywords: Indigenous Peoples, Tutelary Power, Uiramutã, Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land.

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RESUMO

O surgimento de um ente federativo pode acontecer de maneira mais ou menos fetichizada, a depender da capacidade dos atores em jogo de ocultarem os conflitos que ocorreram no decorrer daquele processo. Foi isso que aconteceu durante a criação do município de Uiramutã, no estado de Roraima, que pretendeu apagar não somente as disputas em torno da Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol, como também tentou invisibilizar os povos indígenas da região. Por meio da leitura das atas das comissões de criação do município, bem como de documentos produzidos pela Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, pelo Conselho Indígena de Roraima e por outras organizações indigenistas, este artigo descreve e analisa as táticas e estratégias adotadas pelas elites políticas e econômicas para ocupar e liberar terras indígenas para a exploração econômica. Pretendo demonstrar, assim, como o Estado é “feito” empiricamente e localmente, através da criação de estruturas burocráticas, fomentando exclusões e relações assimétricas. Veremos, assim, que a guerra de conquista continua sendo reelaborada através do exercício de poder que recai sobre povos e territórios indígenas. A meu ver, o colonialismo não deve ser compreendido como uma reminiscência de um passado longínquo, mas enquanto um campo de poder que ainda estrutura desigualdades.

Palavras-chave: Povos Indígenas, Poder Tutelar, Uiramutã, Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol.

MAKING THE STATE

The Kapon (Akawaio, Ingarikó and Patamona) and Pemon (Arekuna, Kamarakoto, Makuxi and Taurepan) indigenous peoples – speakers of homonymous languages from the Karib family – live in a region where the Brazil-Guiana-Venezuela triple border currently lies. Since the first invasions by Europeans, the mineral-rich region has been the target of numerous disputes. In 1777, for example, the Portuguese built the São Joaquim Fort on the Branco River, as well as indigenous settlements, to protect their Amazonian domain from the onslaught of the Dutch (Amaral, 2022; Farage, 1991).

But it seems that the *colonial situation* (Balandier, 2014) in that region has not been lost in the pages of history, as it continues to produce effects at the same time, albeit in different ways. Let's look at an emblematic event: the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã in 1995, within the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land, in the northeast of Roraima, a state with a population of 97,320 indigenous peoples.¹ Although the “urban nucleus” of the municipality

¹ According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the 2022 Census showed that Roraima

was legally excluded from that area when the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land was ratified in 2005, the fact is that sociocultural boundaries seem less rigid than the legal norms might suggest. Thus, the conflicts that arose before, during, and after the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã – involving indigenous peoples, ranchers, miners, and different actors and state spheres – did not cease despite attempts at “pacification” emanating from the “State”.

In this article, I describe and analyze the process of creating the municipality of Uiramutã, focusing on the representations and power practices at play. The focus here is on the tactics and strategies adopted by political and economic elites to influence indigenous territories. However, this should not lead the reader to think that indigenous peoples remained apathetic, waiting for invaders. On the contrary, as we will see through the actions of the Council of Roraima (CIR)², there was resistance. My goal is to shed light on the processes through which a *state* is constructed locally by creating a municipality (an enclave) within indigenous territory. The “state” here should not be understood as something definitive, but as an ideological construct capable of legitimizing and making tolerable what may be considered unbearable or intolerable (Abrams, 2006).

I share the argument put forth by Santilli (2001) and the CIR that the municipality of Uiramutã was established in that region as a strategy to neutralize and fragment mobilizations for the demarcation of the Raposa Serra do Sol. The disputes surrounding that space make it clear that, in contemporary Brazil, the “land dimension of the state’s intervention over indigenous peoples is still in full operation, in continuity with a long-term colonial history” (Souza Lima, 2015, p. 429, my translation).

Although I conducted fieldwork in the Raposa Serra do Sol at different times between 2015 and 2021, the data presented here was constructed through the analysis of written documents, especially the minutes of the commissions that created the municipality, legislation, and petitions, as well as reports and communications from the CIR and National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples (Funai), available in the virtual archive of the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA)³. These documents were read both as ethnographic artifacts, exploring the multiple analytical possibilities of documentary ethnography (Ferreira; Lowenkron, 2020), and as artifacts that distinguish modern organizations (Teixeira; Lobo, 2018).

To reconstruct a long-term historical process and highlight certain recurrences, I will articulate the synchronic and diachronic dimensions, guided by Elias’s (2006) notion of *social*

is the Brazilian state with the highest proportion of indigenous peoples in relation to its total population. Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/trabalho/22827-censo-demografico-2022.html>. Accessed on: July 16, 2025.

2 An indigenous organization that operates in 35 indigenous lands in Roraima, in 465 communities, belonging to the Macuxi, Wapichana, Ingarikó, Patamona, Sapará, Taurepang, Wai-Wai, Yanomami, Yekuana and Pirititi ethnic groups.

3 Available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/index.php/>. Accessed on: Oct. 13, 2024

process, which allows us to understand “long-term, unplanned trends that are nonetheless structured and directed in the development of societal structures and structures of personality” (Elias, 2006, p. 197, my translation). This idea of development should not be confused with an evolutionary approach; it is an analytical tool that allows us to demystify supposed “social totalities”.

In addition to observing how the state is forged locally, I intend to demonstrate how colonialism is updated contemporaneously, i.e. not as a mere cultural or economic reminiscence, but as a structure that still produces inequalities (Tardelli, 2023). Thus, the creation of that municipality is both an example of how the state is made and how certain forms of power act locally, controlling populations and freeing up spaces for economic exploitation.

NOTES ON A LONG-DURATION PROCESS

Created in 1910 during the government of Nilo Peçanha (1867-1924), the Indigenous Protection and National Worker Location Service (SPILT⁴) was designed to discover, expand, and demarcate territories, “civilizing” those on the margins of the nation, that is, integrating indigenous peoples into a system of state and productive control. With military engineers in its ranks (the “soldier-citizens”), the republican indigenist policy adopted the category of *pacification* to refer to the protection afforded by the state to indigenous peoples, which was to occur without the use of violence. As the indigenous populations were “pacified” and settled in small territorial portions, their lands were released for private appropriation and economic exploitation (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2014; Souza Lima, 1995).

Thus, the creation of a state agency enabled the state to exercise what Souza Lima (1995) termed *tutelary power* over geographical, social, and symbolic spaces. This modality of power acts on territories and populations classified as *indigenous*, aiming for territorial and political integration. Forged from a military matrix typical of a conquest war, *tutelary power* can mediate without taking sides, arbitrate in a way that contributes to the maintenance of conflict, or intentionally produce dissent through a Roman principle: *divide et impera*.

During the Estado Novo (1937-1946), the occupation of “empty” spaces and the construction of a national identity were parts of the same process through which figures, values, ideas, practices, and colonial traditions resurfaced. With the so-called “March to the West,” Getúlio Vargas and the ideologues who contributed to the Estado Novo project aimed not only to create a new man – *the Brazilian worker* – but also to transform the ideology of territorial

⁴ In 1918, it came to be known simply as the Indigenous Protection Service (SPI). The agency was dissolved in 1967, the same year the National Indigenous Foundation (Funai) was created.

expansion into a state ideology (Souza Lima, 1995; Oliveira, 2008).

Through the classification systems inscribed in the legal world, bureaucracy, educational institutions, military corporations, and social rites, “the state shapes mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division, forms of thought” that contribute “to the construction of what we commonly designate as national identity – or, in more traditional terms, national character” (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 105, my translation). In this sense, the Vargas project valued the figure of the “pacified indigenous” as a fundamental piece in defending the country’s borders. In other words, the integration of indigenous peoples into national society was perceived and defended as necessary for Brazil’s economic development (Oliveira, 2003).

The Brazilian government’s interest in national integration was related, among other factors, to the growing clandestine exploitation of the Amazon by foreigners. Supported by the propagandistic discourse of “National Security,” new Federal Territories were created—whose land ownership belonged to the Union – to ensure the settlement and colonization of supposedly “uninhabited” areas (Oliveira, 2003). In 1943, President Getúlio Vargas signed Decree-Law No. 5,812, creating the territories of Amapá, Rio Branco, Guaporé (Rondônia), Iguçu, and Ponta Porã – the last two were extinguished by the 1946 Constitution. Until that moment, Boa Vista do Rio Branco was a municipality of Amazonas. The name “Rio Branco” comes from the watercourse that bathes the city of Boa Vista. However, due to the toponymic coincidence between this territory and the capital of Acre, on September 13, 1962, its name was changed to Roraima, named after the most prominent mountain in the region, located on the border between Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana (Oliveira, 2003).

Subsequently, through large development-oriented projects, the military regime (1964-1985) encouraged the opening of colonization fronts towards the Amazon, provoking a mass displacement to that region. For this, it was necessary to construct federal highways capable of linking the Amazon to the rest of the country (such as Belém-Brasília and Cuiabá-Porto Velho), as well as creating financial and fiscal support bodies for governmental policy, such as the Superintendency for the Development of the Amazon (SUDAM) and the Superintendency of the Manaus Free Trade Zone (SUFRAMA). In 1970, the National Integration Plan was implemented, aimed at promoting the economic growth of that region through the allocation of financial resources and the encouragement of migration from other regions of the country. During the same period, the BR-174 highway⁵ was constructed, connecting Boa Vista and the Territory of Roraima to the rest of Brazil. From then on, there was an increase in non-indigenous population and an intensification of economic activities in the region (Baines, 2003). The process of agricultural frontier expansion intensified in the 1980s, a period during which migratory flows were encouraged by Roraiman political groups (Barbosa, 1993).

⁵ Known as ‘Manaus-Boa Vista,’ BR-174 connects the states of Mato Grosso, Rondônia, Amazonas, and Roraima to Venezuela.

During the “redemocratization,” the military continued to be present in the government of José Sarney (1985-1990). In 1985, the Calha Norte Project (PCN) was conceived, which established military bases along Brazil’s northern border and fostered migratory flows towards the Amazon through the expansion of the road network and colonization in border regions (Barbosa, 1993). The establishment of infrastructure on Brazil’s northern border by the PCN was justified as a means of protecting the border, reinforcing national sovereignty, and preventing the advance of drug trafficking and guerrillas from neighboring countries. However, there were less explicit motives: fostering economic development through mining projects in the Guiana Massif, rich in cassiterite, diamonds, gold, among other minerals (Baines, 2003).

In a context of militarization of Funai and indigenist policy in Brazil, the PCN intensified intervention in indigenous areas situated along the border, contributing to the stagnation of land regularization for these territories (Pacheco de Oliveira, 1990; Souza Lima, 1990). For those responsible for the formulation and execution of these projects, indigenous claims should be reduced to national interests and objectives. Since the areas they claimed were often rich in minerals, the fate of indigenous peoples was – and still is – one of the military’s concerns, primarily from an integrationist perspective. Symptomatically, “the same power that prevents the *tutelados* of the Brazilian state from legalizing their lands alienates them to mineral speculation” (Souza Lima, 1990, p. 61, my translation).

With the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, Roraima – like Amapá – was elevated to state status, and a new “federative pact” was established in Brazil. The constituents redefined the political competence of federative entities, expanding the scope of action for states and municipalities and granting greater “political autonomy” to the latter. From this new institutional framework, there was a “fragmentation of Brazilian municipalities”: between 1988 and 2000, 1,438 new municipalities were created, the majority of which directly depended on federal resource transfers for their operation (Tomio, 2002). In Roraima, out of a total of 15 municipalities, eight were created between 1890 and 1982, and seven between 1994 and 1997⁶.

Although mining activities had been present in northeastern Roraima since the early decades of the 20th century, from the 1980s, this activity spurred population growth in Roraima. During the same period, the Yanomami territory, located in the upper Mucajaí River, began to be massively invaded by miners. As the mining activity stimulated the demand for numerous consumer goods, the local economy began to open opportunities for migrants from different parts of the country, leading to an increase in trade surrounding gold and diamonds, and at the same time, an increase in the number of small farmers. This process was encouraged by then-

6 Municipalities of Roraima and their dates of foundation: Boa Vista (July 9, 1890); Caracaraí (May 28, 1955); Alto Alegre (July 1, 1982); Bonfim (July 1, 1982); Normandia (July 1, 1982); Mucajaí (July 1, 1982); São João da Baliza (July 1, 1982); São Luís (July 1, 1982); Iracema (November 4, 1994); Amajari (October 17, 1995); Cantá (October 17, 1995); Pacaraima (October 17, 1995); Rorainópolis (October 17, 1995); Uiramutã (October 17, 1995); Caroebe (1997).

governor Romero Jucá Filho⁷.

The result for the Yanomami was alarming: proliferation of diseases, violence, pollution of the water network, unviability of hunting, deforestation, and over a thousand deaths. This calamitous situation resonated internationally, thanks in large part to the political actions of Davi Kopenawa (Kopenawa; Albert, 2015). In response, the federal government developed a plan to remove around 40,000 miners from the region. Romero Jucá opposed the measure, claiming he had not been consulted and that the “livelihood of the displaced and their families” had not been considered. He even suggested a policy for regulating mining activities, which would involve the establishment of a Caixa Econômica Federal agency nearby to prevent smuggling (Spritzer; Hippolito, 2022).

As the first election for governor of the new state approached – taking place in October 1990 – he stepped down to become a candidate for the Social Democratic Party (PDS). However, he lost the election to military candidate Ottomar de Souza Pinto (Veloso; Gomes, 2022), who ran for the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) and governed Roraima from 1991 to 1994, during which the process of creating the municipality of Uiramutã was underway. Ottomar was a friend of Interior Minister Mário Andreazza. In 1979, the same year he was promoted to brigadier and entered retirement, General João Batista Figueiredo, who governed Brazil from 1979 to 1985, appointed him governor of the territory of Roraima. During his administration, he implemented projects focused on agriculture, such as building roads, establishing a meatpacking plant in Boa Vista, two feed factories, seed and milk processing plants, and a fish processing center, in addition to promoting the planting of coffee, cocoa, guarana, rubber trees, oilseeds, and citrus fruits.

According to a document from the Roraima Diocese Information Center titled *Índios e brancos em Roraima* (1990), the Roraima government’s interest in indigenous peoples can be traced back to 1979. Until then, they were merely considered an impediment to the development of the territory, as made explicit in the words of Governor Ramos Pereira (1975-1979): “It will not be a handful of indigenous tribes that will prevent the progress of Roraima” (Ramos, s.d. *apud* Centro de Informação Diocese de Roraima, 1990, p. 14, my translation).

The management of indigenous peoples and territories changed with the arrival of Ottomar Pinto. Strategically, he controlled Funai and its actions towards indigenous peoples while also acting directly within communities. In the former case, he delayed demarcations and mediated between the indigenist agency and the landowners with whom he maintained political alliances. In the latter case, he intervened in communities, with Funai’s approval, constructing an image as a “defender” of indigenous peoples. For example, he implemented a financial

⁷ In September 1988, Sarney appointed him governor of the Territory of Roraima. At the end of the year, following the promulgation of the new Federal Constitution, his name was approved by the Senate’s Committee on Constitution and Justice as governor of the newly created state of Roraima.

aid program for communities aimed at increasing local agricultural production by providing tractors and drivers or financing for the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, tools, etc. If the project failed, debts were forgiven. Additionally, alongside his wife, he began visiting the *malocas*⁸ periodically, especially during Christmas and Easter, occasions on which he distributed gifts to the indigenous peoples.

Under pressure from local politicians, the government created six new municipalities in 1982, three of which were in indigenous territories. The new mayors argued that since these territories were within their respective municipalities, they did not constitute a separate or culturally distinct area. Although Funai prohibited campaign rallies in the communities, these areas became part of the election campaign routes, which involved gifts and threats. As a result of these actions that lasted for three years, Ottomar Pinto managed to have 30% of the region's indigenous peoples registered as voters and supported him in his campaign for governor of the newly created state.

Furthermore, Ottomar Pinto encouraged the migration of Brazilians from other states to Roraima, promoting the settlement of 10,000 families and the creation of nine neighborhoods in Boa Vista. These measures were highlighted during his electoral campaign for the governorship of the newly created state in 1990. As a candidate, he even stated his intention to settle 50,000 families in Roraima. Officially, the Roraima Government Colonization Department managed to allocate 1,953 families to existing and newly established agricultural colonies (31.4% in 1991 and 68.6% in 1992). However, "the greatest beneficiaries of this model are the medium/large, capitalized farmers, who initiate a process of land concentration officially recorded in the colonies" (Barbosa, 1993, p. 191, my translation). The government continued to implement land distribution programs. According to the then-governor: "Roraima has a lot of land: Brazil is full of landless men, while here there is plenty of land without men" (Barbosa, 1993, p. 193, my translation).

NEW CONFIGURATIONS, OLD DISPUTES

Inhabited by the Macuxi, Wapichana, Sapará, Ingarikó, Patamona, and Taurepang ethnic groups, the Indigenous Land of Raposa Serra do Sol is in the northeastern state of Roraima. Its name is derived from two large villages in the region: the *Maikan* community ("fox"), predominantly inhabited by the Macuxi people, and the *A'nayen* community ("sun mountain"), which is predominantly made up of Ingarikó. Administratively, the land is organized into four

⁸ Depending on the context, the term "maloca" is used to refer to indigenous villages as well as family dwellings and community spaces for social gatherings, political meetings, and religious rituals.

regions: Raposa, Baixo Cotingo, Surumu, and Serras, the latter being shared by all the peoples.

Before the establishment of the municipality of Uiramutã, the first two regions, along with Serras, were part of the municipality of Normandia, while Surumu was linked to the municipality of Pacaraima. The municipality of Uiramutã was created in 1995 and installed in January 1997 in a location that housed a homonymous indigenous community situated in the Serras region, near the Maú River (or Ireng), which forms the western border of Brazil with Guyana. The locality is 315 kilometers from Boa Vista. From the capital to the town, one initially travels 160 kilometers along BR-174 North; the rest of the journey is made on a dirt road. For those traveling on the highway towards the municipality of Pacaraima, the entrance to the locality is on the right.

Spatially, Uiramutã is divided into two areas: the “old center” (also referred to as the “village,” “municipal seat,” or “urban nucleus”) and the “current center”. The “old center” corresponds to the area where the inhabitants of the *maloca* lived when the first invasion occurred, and where many indigenous peoples still reside. It is a strip of land bounded in the west-east direction by two igarapés, which separate the two areas. The area is 400 meters wide, in the north-south direction, and approximately 1100 meters long, in the east-west direction. The “current center” is situated to the north and south of the “old center”. The area was managed by the *tuxaua*⁹ Orlando Pereira, son of tuxaua José Massaranduba.

The “urban nucleus” also includes the Village of Mutum, the Village of Socó, and Água Fria, small villages that, in the past, like Uiramutã, served as support bases for illegal mining in Raposa Serra do Sol. The largest of the villages in terms of population is Mutum, located on the eastern side, on the right bank of the Maú River. The Village of Socó, in turn, is in the central part, next to a homonymous maloca, in an area where Severino Mineiro, an old invader married to a Wapichana and the great-grandfather of former Uiramutã mayor Florani Mota, once lived. Finally, on the western side, is Água Fria, near the Ingarikó villages, located in a mountainous region.

The first invasions of Uiramutã date back to the late 1950s when miners settled in the center of the maloca, next to the house of the former tuxaua José Massaranduba. Between fluctuations, in the second half of the 1980s, invaders reoccupied the mountainous mining region along the Cotingo, Kinô, and Maú rivers. To assist the miners and facilitate “integration,” the Roraima government even opened a road in the region. Gradually, the locality transformed into a *corrutela* (a distortion of “corruptela”), a regional category used to designate support places

9 Each community belonging to the TIRSS has autonomy and recognizes the *tuxaua* as its main leader. In addition to mediating internal conflicts and representing the residents of their respective community externally, families turn to him to solve numerous problems. Furthermore, it is also the tuxaua's responsibility to impose sanctions on those who disrespect local rules. The introduction of the figure of the “tuxaua,” as well as the meetings among them, was encouraged by the Consolata priests starting in 1968. This occurred during religious instruction courses, usually at the Surumu mission, where a boarding school operated (Centro de Informação Diocese de Roraima, 1990).

for miners (Santilli, 2001). With the new invasions, indigenous houses began to coexist side by side with bars and brothels. Additionally, malaria, respiratory and venereal diseases, as well as physical assaults and deaths, became constant in the lives of those people.

To understand how these disputes and tensions are recurrent in that space, I will describe a social situation that I consider quite significant. Since *social situations* are events that maintain relationships with other social situations within a social system (Gluckman, 2010), through the analysis of successive events, we may visualize the configurations that mark the conflicting relationships in Raposa Serra do Sol, and notably in Uiramutã.

Ten years before the creation of the municipality, Funai prepared a Report about the Uiramutã *maloca* and the Indigenous area of Raposa Serra do Sol. In compliance with Service Communication No. 189/P, dated May 15, 1985, employees Roger Martins Gonçalves and Maria Guiomar de Melo traveled from Boa Vista to Uiramutã to investigate a complaint made by a soldier from the local Military Police (PM). According to him, indigenous peoples of the Macuxi ethnicity had closed a road linking Uiramutã to Orinduque¹⁰.

On their way, the employees stopped in Maturuca to gather information about the situation from tuxaua Jacir José de Souza, then one of the indigenous counselors and general tuxaua of the Serras region. He reported that the conflict began when indigenous peoples from 25 communities built a fence to protect a location where a field would be cultivated, and whose harvest would supply indigenous peoples working in mining for the “cantina comunitária”.¹¹ As a small pasture belonging to a settler – married to a Wapichana woman – was within the fenced area, “as always, the farmers took the opportunity to ignite the land issue”.

When they arrived at the police station, the employees observed that the place was crowded with farmers from Raposa Serra do Sol, even though most of them had no direct connection to the dispute. They had been summoned by the police officer “to take action regarding the fence of the indigenous” and to pressure the settler not to reach any kind of agreement with Funai. The employees of the indigenous affairs agency then requested that these individuals leave, so they could initiate negotiations between the parties.

The area sought by the settler, a certain Mr. Degas, who owned 28 heads of cattle, would correspond to 500 square meters, extending beyond the indigenous fence. However, the indigenous peoples refused to cede any land beyond the fence. The settler proposed, in the

10 The Indigenous Community of Orinduque is made up of Patamona groups and is in the former Ingarikó Indigenous Area, in the Serras region of the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Territory.

11 A project implemented by the Catholic Church, through the Consolata Mission, aimed to break the ties of dependency between local elites and Indigenous peoples. This was necessary because the labor exploitation of Indigenous peoples by farmers often led to indebtedness, as the farmers frequently owned the stores that sold food and industrial goods to the Indigenous communities. The Church then established a system where Indigenous peoples would buy from “community stores,” which would be managed by a tuxaua. The funds for these purchases would come from both individual mining activities and community agricultural endeavors (Centro de Informação Diocese de Roraima, 1990; Santilli, 2001).

end, to keep the area where the Escondida *maloca* was located. Again, the indigenous peoples did not give in. As no agreement was reached, the Funai employees moved to the area where the fence had been installed and invited tuxaua Jacir to speak privately with the farmer. The negotiation, however, was fruitless; although the tuxaua proposed buying his cattle and offered him an area locally known as “Boca do Uiramutã”.

Subsequently, the agents returned to Uiramutã to request that the farmers calm down. They agreed that “the indigenous would not take any measures against the non-indigenous residents of the Uiramutã maloca, and the farmers would not take any repressive measures against the indigenous”. The idea was to take the negotiation to Boa Vista, “away from the interference of third parties”. Finally, the agents suggested the following measures: that the Federal Police be called, if necessary, “to guarantee the integrity of the indigenous and community-level work,” and that the survival of the settler and his family be assured until the Indigenous area of Raposa Serra do Sol was definitively demarcated—which only happened more than a decade later.

According to Santilli (2001), the first attempt to demarcate the territory that partially corresponds to Raposa Serra do Sol dates to 1917, when the state of Amazonas enacted State Law No. 941, dated October 16 of that year, allocating a strip of land between the Cotingo and Surumu rivers for the usufruct of the Macuxi and Jaricuna. In 1919, the SPI proceeded with the demarcation and registration of the area. However, the lands continued to be invaded by settlers. Only in 1977 would new measures be taken. At that time, Funai established an Interministerial Working Group to carry out the identification of the lands. But the ordinance did not define the extent of the area to be demarcated. A new working group was established in 1979, but without conducting anthropological and historiographical studies. The model of demarcation in force at the time was that of “agricultural colonies” (or “islands”), which favored the invasion by farmers. Since Funai had not fulfilled its promises to demarcate all the claimed areas and as conflicts in the Serras region continued unabated, in a general meeting in 1983, the tuxauas presented a proposal for unified demarcation, supported by the Macuxi, Taurepang, Ingarikó, and Wapichana of the northern area. However, as reported in a CIR report from 2003, the demarcation had been “ostensibly opposed by the government and parliamentarians of Roraima who used everything from legal resources to the co-optation of indigenous leaders to prevent the conclusion of the demarcation process in a continuous area”.

In 1984, yet another working group was created, but the results were also inconclusive. Funai decided to re-examine the case of Raposa Serra do Sol in 1991. During the years 1992 and 1993, studies were finally completed, meeting the requirements for the administrative recognition of indigenous lands. The identification process was concluded in May 1993 and, following bureaucratic procedures, forwarded to the Ministry of Justice. The opposing reactions were swift (Santilli, 2001). Between 1994 and 1995, the government of Roraima attempted to build the “Tamanduá dam” (or Cotingo hydroelectric plant) on the Cotingo River, whose cultural and environmental impacts would be disastrous. However, an indigenous mobilization at the

national and international levels was able to prevent this project. The same did not happen with the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã. According to CIR, it was yet another “political maneuver by the local government”.

SCENES FROM A STATE DRAMA

The process of creating the municipality of Uiramutã, which will be described in this section, is directly linked to the conflicts mentioned above. By observing the different moments, events, actors, uses, appropriations, and meanings attributed to that space, we notice certain recurring themes over time and how the State is locally produced. Analyzing the discourses will help us understand the groups involved, their interests, and practices. We will deal here with *speech acts* of a ritual; that is, in the convergence between what is *said* and what is *done*, the intentions contained in the words can transform into concrete action (Teixeira, 1998; Teixeira; Tardelli, 2022).

On March 3, 1992, there was a meeting in Uiramutã to establish the Special Commission for the Creation of the Municipality of Uiramutã¹², as provided by state legislation. Present at the meeting were then-councilman Venceslau Braz de Freitas Barbosa (“representative of the Village of Uiramutã”) – who would become the first mayor of the new municipality – merchant Arthur Nabuco de Araújo (“representative of the Village of Socó”) and rancher Wilson Alvez Bezerra (“representative of the Village of Uiramutã”). The table also included state deputies Antônio Evangelista Sobrinho – known as Antonio “Pampinha” – and Herbson Jairo Ribeiro Bantin – known as “Berinho” Bantim – affiliated with the PTB and the Liberal Front Party (PFL), respectively. The secretariat was under the responsibility of José Eduardo de Freitas Barbosa – who is likely related to the one who opened the session and coordinated the work: Venceslau Braz de Freitas Barbosa.

Locally known as “Braz,” Venceslau was affiliated with the Progressive Party (PP) from 2011 to 2013; the Humanist Party of Solidarity (PHS) from 2013 to 2015; the Brazilian Labor Renewal Party (PRTB) from 2015 to 2016; the Democratic Labor Party (PDT) from 2016 to 2018; and, at the time of the research, he was with Solidarity. As published in the Diary of the Legislative Assembly of Roraima on February 21, 2018, he was appointed at the beginning of that year to a commissioned position as Legislative Parliamentary Advisor.

In 2011, the Public Ministry of the State of Roraima (MPRR) filed a civil action against former director of the Institute of Lands of Roraima (Iteraima), Washington Pará, and two

12 Minutes of the meeting regarding the General Assembly for the establishment of the Special Commission for the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã, dated March 3, 1992.

other agency employees for administrative impropriety. This was because Washington Pará had issued a land title favoring Venceslau Braz, owner of Fazenda Topázio, which had an area of 1,529 hectares and was in the Gleba Cauamé, municipality of Alto Alegre. The issue was that the land regularization process had allegedly occurred fraudulently, as the documents presented were said to be false.

According to the lawsuit, the area belonged to Sanival Landes Bueno, who had been cultivating rice and corn on the property since 2007. When he went to follow the land regularization process at the institute, Sanival encountered a titling process for the same area benefiting Venceslau Braz, former mayor of Uiramutã and one of the “desintrusados” (those non-indigenous peoples who had to leave the land after demarcation) of the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land. Among the punishments sought by the MPRR were the annulment of the land title issued, the loss of public office held at the time of the judgment, and the suspension of political rights for five years (Ministério [...], 2013).

Antonio Evangelista Sobrinho was born in the Ceará city of Campos Sales and arrived in Roraima in 1971. A rice producer, he was reportedly the first to install a grain processing machine, leading to his nickname: “Pampinha”. In 1990, affiliated with the PTB, he was elected to the first legislature of the State Legislative Assembly of the newly created state of Roraima, serving from 1991 to 1994. During this period, he was part of the Commission on Administration, Public Services, Transportation, and Works of the Roraima Legislative Assembly.

“Berinho” Bantim was also elected, by the PFL, to the first legislature of the State Legislative Assembly. He served three more terms: from 1995 to 1998, from 1999 to 2002, and from 2003 to 2006. On the last occasion, he was with the Social Liberal Party (PSL). From 2007 to 2011, he was affiliated with the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB); from 2011 to 2012, with the Social Democratic Party (PSD); from 2012 to 2013, with the Patriota (PATRI); from 2013 to 2014, with Solidarity; and in 2018 he was affiliated with the Party of Free Homeland (PPL). In 2011, the Regional Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of the 1st Region filed a criminal action against the parliamentarian for crimes committed against public administration between 1998 and 2002. According to the accusation, he was involved in the “grasshopper scandal,” a scheme to divert resources from the Roraima Department of Roads and Highways and the Secretary of Administration (SEAD): the people hired never provided services to the state (Nery, 2011).

Rancher Wilson Alvez Bezerra, in turn, was reportedly linked to the issues of the ratification of the Raposa Serra do Sol. In August 2011, he attended a public hearing organized by the Commission on Agriculture, Livestock, Supply, and Rural Development of the Chamber of Deputies. The purpose of the debate proposed by deputy Josué Bengtson (PTB-PA) was to discuss allegations published by *Veja* magazine, claiming that four new “slums” had emerged on the outskirts of Boa Vista because of the demarcation of that indigenous land. These “slums” were said to be inhabited by both ranchers who had been expropriated from the indigenous

area by a decision of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) and by indigenous peoples whose income depended on work performed for rice growers, ranchers, and small traders in the region (Comissão [...], 2011).

At the 1992 meeting, Venceslau Braz initially stated that the event had “historical importance” and that it could only occur due to the “new institutional framework” of the state of Roraima, which was a result of the promulgation of the state constitution. From that point, a “new relationship between the government and the general population” had begun, allowing the “interior” to reconsider “its situation in relation to the municipalities that govern its economic-social life, not always aligned with the real needs of each village or settlement. From this perspective, “the town of Uiramutã is eligible to become a new municipality in the state because it already has the legal conditions to do so”. For Braz, that would be the ideal moment “to think about the future of the mountain region, which, due to various factors, is inhibited in its development, and both populationally and economically fulfills all the requirements to become a municipality with the conditions for political affirmation”.

As we will see, the discursive regime of the actors who were at the forefront of the municipality’s creation operated on the key of developmentalism, echoing the discourses adopted to colonize the Amazon region at different periods and from different power practices. Thus, binomials such as *progress/backwardness* and *growth/stagnation* frequently appeared in speeches. The novelty may lie in the use of the notions of “affirmation” and “political autonomy”, linked to a project of political-administrative decentralization concerning the municipal, state, and federal plans, in a period following the military dictatorship.

In his speech, Venceslau Braz emphasized that he would take on responsibilities and would not waver in the face of the difficulties that the commission would encounter. According to him, there would be opposing positions “to the aspirations of the Village of Uiramutã”. However, depending on the reading of the minutes, we do not know what the dissenting viewpoints are. This is because documents, as artifacts that distinguish modern organizations, are characterized by “fixing meanings that render invisible the people and the context that gave rise to them” (Teixeira; Lobo, 2018, p. 254, my translation).

From that date, the commission would draft a work plan to gather data about the population, infrastructure, services, and “mineral and livestock potential”. With this information, it would be possible to “prove” that that locality “has the right to emancipate itself, thus contributing to the strengthening of the region and the state, through the implementation of realistic and objective projects that allow achieving the well-being of the entire population of the future municipality more quickly”.

Then, deputy Antonio “Pampinha” took the floor and, in advance, expressed his support for the creation of the municipality; he also noted that, as a parliamentarian, he had presented projects regarding the “geographical-political change of the State, through the creation of several municipalities”. The deputy congratulated the commission and encouraged it to “fight with all

its strength to achieve its objective”. Deputy “Berinho” Bantim also praised the proposal for creating the municipality, emphasizing that it was necessary to “change a state of affairs that, if continued, only delays the municipalities in the mountains, as the many difficulties only tend to increase if the people who live there do not take their destiny into their own hands”.

Councilman Nivaldo Afonso and the Agriculture Delegate, Colonel Pereira, also expressed their support for the new municipality. The colonel even showed enthusiasm regarding the “emancipation of various regions of the state that already have the conditions for it, as a normal way to achieve quicker solutions to the various problems that hinder the desired growth for everyone”. Professor Francisca de Chagas and Manoel Joaquim de Moraes agreed that “emancipation will only bring more resources and possibilities for progress”. They congratulated the deputies, “who understand the just aspiration of the people of the town and the region, who are already maturing to accept and collaborate with the new municipality, whose dismemberment from Normandia will not harm them”, adding that the municipality would make it possible to “work together much more productively and effectively, in favor of the entire population”.

The coordinator then declared the special commission created and constituted. Furthermore, he highlighted that “each member represents the interests and the free will of each district in the region” and that the commission will act in accordance with the substitutes for complementary law projects numbers 01 and 02/1991. He also appealed to the state executive to “collaborate with the goals of the project that is democratically involving all segments of the interior society of the mountains”. However, we did not find any registrations of the participation of indigenous peoples, their organizations, or any indigenist body in any of the minutes. The fact is that the indigenous peoples of the region expressed their opposition to the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã during the bureaucratic process, either through blockades on the roads or through public denunciations. It is important to keep in mind that the invention of the municipality occurred simultaneously with the long process of demarcating the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land. Although some indigenous peoples supported the creation of the municipality, the power relations in the sense of Foucault (1995) take on a more complex configuration; words like “co-optation” are insufficient for us to understand the situational choices of each social actor (Gluckman, 2010).

After a vote, the commission was constituted by the following members: Venceslau Braz de Freitas Barbosa (president), Manoel Joaquim de Moraes (vice-president), Alcir Rodrigues de Oliveira (secretary), Wilson Alvez Bezerra (treasurer), João Alves da Silva (member), and José Alves Crispim (member). The minutes were recorded by José Eduardo de Freitas Barbosa.

In the same year, the Planning Secretariat of the state of Roraima prepared the *Study of political-administrative redistricting – creation of new municipalities*. This document, which provided economic and demographic data, was used by the deputies of the Legislative Assembly of Roraima as justification for the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã. The interests of the

state Executive and Legislative powers, as well as the regional elites, were in sync, as is evident in one of the excerpts from the study: “The Amazon is a large demographic void, where the presence of public power with the realization of economic infrastructure works and disciplining policies for economic occupation are absolutely essential”.

On April 25, 1994, the Attorney General of the Federal Public Ministry, Aristides Junqueira Alvarenga, filed a *security mandate*¹³ against the Regional Electoral Court of the State of Roraima (TRE-RR), which had determined on the 6th of that month the holding of plebiscite consultations in Uiramutã, Amajari, and Rorainópolis on May 8, with the aim of elevating them to the status of municipalities. As noted by the Federal Public Ministry, those localities did not have the electorate required by current legislation. For a municipality to be created, according to Article 2 of Complementary Law No. 001 of April 5, 1992, which provided for the creation, incorporation, merging, and dismemberment of municipalities, it was necessary to have “a number of voters not less than 30% (thirty percent) of the population of the emancipated area” (section II) and “an already constituted urban center with a minimum of 100 (one hundred) residential houses” (section III).

However, according to the petition from the Federal Public Ministry, based on a certificate issued by the TRE-RR itself, the voter/population ratio in Uiramutã was only 8.76%; in Amajari, it was 10.95%; and in Rorainópolis, it was 27.50%. If held, the Attorney General argued, the plebiscite consultations would be inconsistent with the necessary “representation of the populations directly concerned” established by the Federal Constitution; for this reason, the Federal Public Ministry requested their suspension. Two days later, the president of the TRE-RR, Judge Jurandir Pascoal, sent a copy of the decision of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) to the president of the Legislative Assembly, Ailton Antônio Soligo, which determined that the plebiscite consultations in those localities be suspended (Official Letter No. 070/94).

On March 23, 1995, an extraordinary meeting took place in the Legislative Assembly¹⁴, presided over by Deputy Helder Teixeira Grossi and attended by deputies Herbson Bantin and

¹³ The security mandate is a type of legal action used to protect a right that has been violated or is under threat due to an abuse of power by a public authority. It is provided for in Article 5, clause LXIX, of the Federal Constitution and is regulated by Law No. 12,016 of 2009.

¹⁴ Minutes of the meeting regarding the Special Commission to Guide the Organization of the Emancipation Process of the municipality of Uiramutã. 1st (Extraordinary) Meeting held on March 23, 1995.

Jalser Renier Padilha. The aim was to create a Special Commission (as provided in Resolution No. 015/95) that would analyze Complementary Law No. 001/92 and guide the “organization of the emancipation process of the municipality of Uiramutã”. With a quorum present, they elected the members of the commission: Herbson Bantin would be the president; Helder Grossi, the vice-president; and Jalser Padilha, the rapporteur.

In the second extraordinary meeting¹⁵, held on March 27, in addition to the three commission members, Councilman Venceslau Braz was present, whose “qualities and importance of his presence during the work” were praised by the president, “due to his experience in the emancipation process of that region”. At that time, the schedules for visiting the Vila do Mutum, Vila do Socó, Vila do Uiramutã, and Água Fria were established. Before concluding the session, Deputy Helder Grossi emphasized that the presence of the commission in those localities would be a “way to honor the residents” living there.

Three days later, a third extraordinary meeting occurred¹⁶. This time, in the village of Uiramutã, with the presence of the mayor of Normandia, Gelb Pereira, and the councilmen of the same municipality, Afonso Nivaldo de Souza – then president of the City Council – Antonio Barbosa da Silva, and Venceslau Braz. Deputy Helder Grossi advocated for emancipation so that Uiramutã “can walk on its own legs”. Then, Deputy Jalser Padilha stated that “the emancipated municipality has everything to gain,” since “the taxes that may arise are minimal compared to the advantages and opportunities that will arise”. Mayor Gelb Pereira spoke about “the difficult economic and financial situation of the City Hall to adequately cover the entire area of the municipality of Normandia”. Indirectly, councilor Antônio Barbosa seemed to mention the indigenous peoples of the Sierras region, when he pointed out “that the army played a major role in clearing, building and allocating these populations, who live in the Sierras region today”. He also said that “if the inhabitants of these communities don’t vote, don’t apply themselves to this task, it won’t be worth the effort”.

According to the minutes, the president “opened the floor to members of the community to express their opinions on the matter; no one spoke up”. However, we do not know which “community” is being referred to, nor who these people were. At the end of the session, “for the sake of justice,” the president delegated to the Emancipation Commission, which had initiated the first actions for the creation of the municipality, the task of guiding the emancipation process, as provided for in Article 17 of the Constitution of the State of Roraima. The commission would then consist of Councilman Venceslau Braz (president), João Alves da Silva (vice-president), Amélio Moraes (secretary), Wilson Alvez Bezerra (treasurer), Francisca das Chagas Ribeiro

15 Minutes of the meeting regarding the Special Commission to Guide the Organization of the Emancipation Process of the municipality of Uiramutã. 1st (Extraordinary) Meeting held on March 23, 1995.

16 Minutes of the meeting regarding the Special Commission to Guide the Organization of the Emancipation Process of the municipality of Uiramutã. 1st (Extraordinary) Meeting held on March 23, 1995.

(member), and Jurandi Pinho Costa (member). That is, except for Amélio Moraes and Jurandi Pinho, all the people mentioned attended the March 1992 meeting, although Professor Francisca das Chagas was not part of that year's commission.

On the same day¹⁷, the Emancipation Commission met¹⁸. The same participants from the previous meeting were present. This new minute reveals, however, just like the March 1992 minutes, who and which localities were “represented”: Venceslau Braz (“representative of the village of Uiramutã”)¹⁹, João Alves da Silva (“representative of the Vila de Água Fria”), Jurandir Pinho Costa (“representative of the Vila do Mutum”), Wilson Alvez Bezerra (“representative of the Vila do Socó”), Amélio Moraes (“representative of the Vila do Uiramutã”), and Francisca das Chagas Ribeiro (“representative of the Vila do Mutum”). Again, there is no mention of indigenous leaders and communities, or of the regions that make up the Raposa Serra do Sol. There was a new vote, but it only endorsed the composition of the commission formed in the previous meeting. Thus, we observe an invisibility of the indigenous peoples, who were excluded from the process, ignoring their presence as original peoples.

Evidently, three years after the initial political mobilizations aimed at the creation of the municipality of Uiramutã, no work plan had been developed, nor had data on the communities of the Raposa Serra do Sol been gathered that “proved” the “right” to emancipation, except for the study conducted by the state Planning Secretariat.

On April 11, 1995, during the period when the emancipation process was underway, Governor Neudo Campos enacted Complementary Law No. 011, a political maneuver that altered the two sections of Complementary Law No. 001. By the new wording, the percentage of voters required was reduced from 30% to 10%, while the number of residential houses decreased from 100 to 70. Neudo Campos, moreover, never hid his openly opposing stance toward the continuous demarcation of Raposa Serra do Sol. In 2008, almost three years after the ratification, he stated in a public hearing: “They have a lot of land, which is already excessive. What they need is helping to produce their own food” (Deputados [...], 2008).

Alongside the process of creating Uiramutã, processes regarding the emancipations of Pacaraima, Amajari, Rorainópolis, and Cantá were also underway. Therefore, on April 15, 1995, a joint meeting²⁰ of the respective special commissions and their rapporteurs was held in the Legislative Assembly. At that meeting, the final reports of the special commissions were read and unanimously approved. Finally, an official letter was prepared to send the final report to the

¹⁷ The time recorded in both minutes was the same: at 10 a.m.

¹⁸ Minutes of the meeting regarding the Emancipation Commission of the municipality of Uiramutã, dated March 30, 1995.

¹⁹ In the minutes, the preposition “de” is sometimes used (Vila de Uiramutã) and at other times the contraction of the preposition “de” with the article “o” is written (Vila do Uiramutã).

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting regarding the Joint Meeting of the Special Commissions that Guide the Emancipation Processes of the municipalities of: Pacaraima, Amajari, Rorainópolis, Cantá, and Uiramutã, dated April 15, 1995.

presidency of the assembly. On October 17, 1995, Law No. 098 was enacted, which “created” the municipality of Uiramutã. In fact, as Bourdieu (2008, p. 114, my translation) emphasizes:

By stating, with authority, that a being, thing, or person exists in truth (*verdict*) in its legitimate social definition, that is, is what is authorized to be, what has the right to be, the social being that it has the right to claim, to profess, to exercise (as opposed to illegal exercise), the state exercises a true creative power, almost divine.

The establishment of the municipality only occurred in 1997. In January of that year, Venceslau Braz was elected mayor. In the following years, some of the actors who participated in the creation of the municipality would take on positions in the City Hall and the municipal chamber. In the subsequent elections, candidates from indigenous backgrounds would participate. Still in 1997, in response to the arbitrary process of municipal emancipation, indigenous groups expelled miners and closed the mines in the region – in the western area in 1997, and in the eastern area in 1998.

However, in 2022, the CIR estimated that there were around 4,000 gold miners in Raposa Serra do Sol, a number that grew substantially with the arrival of Jair Bolsonaro as President of the Republic in 2019 (Pereira, 2022). At the time, without the support of Funai and the Federal Police (PF), the communities organized themselves to defend their territories and fight gold extraction: they burned gold diggers’ rafts and seized mining materials. Parallel to this, however, the Roraima Legislative Assembly approved Bill 233/2022, which prohibited the destruction of dredges and other equipment seized in illegal mining areas. Although the law was sanctioned by Governor Antônio Denarium,²¹ the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional.

A CONQUEST WAR

Only on December 11, 1998, did the Minister of Justice, Renan Calheiros, sign Ordinance No. 820, which defined the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land as an area of 1,678,800 hectares. However, again due to pressure from local politicians, the ratification was postponed until 2005. In a letter (Letter No. 353/03-CIR) sent to then-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on June 11, 2003, the CIR advocated for the full ratification of the indigenous land. Among the reasons listed, it emphasized: “Avoid negative impacts caused by the creation of municipalities,” noting that “the seats of the municipalities of Uiramutã and Pacaraima, amidst the indigenous communities, lead to strong interference in the languages, customs, and traditions of the peoples

²¹ Antônio Denarium was elected governor by the Social Liberal Party (PSL) in the second round of the 2018 elections. In 2022, he was re-elected as a member of the Progressive Party (PP).

inhabiting the area,” adding that the non-ratification would encourage urban expansion by non-indigenous people and restrict the ownership and use of land by indigenous peoples.

A few years after the creation of Uiramutã, in November 2000, the army began constructing a barracks in the municipality. The goal was to establish the 6th Special Border Platoon there, following the guidelines of the PCN. Despite the opposition from indigenous peoples, who denounced military abuses at various levels, the barracks was inaugurated in May 2002, even though the construction was not completed. The military base is in the southern part of Uiramutã, about 100 meters from the nearest community.

And the war continues on other battlefronts. Since 2009, during the Raposa Serra do Sol trial before the Supreme Court, the “temporal milestone” argument, adopted at the time by the Federal Attorney General’s Office (AGU), has been on the lips of magistrates and parliamentarians. According to this legal thesis, indigenous peoples would only have the right to occupy the lands they occupied (or disputed) before October 5, 1988, that is, before the Federal Constitution was promulgated. In September 2023, the STF judged the case of the Xokleng, finding the temporal milestone unconstitutional. Despite this decision, the National Congress approved Law 14.701/2023, introducing the timeframe thesis into the Brazilian legal system. According to the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (2025), which has challenged the legislation in the Supreme Court, it is the “Law of Indigenous Genocide”, since it has created obstacles to the demarcation of indigenous lands, as well as encouraging invasions and a situation of insecurity for indigenous peoples throughout the country.

In fact, the “time” of the state – and of the legal world – seems to be akin to Benjamin’s “Angel of History”. Looking to the past, the angel sees catastrophes, destruction and ruins. From paradise, a storm arises – the “progress” – which drives him towards the future, “to which he has his back turned, while before him the ruins accumulate up to heaven” (Benjamin, 1994, p. 226). This critical view of progress helps us to think about the violence historically perpetrated against indigenous peoples, often led by the State through its agents and institutions.

Still in relation to the municipality of Uiramutã, if we only consider the content of the minutes, we can infer that during the meetings there were no debates, discussions, disagreements, exchanges of barbs or anything of the sort. As an ideological construct, the state tries to hide historical processes, relations of domination and conflicts which, if they were to come to light, “would be incompatible with the state’s proclaimed autonomy and interference” (Abrams, 2006, p. 95). However, by mapping the actors, institutions and power relations that were at play during the creation of the municipality, we can see how the state was manufactured locally as a unit “in the social language of conflict rather than in its suppression” (Teixeira; Lobo, 2018, p. 266).

According to Mitchell (1999), the state emerges from techniques that allow certain material practices to appear as abstract and immaterial forms. The ideological dimension of the state is not merely related to a subjective belief but to a representation that is reproduced

and made explicit in visible everyday forms, such as language, legal practices, the architectural style of public buildings, uniforms, or the way borders are delineated and monitored. It is, therefore, an empirical phenomenon.

In the preceding paragraphs, we see how alliances among different actors were crucial for the municipality's creation; this does not mean they necessarily acted against the law, that is, against the competencies assigned to them by law. There seems to have been a confluence of interests, and a sharing of meanings projected onto that space. In this sense, it is notable how different categories were used to designate Uiramutã over time. The word *maloca* refers to indigenous houses or spaces for meetings and rituals. In reports and maps from Funai, as well as in IBGE maps, however, the word appears to take on the meaning of *aldeia*²², as it was historically used, or *community*. On the other hand, those who played a key role in the municipality's creation and served on the commissions strategically adopted the category of *vila* (*village*).²³

Not coincidentally, the commissions recall the “royal commission,” which was a group chosen by the king to perform a socially recognized mission regarding a problem generally deemed significant. Commissions are “staged operations that consist of enacting a set of people destined to perform a kind of public drama, the drama of reflection on public issues,” and, more than that, they are ceremonies that act to be recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 2017, p. 56, my translation).

Thus, the minutes of the municipality's creation can be read as registrations of a political ritual through which power was enacted, social positions were defined, and inequalities were (re)produced (Geertz, 1991). During the emancipation process meetings, we witnessed the dramatization and exhibition of power relations through which actors, groups, and institutions fought for the “symbolic power to make see and make believe, to predict and prescribe, to make known and to make recognized, which is at the same time a struggle for power over ‘political powers’ (the administrations of the State)” (Bourdieu, 2015, p. 179, my translation).

The establishment of that federative entity within indigenous territory, that is, the expansion of the state over a geographic space, highlights that we are facing a reworked form of conquest war aimed at seizing lands and populations (Souza Lima, 1990; 1995). Likewise, it reveals a *colonial situation* (Balandier, 2014), in which the principle “divide and conquer” is strictly followed through the imposition of ethnic, cultural, and religious divisions, etc. It is no coincidence that one of the strategic objectives of creating the municipality of Uiramutã was to counter the demand for the continuous demarcation of Raposa Serra do Sol, opposing the

22 This category is historically linked to Jesuit settlements.

23 During the colonial period, a village was an administrative unit larger than a “aldeia” but smaller than a city. Thus, settlements could be elevated to villages and villages to cities, depending on population growth and infrastructure.

fragmented demarcations promoted by local politicians, termed “island demarcation,” which opens indigenous lands to invasions, illegal occupations, and plundering.

From this perspective, I have argued that colonialism still produces power effects (Tardelli, 2023). However, this does not imply continuity but rather a repetition with difference, that is, a regeneration of hierarchies and asymmetries through other means. In my view, *colonialism* is a structure or field of power, in the sense proposed by Bourdieu (2015), that is maintained through the reproduction of objective power relations structured by the worldviews of those entangled in those relations. Following Balandier (2014), I believe that colonialism is not only grounded in state actions but also in everyday practices that are uncoded and spread across numerous social sectors. Colonial power – or the colonial exercise of power – updates this structure. But while different forms of power can coexist and complement each other (Foucault, 1995; Souza Lima, 1995), this is also true of the different possibilities of resistance.

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Gabriel Tardelli

Substitute professor in the Departamento de Antropologia at Universidade Federal Fluminense. Postdoctoral researcher and Doctor of Anthropology from the Universidade de Brasília. ID ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7252-0123>. E-mail: gabrielcmtardelli@gmail.com