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Os Warao na encruzilhada: Conflitos e economias morais nos abrigos indígenas de Roraima

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Operation Welcome was created in 2018 by the Brazilian government to deal with the influx of Venezuelans arriving in the country, including indigenous peoples. Based in the state of Roraima, it is an operation that has a military arm (Army) and a civilian arm (Social Assistance), in addition to support from United Nations agencies and NGOs through partnerships and shared governance. This article analyzes one of the axes of the operation, namely "reception." The focus is on some of the services offered within shelters for indigenous people, such as food, hygiene, and security. By describing some of the social situations I observed within these spaces, we will see, through the lenses of the Warao, military personnel, humanitarian workers, and missionaries not only different perspectives and worldviews, but also different moral economies. The conflicts that structured the relationships between actors and institutions revealed both colonial recurrences and contemporary configurations characteristic of humanitarian military governments.

Warao, indigenous peoples, Operation Welcome, humanitarian reason

A Operação Acolhida foi criada em 2018 pelo governo brasileiro para lidar com o fluxo de venezuelanos que chegavam ao país, incluindo povos indígenas. Baseada no estado de Roraima, trata-se de uma operação que conta com um braço militar (Exército) e outro civil (Assistência Social), além do apoio dado por agências das Nações Unidas e ONGs por meio de parcerias e da lógica da *governança compartilhada*. O presente artigo analisa um dos eixos da operação, isto é, o "acolhimento". O foco recai sobre alguns dos serviços oferecidos dentro dos abrigos destinados a indígenas, como alimentação, higiene e segurança. Ao descrever algumas situações sociais que pude observar dentro desses espaços, veremos, pelas lentes dos Warao, militares, trabalhadores humanitários e missionários não somente diferentes perspectivas e visões de mundo, mas diferentes economias morais. Os conflitos que estruturavam as relações entre atores e instituições evidenciavam tanto recorrências coloniais quanto configurações contemporâneas próprias dos governos militares humanitários.

Warao, povos indígenas, Operação Acolhida, razão humanitária

A humanitarian military government

Due to invasions that have been affecting their traditionally occupied territories for decades with a view to exploiting natural resources, countless indigenous peoples in Venezuela have been expelled from their lands and forced to move to urban centers. In the case of the Warao, who live in the Guianas macro-region between the Orinoco delta and the Amazon River delta estuary, the situation has worsened to such an extent that, in the last ten years, they have left their communities in eastern Venezuela for Brazil, which is home to more than 8,000 indigenous people of this ethnic group, scattered throughout all regions of the country.[1] The same has happened with the Taurepang, E`ñepa, Kariña, and Wayúu, among other indigenous peoples, totaling about 4,000 people.[2]

The reasons for this displacement, which intensified in 2016, are similar to those of millions of Venezuelans: hyperinflation, unemployment, food shortages in markets, lack of medicine, political persecution, violence perpetrated by armed groups that controlled mining areas, among other rights violations that seem to have worsened with the death of President Hugo Chávez (1954-2013) and the rise of Nicolás Maduro to the Miraflores Palace, in a context of economic recession and political and social instability (Lezama 2020; Carroll 2013). Nevertheless, I believe that the displacement of the Warao should be seen as part of a long-term historical process (Elias 2006) marked by a series of violent events that have become "a frame of reference within which forms of community have gained expression; the history of lives entangled in violence is part of the history of the nation" (Das 2020, 22). This is what the Indian anthropologist Veena Das conceptualized as *critical events*, that is, events that can traumatize, cause pain and suffering, disrupt the lives of those affected by them, and generate new forms of subjectivity (Das 1995). Such events are linked to everyday life and penetrate the core of the ordinary, giving "shape to the intertwining of community and state experiences and continue to become more lethal" (Das 2020, 23).

The Warao arrive in Brazil following the same route as Venezuelans and other indigenous peoples: through the municipality of Santa Elena de Uairén, which is 15 km from the border with the municipality of Pacaraima, in the state of Roraima. There, the Brazilian government set up the base for Operação Acolhida (Operation Welcome), a humanitarian military operation created in February 2018 by President Michel Temer, who took office after the parliamentary coup that ousted President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. With the arrival of Jair Messias Bolsonaro to the presidency (2019-2022), the operation was consolidated (Capdeville 2021; Tardelli 2023a; 2025). During Lula's third term in office, there appear to have been few changes, at least regarding the military's role. As I have shown (Tardelli 2023a; 2025), this operation arose in a context of growing military participation in Brazilian political life since redemocratization, although this is not necessarily new in our republican history. Similarly, Operation Welcome is directly linked to a series of humanitarian military interventions that have emerged on the international scene since the 1990s (Fassin & Pandolfi 2010; Fassin 2016a), as we will see below.

1 ACNUR – Agência da ONU para Refugiados. Populações indígenas refugiadas e migrantes no Brasil. https://www.acnur.org/br/o-que-fazemos/temas-especificos/populacao-indigena.

2 Ibidem.

The Federal Government coordinates the operation through the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee, chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Presidency of the Republic and with the participation of various ministries, with a greater focus on the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Citizenship — currently the Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, Family, and Fight Against Hunger (MDS), responsible for public policies provided for in the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS). The military arm includes the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force (FT Log Hum), a temporary military unit whose objective was to carry out a specific mission. The operation is mainly funded by the Brazilian government,[3] with the support of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations — mostly religious in nature — whose roles, responsibilities, actions, and projects are carried out based on the neoliberal logic of *shared governance*, which establishes new relationships between political, social, and economic actors (Teixeira & Souza Lima 2010; Teixeira 2017; Tardelli 2023a). Thus, the response created to deal with the "humanitarian crisis" offers different services, such as the regularization of *refugees*' and *migrants*' documents,[4] institutional reception, and internalization, that is, the relocation of Venezuelans from Roraima to other states of Brazil.

In this article, the focus will be on the second axis of the operation, reception (acolhimento),[5] especially in the indigenous shelters in Roraima,[6] the services offered in these spaces, and the conflicts that arose between the Warao and the institutions, leaving for another time the relations between the Warao and other indigenous peoples who lived there, such as the E'ñepa. To this end, in the first part, I will present some social situations observed in these environments. Following Gluckman (2010), I believe that observing these social situations can help us verify the validity of our generalizations. In the situations described here, we will see that conflicts are structural, delimiting moral boundaries and radically different worldviews.

For clarification, I worked as an anthropologist in two shelters between March 2020 and November 2021, hired by one of the NGOs responsible for managing these locations. Subsequently, I worked at UN agencies until March 2025. All my employers were aware of my research. Due to contractual confidentiality clauses, I only used information already published by the institutions — including public documents that I produced — by the judicial system, or by the media. In addition, I maintained friendly ties with the Warao in various regions of Brazil, and much of the data analyzed in this work was constructed through these relationships, both inside and outside the shelters. Inspired by anthropologist Didier Fassin (2016b), I sought to operate on the *threshold of the cave*, alternating between humanitarian work and independent research. This position allowed me to observe, from a privileged locus, the engagement, dilemmas, and moralities of humanitarian workers, military personnel, and other institutional actors, while maintaining autonomy and critical reflection, despite the ethical and epistemological challenges inherent in this liminality.

Among military personnel, humanitarian workers, missionaries, anthropologists, social workers, and police officers, the Warao found themselves at a *cross-*

3 During the initial phase of Operation Welcome, the Brazilian government issued provisional measures that allocated significant resources to assist Venezuelans. In February 2018, Provisional Measure No. 823130 opened an extraordinary credit line of R$ 190 million for the Ministry of Defense. In November of the same year, Provisional Measure No. 857 added R$ 75.2 million, and in 2019, Provisional Measure No. 880 allocated an additional R$ 223 million to the operation. For comparison, the federal budget approved for 2018 was R$ 3.57 trillion, including R$ 139.91 billion for Education, R$ 585 billion for Social Security, and R$ 130 billion for Health (Tardelli 2023a).

4 In Pacaraima, Operation Welcome has a Reception and Identification Center (PRI), a Screening Center (PTRIG), and an Advanced Medical Care Center, where registration, immigration control, CPF issuance, vaccination, health screening, psychosocial care, and emergency medical care are provided. Upon arrival, newcomers can choose to apply for refugee status or temporary residence. For a more in-depth analysis of these state categories, see: Capdeville (2021) and Tardelli (2023a; 2025).

5 TN: The Portuguese term acolhimento has a range of connotations that extend beyond 'receiving' or even 'welcoming' to imply protection and care (offering shelter).

6 The indigenous shelters in Roraima will be described here as generic spaces to preserve the identity of the actors who work there. On the other hand, the names and locations of these spaces will be mentioned when their identity is revealed in news reports and public reports on specific situations.

roads, a word that takes on a double connotation here, implying not only a dead end, a metaphor for moments of impasse, but also, in dialogue with Leda Maria Martins (2021), a place or meeting point between congruent and/or contradictory elements, influences and divergences, fusions and ruptures. The author adopts this notion as a concept and as a semiotic operation in order to understand the dynamics and processes of sign transit, interactions, and intersections that permeate the lives of African peoples, whose "epistemes and a whole complex collection of knowledge and values have been reterritorialized, reimplanted, refunded, recycled, reinvented, reinterpreted, at the countless historical crossroads derived from these crossings" (Martins 2021, 31, my translation).

At the crossroads experienced by the Warao, different worldviews and *moral economies* circulated. Inspired by the definitions of Thompson (1998) and Scott (1976) and emphasizing the moral dimension of this type of economy, Fassin (2019, 42) proposes that moral economy be "considered as the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions, and values, norms, and obligations in the social space." For him, moral economies concern society, groups of societies, and social segments. In each place, moral economies take on unique historical forms, but they also shift from the local to the global. In this sense, "local research illuminates national or transnational scenes, and one can even speak of an ethnography of the moral economies of contemporary societies" (Fassin 2019, 45-46).

From this perspective, this article seeks to reflect, based on empirical research conducted with the Warao in different ethnographic contexts, on these indigenous peoples' contact with a specific moral economy that guides humanitarian aid and often serves to justify military interventions in various scenarios (Fassin & Pandolfi 2010; Fassin 2016a). This moral economy involves the production and circulation of values, norms, and sentiments that legitimize certain institutional practices.

Furthermore, I argue that the power relations established between the Warao, and the institutional actors of Operation Welcome reproduce colonial discourses historically projected onto indigenous peoples (Tardelli 2023a; 2025). Among these practices, the recurrence of stigmatizing images attributed to indigenous peoples stands out — such as "barbarians," "savages," "primitive," "dirty," "naive," "pure," "childish," "brave," and "lazy" — which contribute to the marginalization and dehumanization of these groups. In addition, typical colonial practices persist, such as the compulsory sedentarization of these populations in delimited spaces, evidencing the continuity and functioning of mechanisms of control and exclusion.

Welcoming Brazil

Operation Welcome is structured around three main areas: 1) *border control,* 2) *reception,* and 3) *internal relocation*. The first pillar covers activities such as reception, identification, health inspections, immunization, immigration regularization, and screening of new arrivals. The third pillar refers to the relocation of refugees and migrants from Roraima to other Brazilian states. The second pillar,

the focus of this article, corresponds to the sheltering of Venezuelans — including indigenous populations — in spaces designated for people classified as "vulnerable." According to official statements, these shelters seek to guarantee minimum conditions of safety, rest, personal hygiene, and food.

Although they were created as "emergency" and "temporary" spaces, in the absence of other public policies, many Warao ended up living permanently in shelters in Pacaraima and Boa Vista for more than eight years. Those who managed to gain access to land and housing did so without the support of the operation itself or any other state agency. I met indigenous people who, even after traveling to other Brazilian states, found themselves living in shelters again — this time run by municipal or state governments — often as precarious as those in Roraima (Rosa 2021; Maréchal, Velho & Rodrigues 2021; Facundo & Santos 2024; Rodrigues 2025).

About the shelters provided by Operation Welcome in Roraima, there is a clear link between Brazilian shelter policies and humanitarian assistance practices aimed at refugees and migrants in situations of war, conflict, or disaster. International humanitarian manuals, such as *The Camp Management Toolkit*, use the term *camp* to refer to a variety of spaces intended for displaced persons — from temporary settlements and planned camps to collective and transit centers. The category "shelter" refers to one of the services offered in these camps, such as housing units, which not only provide physical protection from the elements, but also offer an environment of privacy and dignity to those who live there (NRC 2008).

Operation Welcome opted for the term *abrigo* ("shelter" in English; "refúgio" in Spanish) to designate the spaces intended for migrants and refugees, in contrast to the concept of "camp" used in the manuals. This choice is related to the existence, in Brazil, of a shelter policy linked to the SUAS. In an interview (Simões & Franchi 2022), General Antônio Manoel de Barros — who succeeded General Eduardo Pazuello in command of the operation[7] — pointed out that the shelters of Operation Welcome differ from "refugee camps" in that they are in urban areas, with a lower concentration of people and greater proximity to public services. This strategy sought to dissociate the operation's actions from the image of refugee camps, especially considering xenophobic acts reported in cities such as Pacaraima and Boa Vista since the beginning of the operation.[8]

Nevertheless, I believe that indigenous shelters are the result of a combination of architectural practices and models implemented in different places and periods, whose stated objectives vary, but whose effects on indigenous peoples — often labeled as "nomads" — are similar: confinement and sedentarization. Historically, the republican indigenous policy, led by the military, especially the Brazilian Army, adopted "pacification" as a justification for protecting indigenous peoples. In practice, this meant contacting them without the use of force, relocating them to posts, farms, or reformatories, and freeing up their lands for economic exploitation (Oliveira 1988; 2014; Souza Lima 1995; Ramos 1998; Corrêa 2000; Fernandes 2022).

The implementation of indigenous policies is marked by *tutelary power*, a con-

7 On the trajectories of these generals, see Tardelli (2023a; 2023b).

8 Mendonça, Heloísa. "O 'monstro da xenofobia' ronda a porta de entrada de venezuelanos no Brasil". *El País*, Brasil, 27 Ago. 2018. https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/08/17/politica/1534459908_846691.html

cept developed by Souza Lima (1995) to understand the type of power exercised by the state apparatus specifically aimed at indigenous populations and their territories. It is a power that combines benevolence and repression, with roots in Portuguese colonial practices, which sought to ensure sovereignty over vast territories. To justify its actions, the state resorts to the idea of "pacifying areas of conflict between natives and non-natives," promoting supposed social peace and granting legal guardianship to indigenous populations (Souza Lima 2002, 14, my translation). Although centralized in state agencies, indigenism is implemented by different institutions, such as religious organizations, multinationals, the Armed Forces and, in my view, UN agencies and civil society organizations.

Thus, on the one hand, the shelter spaces of Operation Welcome combine characteristics of shelters for homeless people, provided for in social assistance policy, with provisions aimed at the *undesirables* — refugees, immigrants, stateless persons, and others affected by surveillance and migration control policies (Agier 2020; Mbembe 2020). On the other hand, these shelters incorporate technologies of power (Foucault 2021) inherited from what I have called the *shared colonial archive*, dating back to the Jesuit settlements of the 16th century (Tardelli 2023a), and perpetuate mechanisms of control and exclusion, despite the rhetoric of protection and assistance.

In this context, the multiplicity of institutions involved in Operation Welcome corresponds to a profusion of acronyms and organizational structures, whose functions were not always within the reach of the Warao. In fact, the lack of mutual understanding between the institutions themselves was noticeable, mainly due to the recurrence of projects replicated by different organizations, often without any alignment. Professionals working in UN agencies and partner organizations often identified themselves as humanitarian workers, a category that denotes the existence of a specific ethos, guiding both the rhetoric and behavior of these actors (Tardelli 2025).

Many of the services provided in the shelters by these institutions were welcomed by Warao and evaluated positively. However, projects that disregarded their sociocultural specificities and did not promote the effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes caused discomfort. A recurring demand among the Warao concerned the need to hire indigenous people from their own community, as well as professionals with previous experience working with indigenous peoples. This demand became especially visible in situations of tension between the Warao and the shelter teams, particularly about compliance with the rules of the space, when indigenous people were reprimanded and sometimes sanctioned.

In 2019, there were thirteen shelters operating in Roraima, classified as *family, single*, and *indigenous*. Until December 2024, reception and assistance in these spaces were the responsibility of the MDS and UNHCR, which entered partnerships with civil society organizations for the direct management of the shelters. Between 2020 and 2023, the Association of Volunteers for International Service (AVSI) administered shelters for non-indigenous Venezuelans, while the Fraternity

— International Humanitarian Federation (FFHI) managed indigenous shelters. The Brazilian Army also played an important role, taking care of military coordination, security, logistics, food, and, occasionally, health. In addition, in different Brazilian cities, there were shelters for indigenous refugees and migrants under the administration of local executive powers, through their social assistance secretariats, often relying on funds transferred from the MDS.

The FFHI is a non-profit civil entity, "of a philosophical, cultural, humanitarian, environmental, and charitable nature."[9] With its ideologues being the "spiritual philosopher" José Trigueirinho Netto and Mother María Shimani de Montserrat, the institution aims to "practice and spread brotherhood among all the Kingdoms of Nature, awakening and expanding human consciousness for a life of peace, love, and altruism."[10] This includes everything from missions focused on rescuing and caring for animals impacted by the Brumadinho dam collapse in Minas Gerais[11] to assisting indigenous and non-indigenous Venezuelans.

The institution has a unique organizational structure, emulating the hierarchies and practices of Catholic associations, such as brotherhoods, confraternities, and orders. However, they did not recognize themselves as such, nor did they have the endorsement of the Catholic Church. Within the scope of Operation Welcome, those who worked for the Fraternity were generally called "missionaries," even in some cases when they were hired workers. Internally, however, the term *missionary* was used to designate members who, after an initial period as *volunteers*, became part of the organization's upper hierarchy and participated in decision-making. They were distinguished by their clothing: while volunteers wore a navy-blue T-shirt with the logo on the back (the same uniform as the hired workers), members wore a light gray T-shirt, also with the logo; the bottom part was the same for both: dark gray tactel pants and short boots.

Based on this contractual relationship, UNHCR transferred funds, provided guidance, and supported its partners, who were required to follow certain agency guidelines, such as team composition and the implementation of protective measures. However, this did not mean that these guidelines were applied literally, nor that relations between the institutions involved were always harmonious. Direct contact with the community was maintained through FFHI teams, which, over time, were reconfigured: they came to be composed not only of missionaries, but also of professionals hired to work inside and outside the shelters, including in administrative roles. Even so, the Warao were fully aware that key decisions were made by UNHCR and the government.

The shelter team was composed of different roles: *field coordinator*, *protection officer*, *case manager*, *registration officer*, *distribution officer*, *health focal point*, *community participation officer*, and *anthropologist* — the latter was only provided for indigenous shelters. In the specific case of the coordinator — a position I held between June and November 2020 — I was responsible for managing the space and the team, inter-institutional coordination, and monitoring the services provided, such as distribution of items, protection, health, education, food, and security. At the same time, there was military coordination, usually assumed by an Army

9 FRATERNIDADE – Federação Humanitária Internacional. Quem somos, *Fraternidade Internacional*. Disponível em: https://www.fraterinternacional.org/quem-somos/. Acesso em 05 jan. 2020.

10 Ibidem.

11 The dam collapse in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, occurred on January 25, 2019, when the tailings structure at Vale's Córrego do Feijão mine collapsed in the early afternoon. A flood of mud covered about 290 hectares, reaching company facilities, rural areas of the city, and the community of Vila Ferteco. The disaster left 272 dead and thousands homeless or displaced, and is considered the largest workplace accident in Brazil's history.

lieutenant, assisted by two lower-ranking officers (sergeant or sergeant major, depending on the military contingent).

In the shelters, I observed a clear division between the indigenous community and the administrative staff, as Goffman (2019) noted in relation to other types of institutions. Despite moments of cordiality, solidarity, and bonds of affinity, both groups tended to conceive of each other based on shared stereotypes behind the scenes: shelter staff often portrayed the Warao as childish, dirty, dependent, and untrustworthy; while the indigenous people projected images of condescension, pettiness, and arbitrariness onto the teams. The teams positioned themselves from a perspective of superiority, while the indigenous people were perceived as incapable and reprehensible.

In this scenario of relationships marked by stereotypes and asymmetries, the Warao use the category *criollos* to refer to others — Venezuelans or Brazilians. This designation, although it refers to the homonymous word used during the colonization of Spanish America to identify the children of Europeans born in the New World, takes on its own meaning among the Warao, which cannot be confused with the original historical use. Although relations between Warao and *criollos* could, at times, be friendly, a negative representation of the latter predominated, reinforcing symbolic and sociocultural distinctions that delimited identity boundaries and contributed to the reproduction of tensions in the daily lives of the shelters.

Continuing the analysis of social representations between indigenous and non-indigenous people, Langebaek Rueda (2009) shows how indigenous people were imagined in Venezuela and Colombia, and how these images influenced the identity of *criollos*. Although "criollo" refers to the descendants of colonizers, the author states that many non-direct descendants also identified themselves as such. *Criollismo*, therefore, is an ideology of non-indigenous people that, even though it exalts the indigenous person as a national symbol, ends up relegating them to a "remnant" of the past. The exclusion of indigenous peoples thus coexists with praise in nation-building narratives. Furthermore, as occurred in Brazil, although with differences, Venezuelan and Colombian social thought, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, was also involved in discussions about the qualities or defects of mixed races, the harmful effects of the tropics and the theory of race degeneration (Langebaek Rueda 2009).

Additionally, the infamous myth of "racial democracy" also flourished in Venezuelan circles. As Wright (1990) points out, during the 20th century, politicians and intellectuals defended the creation of a "new race" that was increasingly white, predicting the disappearance of black and indigenous people through isolation or assimilation. European immigration and miscegenation were seen as solutions to social and economic issues, but despite the discourse of acceptance of mixed origins and the promotion of "racial democracy", elites never actually implemented racial equality (Wright 1990). During the government of Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952-1958), indigenism was incorporated into the "New National Ideal", with a positivist basis, which saw development as unilateral and the nation as indivisi-

ble; therefore, indigenous people should be integrated and assimilated into the surrounding society. The State began to treat indigenous people as a "problem" to be managed (Paz 2000), seeking to transform them physically, racially, morally and socially.

Given this situation, in which indigenous people are relegated to a secondary role, the Warao themselves report the impacts of compulsory contact. For them, the imposition of interethnic relations with non-indigenous people marked the end of a "golden age", bringing diseases, dietary changes, the introduction of industrialized alcoholic beverages and transformations in beliefs, family ties and political organization. The idealized life before contact, marked by autonomy and traditional practices, contrasts with the losses and ruptures, highlighting how the interethnic encounter is experienced as a process of identity reconfiguration.

"*Tú no mandas aquí*"

At first, indigenous shelters received metal structures to which hammocks could be fixed or, as the Warao refer to them in Spanish, *chinchorros*. This structure was called *redario*, following the model implemented in the Indigenous Health Houses (Casais), within the scope of the Indigenous Health Care Subsystem from Brazil.[12] The choice of the newsroom model was justified as a way of contributing to "cultural maintenance". In fact, most Warao preferred to sleep in hammocks, but they didn't like the idea of living so close to each other, without any privacy.

The socio-spatial configuration of indigenous shelters was based on the division into groups, composed of one or more extended or nuclear families, a criterion that guided activities such as updating records, distributing food and hygiene kits, in addition to cleaning the kennels, bathrooms and external areas. At the head of each group were the *aidamo* ("leadership"), traditionally male heads of families whose authority, in Warao communities in Venezuela, was anchored in kinship relationships, especially in the father-in-law/son-in-law axis. However, external interventions — such as the Capuchin missions of the 1920s and the Venezuelan government's policies in the 1960s, which introduced agriculture and salaried work — brought about profound changes, altering the sexual division of labor, depriving the prestige of traditional leaders and favoring the formation of nuclear families, with male leadership. In this context, new positions emerged, such as commissioner, inspector and police, inspired by disciplinary models (Rosa 2021; Tardelli 2023a; 2023b).

Previous contact with confessional institutions was often remembered in shelters, where NGOs with a religious profile also operated. The Warao recalled the religious missions that arrived in their lands throughout the 20th century, attributing both positive aspects to them — such as the teaching of reading and writing by Capuchin missionaries — and negative ones, since these same missionaries were seen as "tough", resorting to punishments and physical violence to impose norms and correct behavior. These attempts at evangelization caused profound transformations in kinship relations and the political organization of the Warao.

12 The Indigenous Health Care Subsystem (SasiSUS) is part of the Unified Health System (SUS), focusing on comprehensive and differentiated care for indigenous populations, taking into account their cultural specificities. It is structured into Special Indigenous Health Districts (DSEIs), and supported by the SUS for more complex cases. The network includes base centers, Indigenous Health Houses (Casai), and Basic Indigenous Health Units located in the community.

Traditionally, after marriage, the couple settled in the mother's house or community, following the logic of matrilocality. The domestic unit was formed by a founding couple, in which the man, father/father-in-law (*aidamo*; *iramo*), guided his sons-in-law in obtaining food, while the woman, mother/mother-in-law (*arani*), redistributed these resources (Lafée-Wilbert & Wilbert 2008; Rosa 2021). The elder, called *aidamo*, was the main authority of the segmentary organization, leading single sons, sons-in-law and grandchildren in productive activities.

In Brazil, *aidamo* began to serve as a link between institutions and the community, often being invested in their "positions" through other eligibility criteria, highlighting fluency in the Spanish language, voluntariness and sympathy nurtured by the professional who elected them. Not only older men could be aidamo, but women, young people and people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ population. Although institutions viewed them as *cacique* (chiefs), this did not necessarily make him a representative figure for that community. Hence a succession of frustrations. When he tried to lead a group to carry out food distribution and cleaning activities or to mediate conflicts, he found himself in awkward situations during which his authority was questioned. Those who were truly collectively recognized as aidamo — and saw themselves as such — questioned those who, although invested in this role, No "*dieron ejemplo*" ("*did not set an example*"), that is, drank abusively, were unable to organize their group for activities, were not present at meetings and, therefore, had no voice within the group.

Perceptions regarding the investiture of leadership among the Warao were marked by ambiguity. The aidamo often claimed autonomy and independence, but they also resorted to the endorsement of institutions to legitimize their authority or question the prestige of others. I witnessed several situations of this type. One morning in 2020, two men came to me to complain about the group's aidamo, a young lesbian woman, claiming dissatisfaction and proposing her dismissal. When consulting the group, an older man asked me: "*¿Quien dijo eso? estás bien como ella*" ("*who said that? We're fine with her.*"), and everyone agreed, showing that the supposed dissatisfaction was not consensual. Later, when talking to the leadership, I understood that the episode reflected an internal dispute, and that there was an expectation that I, as an external professional, would intervene in community decisions, as some of the humanitarian and military workers did.

Another ambiguity concerned the need for recognition by institutions. Even though they supported the aidamo, they often did not take his opinion and demands into consideration, restricting Warao's participation to managing mundane tasks, such as cleaning and distributing meals. This generated resentment and a feeling of neglect among the leaders, who often said: "*Le dicen a aidamo: tú no mandas aquí*" ("*They tell aidamo: you don't rule here*"). In practice, the professionals always had the final say, even though they continued to request support from leaders. This asymmetry was also manifested in the admission procedures to the shelters, carried out basically in two ways: via the interstate bus station in Boa Vista, where Operation Welcome facilities like those in Pacaraima operated, or directly through the UNHCR, which evaluated vacancies and profiles according

to the configuration of the shelter. The so-called *protection cases* were prioritized — pregnant women, women victims of violence, unaccompanied children, the elderly, people with illnesses and members of the LGBTQIA+ population.

Those who could not find a place in a shelter had to go to the *transit center* at the bus station, where they received food, could use bathrooms and stayed overnight, but were forced to leave in the morning. For the Warao, this space was considered "dangerous", despite the presence of police and the proximity of the Operation Welcome base. There was no separation between indigenous and non-indigenous people, which forced them to live alongside the criollos. Reports of fights, attacks, robberies and the activities of criminal organizations reinforced the feeling of insecurity. Therefore, many Warao preferred to remain on the streets or in squares close to indigenous shelters, where they could count on the support of relatives, who shared food. But institutional rules prohibited the removal of lunch boxes from shelters, which is why they did it secretly. When caught by doormen or soldiers, the Warao claimed the right to help hungry family members; some professionals ignored the infraction, while others strictly applied the rules.

Being on the street meant being subject to countless forms of aggression, including brutal police approaches. Many Warao, especially men, reported episodes of police violence not only in Roraima, but in different Brazilian states. Seeing family members exposed to this constant risk generated anguish and indignation, putting pressure on institutions to provide shelters. However, the arguments of the humanitarian workers, who defended limits based on the infrastructure of the shelters, did not make sense to the Warao, whose logic was guided by kinship ties: "*En la casa Warao siempre hay lugar para uno más*" ("*In the Warao house there is always room for one more*"). Thus, it was common for family members to enter illegally, either by jumping over the wall, going unnoticed through the entrance or using a family member's identification document, as photos were not always verified. These practices were known through gossip networks and discreet denunciations, revealing mechanisms of community control and, sometimes, hostilities between groups or families.

When the Army or the team discovered these cases, great tension arose between institutions and the community. The aidamo demanded the presence of high-ranking representatives to negotiate the shelter of family members, especially those who were homeless or had recently arrived. The meetings were marked by demands and collective commotion and generally resulted in success for Warao. Even so, the most common way for family members to enter was to go directly to the coordinator or protection officer, who had the autonomy to carry out shelters. These everyday situations illustrate the conflicts between different moral economies: on the one hand, institutional logic, based on rules, control and management; on the other, the moral feelings, emotions and values of the Warao, which defy the boundaries imposed by institutions.

Denial of the gift

In addition to security and infrastructure, the military was responsible for food. Like other services, meals were delivered three times a day by an outsourced company through a contract with the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force. Initially, before and at the beginning of the operation, the Warao received non-perishable food and proteins to be prepared by themselves in the community kitchens. However, as some humanitarian workers told me, this would have created problems: the food would spoil, some Warao would sell the items, or they would not be consumed because they did not like them. This narrative was used to modify the way food was distributed: the indigenous people began to receive ready-made meals, which could only be consumed in a specific space designated for that purpose.

Breakfast consisted of coffee, chocolate milk, fruit and a small piece of bread with butter or some chopped meat (sometimes biscuits). At lunch, the Warao received industrialized juice and a Styrofoam lunch box with a large amount of rice and/or pasta, a small portion of salad, beans and a protein (red meat prepared in the pan was the most common, but there were days with chicken and fish). At dinner, there were few changes; Sometimes they served soup. The menu was not substantially modified throughout the week, nor did it provide specific dishes for children, the elderly and people with any illness.

The distribution of food was carried out within a space called a *comedor*, a Spanish word that means "refectory" or "dining room". Erroneously and unintentionally, I heard military personnel and humanitarian workers pronounce *comeduro*, which refers, in Portuguese, to the container or place where animals eat. In some shelters, the area was surrounded by wooden or iron fences and covered by an awning. The furniture consisted of white plastic tables and chairs.

Food was one of the main factors of dissatisfaction among Warao. They complained about the type of food and the way it was prepared. The rice was not wet, while the meat was tough; sometimes they were given chicken all week, but they wanted to eat fish; the salad was hardly consumed; children didn't like the food and couldn't always chew the protein; there was a lack of salt; Some days they preferred soup. During the exchange of military contingents in the operation, Warao reinforced an old demand: a change in the menu in accordance with the taste and nutritional diet that appealed to them. The military promised; They claimed that there would soon be a change in the contract and that the company would be replaced or that the menu would be modified. But change never came.

The military, aid workers and missionaries did not seem to understand this demand. Everyone used the language of charity, according to which one should be grateful to someone who gives them a gift. For them, it was as if the Warao were ungrateful, as they refused to participate in that exchange based on reciprocity: "*Hermano, hay que estar agradecido por la comida; muchas personas no tienen nada para comer*" ("*Brother, you have to be grateful for food; many people have nothing to eat.*"), said a missionary. In this logic, those who have nothing, who are dispossessed, have no reason to complain about food.

In his classic essay, Mauss (2003) maintains that the denial of the gift implies breaking the cycle of reciprocity, disregard for social ties and the "spirit" of the gift (*hau*), being considered a serious act, which can be interpreted as a declaration of war. In many societies, the refusal to give, receive or reciprocate a gift brings dishonor to both the giver and the receiver, producing imbalances in relationships and may result in the loss of status and prestige. In the context of indigenous shelters in Roraima, this dynamic manifest itself in a particular way in the relationships between the Warao and institutions. The dissatisfaction and demands of the Warao should not be interpreted exclusively as "ingratitude", but rather as an expression of a specific moral economy, in which recognition, participation and respect for cultural practices occupy a central place, equal in importance to the material good received.

In this way, the refusal or questioning of the "gift" highlights tensions between regimes with different values, calling into question issues related to the dignity, autonomy and agency of indigenous people in the context of humanitarian aid. For the Warao — and for all of us — the act of eating transcends the nutritional aspect and is deeply linked to cultural, social and identity dimensions. From this point of view, what is at stake is not only the circulation of material goods, but also what Godelier (2001) calls the *inalienable*, that is, the elements of culture and social life that cannot be exchanged or appropriated by institutions without threatening collective existence itself. Thus, the demand for the right to prepare and consume one's own food expresses not only a refusal to institutional gift, but also the defense of values and practices that constitute the core of one's identity and social ties. They wanted to participate in all food preparation processes and free themselves from institutions. No wonder, whenever they obtained some financial resources, they went to the fairs and the nearest markets. Preparation took place in the community kitchen, where many families cooked simultaneously on small stone stoves fueled by wood. The preferences were *domplina*,[13] *arepa*,[14] *ocumo chino*[15] and fish. Generally, women oversaw these activities, but there were also men. The children, in turn, played nearby. Once prepared, the food was consumed by the family in the hammock.

Exoticism and repugnance

Another service provided in the shelters was known by the English acronym WASH (Water, sanitation and hygiene). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), through a partnership with the Adventist Development and Assistance Resources Agency (ADRA), implemented a project that included the distribution of cleaning products, a card distributed to families to purchase personal hygiene products and the hiring of a focal point, who worked in one or more shelters. UNHCR, in partnership with FFHI, and the Army, through the Task Force, also provided, on a subsidiary basis, some of these items. Army engineering was responsible for repairs related to infrastructure, such as electrical cabling, water and sewage.

Cleaning the shelter was the responsibility of the community, organized into

13 A type of pasta common in Venezuela, made with flour, salt and water. After baking, they stuffed it with butter and mortadella or other ingredients.

14 Common in the cuisines of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia and Panama, it is a bread dough dish made with ground corn or pre-cooked corn flour.

15 Like yam and taioba.

cleaning committees made up of adults from each group, under the coordination of an aidamo or elected key figures. The bathrooms, divided into men's and women's, were shared between the groups, who alternated cleaning depending on the proximity of their respective rooms. Cleanings took place two to three times a day, and the ADRA focal point distributed hygiene items weekly or monthly, in addition to inspecting the performance of the committees, water quality and sanitation. Conflicts were frequent, especially due to insufficient products and the refusal of some, especially young people, to participate in the cleaning. In these situations, the aidamo turned to the shelter coordinator or the ADRA focal point to admonish the resisters, who sometimes justified their absence by alleging work or failures of other groups. If the dialogue did not resolve the problem, the protection officer or the soldier on duty intervened and could impose warnings. Once again, we see how institutional rules and community practices intertwine, generating tensions and daily negotiations about responsibility, cooperation and authority within shelters.

While I was in the field, UNICEF led actions related to this topic. Through reading one of its documents, we observed that its strategy, aimed mainly at children and women, focused on "access to water, sanitation and washing facilities that are culturally appropriate, safe, easy to use, gender appropriate and designed to help mitigate social and gender tensions in humanitarian situations" (UNICEF 2016, 34). However, the same document contradicts the intention of adopting "culturally appropriate" measures. This is because, if WASH is fundamental for health units, schools and early childhood development centers — and I would include indigenous shelters here –, according to the agency, it would be necessary for these institutions to offer "platforms to involve children in actions that promote behavioral changes related to hygiene, sanitation and water" (UNICEF 2016, III).

In dialogue with Teixeira (2013), it is possible to see that the perspective of the Operation Welcome institutions rests on a hygienist conception, where human beings are seen as a primary source of pollution to be controlled. This discourse translates into daily practices of health intervention, often authoritarian, under the pretext of promoting citizenship. In indigenous shelters, this approach materializes to modify and "correct" bodies, especially indigenous people, often represented by military personnel, missionaries and humanitarian workers as "dirty" and unhygienic, whose health would depend on the transformation of their habits. This logic, like health actions aimed at Brazilian indigenous populations, ends up hiding the precarious sanitation conditions of the shelters, neighborhoods and cities where they were located.

The military expressed an almost obsessive concern with cleanliness, carrying out daily inspections and demanding cleaning committees organize the spaces. The detail and minutia of regulations, as Foucault (2021) points out, are central to the functioning of disciplinary power, which manifests itself both in cleanliness demands and in biomedical justifications: "*La suciedad trae enfermedades. ¿Quieres que los niños se enfermen?*" ("Dirt brings disease. Do you want children to get sick?"). At other times, the approach was more definitive: "There's no way, no, they're

really dirty." But those children who defecate on the floor or adults who resist cleanliness standards defy not only institutional standards, but also a *technology of power* that, as Foucault (2021) points out, is exercised over all those who are watched, trained and corrected, such as madmen, children, indigenous people and colonized people.

By invoking the binomial "dirt"/"cleanliness", the actors update the theory of Douglas (2017), for whom impurity is linked to the idea of order: "impurity or dirt is that which cannot be included, if one wants to maintain a standard" (Douglas 2017, 55-56). Thus, there is a dissonance between opposing worldviews, in which one of the parties is classified as "anomalous". Institutional responsibilities are shifted to indigenous peoples, reinforcing morally negative and stigmatizing attitudes, which perceive them as "smelly and dirty, difficult to deal with (and, from a medical point of view, to treat) and averse to health guidelines" (Teixeira 2013, 586). Thus, a moral boundary is demarcated between "us" and "others", based on repugnance, which directly affects the senses and evokes supposed biological truths. Difference, far from being recognized or defended, is merely tolerated, and "others" must be corrected or tamed.

Taming the wild

Most of the shelters were in peripheral areas, far from city centers. The first indigenous shelters of Operation Welcome were implemented improvised in existing spaces, such as gyms and warehouses. These areas were surrounded by walls, on top of which there were often concertina wires, that is, a barrier laminated in a spiral shape, whose sharp, sharp blades inhibited those trying to enter or exit irregularly. The walls that faced the street sometimes featured engravings with indigenous motifs or the logos of the institutions responsible for managing the space. At the entrance, beneath a sign with the name of the shelter, there is an iron gate with a small window for possible identification. A few meters to the right or left, a larger gate served as entry and exit for vehicles.

Regarding the concierge team, responsible for controlling entrances and exits, this was hired by the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force, through an outsourcing contract. These professionals, with very few exceptions, seemed to carry out their activities in a mechanical and bureaucratic manner, without further involvement with the community. The vast majority, if not all, had not worked with indigenous people, nor with refugees and migrants. But the uniqueness of this audience didn't seem to affect them. Therefore, friendly interactions between the Warao and the doormen were scarce.

The impossibility of entering and leaving the shelter without being monitored by the entrance was a source of constant discontent among the Warao. Anyone who did not present their identification document, or had lost it, was prevented from leaving, unless authorized by the coordinator. Depending on the soldiers and doormen on duty, those returning from the street with bags or carts were searched, mainly to check for the presence of alcoholic beverages, which were

prohibited in the shelter. Arnulfo, a resident of Boa Vista for years, compared the shelter to a prison: "*Tengo que presentar el carne todo el tiempo. Cuando entro, me revistan. No somos libres. Prácticamente vivimos en una cárcel*" ("*I must present the identification document all the time. When I entered, they searched for me. We are not free. We practically live in a prison.*"). During the searches, if drinks were found, they were retained by the military, generating discussions or, in some cases, resigned acceptance of the loss. In addition to the seizure, the military often asked the coordination to apply a sanction to the "offender", such as a warning or support in maintenance tasks.

If the person was drunk, their entry was prohibited, and they must remain outside the shelter until the alcoholic effect subsided. Some managed to disguise themselves and go to their hammocks, but, according to the Warao themselves, not all drunks were problematic: there were those who just wanted to take a shower and sleep, and others who created confusion. For them, institutions should make rules more flexible and share responsibility with the community, which would be capable of managing its own conflicts. Therefore, they often asked the organization to allow certain drunk people to enter, especially older people and those who "don't hurt anyone". In these cases, the family and the group's aidamo would make an agreement, guaranteeing that the person would not cause problems. However, there was not always room for negotiation.

In June 2020, I produced a report regarding some cases of police violence that occurred at Abrigo Pintolândia. Based on the Warao's reports, I described situations that indicated a certain pattern in the behavior of the military, police officers and teams working inside the shelters. My objective was to denounce the incursions by the Army Police (PE)[16] in that space and, at the same time, propose a reflection on the need to develop different ways of managing conflicts within shelters. The document — which will serve as a reference for the descriptions that follow — was shared with Operation Welcome and the Federal Public Ministry (MPF).

On the morning of May 12, a Warao woman came to me to report that her younger brother had been attacked by PE soldiers. Although I was already aware of previous episodes of violence involving military personnel since the arrival of the Warao in Brazil, it was the first time I received a complaint. After listening to the story, I talked to the boy; he showed the marks of the blows on his back and described in detail what happened in the early hours of the previous day. He said he was involved in a fight with another young Warao man, both of whom were drunk. The night manager and security guards separated the two, keeping one of them in the shelter and expelling the other, a decision that the family considered arbitrary. Faced with recurring incidents of alcohol consumption, the team called the PE, who came in heavily armed and used pepper spray against the population. Another older indigenous man told me that he was also drinking that day and, while he was walking, he was hit by tear gas, feeling the effects until the next day.

On that day, in addition to the case reported above, another young man had also been removed from the shelter for the same reasons. On the street, they were approached by PE soldiers, searched and forced to get into the police car, which

16 The Army Police (PE) is a unit of the Brazilian Army focused on maintaining discipline and order in military organizations and, in some cases, public safety. Its main activities include policing, traffic control, escorting, and law and order enforcement operations.

contained six soldiers. Inside the vehicle, they were brutally attacked with punches and rifle butts, and, with the car still moving, they were thrown out onto highway BR 174, close to the border with Venezuela, having to return to the shelter on foot. At the end of the month, another young Warao went through a similar situation: after jumping over the wall and disturbing his partner, he was removed from the shelter by guards and, again, the PE was called. The soldiers put him in the vehicle, attacked him and left him on the Ring Road towards Manaus, hitting him once more before leaving, to the point where he reported that he almost lost consciousness.

In my view, these episodes not only highlight the persistence of institutional practices of control and violence justified by the discourse of order and protection, but they also reveal how such actions update colonial devices and strain the moral economies at stake. By resorting to police force and physical punishment, the humanitarian military government exposes its limits and contradictions: while it presents itself as an agent of reception and protection, it reproduces mechanisms of exclusion, discipline and violence that have historically marked relations between the State and indigenous peoples (Souza Lima 1995; Oliveira 2014). The militarized management of humanitarian assistance, while seeking to guarantee security and order, ends up reinforcing hierarchies, stigmas and practices that deny the autonomy and dignity of the individual hosts.

Conditions of resistance possibility

In the 1970s, Marxist James Scott carried out research on modes of production and forms of resistance among peasants in Southeast Asia, especially in Myanmar (formerly Burma) and Vietnam. To understand the conditions of possibility for peasant revolts — or the ethics of subsistence –, Scott adopted the concept of *moral economy*, understanding it as a system of values underlying the expression of emotions and the occurrence of revolts (Scott 1976; 2011). In this context, there is a difference between real injustice and perceived injustice. This is because demands were triggered when the feeling of justice emerged, that is, when implicit agreements regarding the structure of tolerable exploitation were broken. Unlike the conceptualization proposed by Thompson, centered on the field of customs, norms and obligations, Scott inserts values, affections and a sense of justice (Fassin 2019). Among the Warao, situations such as the irregular entry of family members into shelters, even against institutional rules, demonstrate how ties of kinship and solidarity overlap with the logic of management, demonstrating ethics of subsistence and values specific to their moral economy.

Fassin (2019) emphasizes the moral character of the economies that structure humanitarian aid, highlighting that the processes of production, distribution and circulation of goods and services involve moral feelings, emotions, values, norms and obligations. The author illustrates this dynamic by analyzing French migration policies: until 1974, France encouraged the immigration of foreign workers; subsequently, it restricted the entry of immigrants, but, in the following decades, it established *humanitarian reasons* as a criterion for the permanence of foreigners

suffering from serious illnesses, without access to treatment in their countries of origin. Thus, "although the immigrant no longer had a place in the political economy of French society, except on the margins, he found one, more central, in its moral economy" (Fassin 2019, 44).

This reconfiguration of value regimes, in which emotions and moral feelings gain centrality in public space, allowed suffering — especially psychological suffering — to become a privileged criterion for recognizing inequalities and legitimizing policies and interventions, including military ones. As Fassin and Pandolfi (2010) show, there is an international generalization of states of emergency and the consolidation of humanitarian military governments to respond to the "disorder" caused by wars, conflicts and disasters. The humanitarian argument, used in contexts such as Iraqi Kurdistan, in 1991, Somalia, in 1992, and Rwanda, in 1994, serves to legitimize military operations and even extralegal actions, under the justification of the urgency and danger faced by the victims. In this context, the condition of victims and the narrative of vulnerability become requirements for access to rights and services, while humanitarian organizations begin to manage precariousness and misery (Fassin 2019). Operation Welcome therefore exemplifies a global trend of military interventions that use morality based on humanitarian values to legitimize themselves, as well as the perpetuation of emergency situations to justify states of exception (Tardelli 2025).

Despite that, humanitarian discourse, as Daniel Bensaïd (2008, 63) reminds us, "is not a comfortable mask placed over the dominant oppressive forces". The deaths and violence suffered by the Warao and by millions of people around the world who have been forced to leave their countries are not mere fictions — the Palestinians will not let us forget –, and humanitarian aid is desired and, often, essential. However, we cannot dissociate humanitarian reason from its implications and effects: considering "the suffering of victims as the only foundation and only reference would abstract them from the concrete field of power relations and close them in a position of object of compassion, instead of making them subjects of their own emancipation" (Bensaïd 2008, 63).

In the paragraphs above, we saw how conflicts between different moral economies materialized in shelters. The Warao's refusal to accept standardized lunch boxes and their insistence on preparing traditional foods in community kitchens exemplify the tension between the institutional logic of assistance — which presupposes gratitude and conformity — and the sociocultural specificities of the indigenous people. Furthermore, practices such as compulsory sedentarization and strict control of entrances and exits in shelters reproduce mechanisms of exclusion inherited from the colonial period, reinforcing marginalization and the feeling of loss of autonomy among the Warao. The ethnographic data analyzed here sheds light on different moral regimes that confront each other daily, through disputes for recognition, dignity and autonomy.

Thinking in terms of moral economies implies understanding both the perspective of the "dominated" (rebels, victims, rioters, etc.) and the "dominant" (military, police, state agents, humanitarian workers, etc.), reflecting on the values

and norms that are transmitted by the institutions they have passed through or to which they belong. In the same way, we must also analyze "the way in which racially constructed categories are the object of moral judgments and whose use of violence gives rise to moral justifications" (Fassin 2019, 47). With the help of this analytical framework, I think that, in indigenous shelters, conflicts between indigenous people and the institutions that operated there were related to the breaking of a kind of moral pact between the different actors on the scene, as happened during the revolts of English or Burmese peasants.

For the Warao, shelters were not confused with their stilt houses, just as Brazil was not metamorphosed in its lands. But they were extremely important spaces, as they allowed not a fresh start, but the continuity of their lives. More than a mere *space*, the shelter was a *place* permeated with affective relationships (Tuan 2012). They believed and wished for better days. And, although they didn't know how long they could and would have to stay there, they perceived it as if it were their territory. They performed rituals, passed into adulthood, celebrated, established marriage, cooked, were born, grew up, died.

Humanitarian workers signified that space through the lens of "emergency." It was necessary to provide essential services so that refugees and migrants could have a new life in the country that welcomed them. The shelter was not a house, nor was it an indigenous territory. Once rehabilitated, Warao should leave, opening vacancies for other individuals. The missionaries seemed to perceive the shelter as a kind of monastery or cloister, where charity would dignify the souls of both those who practiced it and those who received it. Through education and correction, the inculcation of new habits, it was possible to transform those subjects. The military, forged in and for combat, oscillated: sometimes they attributed the shelter to the meaning of a barracks, where soldiers would be generated, and sometimes they represented it as a battlefield with enemies to be defeated.

Indigenous populations living in shelters are subject to the same mechanisms of control and power applied to the so-called *undesirable* in spaces managed by the humanitarian military government, such as refugee camps and transit centers (Agier 2020). However, despite sharing this fate, Warao's displacement have their own historical roots, prior to the 20th century, which is reflected in the configuration and uniqueness of the spaces allocated to them. In shelters, many reported feelings treated like "animals", especially in moments of tension with institutions, not just as a metaphor, but as a concrete experience of discrimination. And the idea of animality linked to indigenous peoples integrates colonial discourses and practices that have been updated in a long-term process (Souza Lima 1995; Carneiro da Cunha 2008; Tardelli 2023a).

Even recognizing the importance of the help received, the Warao often found themselves placed in positions of inferiority, as passive or incapable, rarely recognized as subjects capable of taking control of their own lives. However, these conflicting situations were conducive to them forging forms of resistance — which I intend to analyze at another time –, such as the collective purchase of land, the creation of their own organizations and dialogue with the Brazilian indigenous movement.

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Análise formal, investigação, escrita – texto original.

Data availability statement

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