

ABOUT THE SONGS OF SELVA SELVA, BY PERCY FLORES NAVARRO

CHULLACHAQUI: The Chullachaqui is a supernatural being that dwells deep in the jungle. He is characterized by a goblin-like appearance with a distinctive feature: a goat's foot, a peculiarity that gives rise to his name in Quechua, meaning "uneven foot."

In 2013, I wrote the story "El Chullachaqui y su Pasado" for the regional contest Amazonía Ancestral, and it was later published by Editorial Trazos of Tarapoto. Inspired by this tale, I composed a song of the same name that recreates its literary passages through a mystical soundscape, evoking sonic elements of Amazonian rituals in which I have also participated on numerous occasions. A key element in the piece is its use of irregular meters, characteristic of the musical traditions of various indigenous communities in the region.

CARNAVAL EN LA SELVA [CARNIVAL IN THE JUNGLE]:

Carnivals, as celebrated globally, take on particular forms in the Peruvian jungle. Like all cultural expressions in the region, these celebrations synthesize multiple influences: indigenous, interregional, and foreign. This musical piece continues that development, starting with the sound of "pandillas" recorded in the 1960s by typical ensembles with acoustic instruments, and evolving into tropical music groups using electric instruments—where the electric guitar gained prominence and reshaped the local musical imagination.

This new version follows the same innovative line, now incorporating digital and virtual electronic instruments alongside traditional elements. In doing so, I seek to renew both the sound and the regional repertoire, which often struggles to incorporate new music.

SUCHICHE: This composition could just as well be titled Tarapoto, as it is an homage to the now-vanished Suchiche Lagoon, the foundational site of the city named Santa Cruz de los Motilones de Tarapoto by Spanish bishop Martínez de Compañón.

I recall the stories my grandfather told me, having known the lagoon: its waters teeming with fish, its lush vegetation, and the giant trees surrounding it. However, the authorities ordered its drainage, arguing it was a breeding ground for malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases. In fact, during the 1940s, one such disease claimed the life of a Peruvian politician

during a visit to the city. Thus, more than a collection of sounds or a literal title, this composition aims to sonically evoke the history of what that lagoon once was.

LANTA TIPINA: This piece was part of my repertoire for several years before the recording of *Selva Selva*. I composed it during fieldwork in a native community of Lamas, where I was invited to take part in the traditional first haircut ritual (which gives the piece its title) and initially dedicated it to one of my godchildren from the community.

Musically, the piece synthesizes various aesthetic influences: a rhythmic section inspired by cumbia or traditional "movido," harmonic and melodic development drawn from jazz, and additional instrumentation with classical roots—including a synthesizer. All of these are woven together to demonstrate the compositional possibilities that arise not only from theoretical or practical knowledge, but also from in situ experimentation.

LA HÚMISHA: This composition had already been part of my repertoire for several years before the *Selva Selva* recording and was performed in various concerts with my group, Motilones. However, it was after my participation in the leadership of the Popular Carnival Organizing Committee of Iquitos that the piece took its final form. The sound is deeply enriched by local festivities, making it notably different from other contemporary pandillas. This may explain why some current musical offerings fail to resonate with certain sectors of the local public.

Musically, the piece develops brief thematic regions with influences from 17th-century academic music. Later, the dialogue between the guitar—with blues-like inflections—and traditional elements of the jungle chimayche style in the final section are fully integrated in both sound and spirit: the popular.

ICARO: From a Western perspective, an icaro could be defined as a song. However, it is important to clarify that this concept does not align with the way it is understood by the indigenous communities who use it. I composed this piece in Iquitos, and in the lyrics I use Kechwa codes that, I believe, are deeply rooted in the daily lives of native communities throughout the Amazon. Including synthesizer sounds or digitally altered sounds to emulate introspective atmospheres may be daring, but there is a degree of permissiveness in these creative choices, so the notion of audacity becomes blurred.

AMAZONAS: This composition had already been performed years before the recording of *Selva Selva*. In fact, it was one of the first songs played by Motilones when it was still the Motilones Project, back in 2017. I initially titled it *Pamashto*, as I composed it there during fieldwork. In this *Wayku* version, two musical genres with similar technical aspects but different geographical origins are fused: on one hand, cumbia or traditional "movido," and on the other, maxixe, more closely tied to Brazilian samba. Both are part of the Peruvian Amazonian sound universe, though more prominent in cities bordering Brazil.

POR LA MARGINAL [ALONG THE MARGINAL]: This piece is notably influenced by a key axis of communication and development among Amazonian peoples and with the rest of the country: the Longitudinal Jungle Highway, also known as the Marginal.

When I spoke of a more authentic *pandilla*, I was specifically referring to the duration of its performances. In popular festivities, there is no consensus among musicians or audiences about how long a piece should last, or even what the titles of the performed songs are. For this reason, this *pandilla* includes up to three organically developed themes.

On the other hand, the voices we hear are tied to an everyday tradition that, depending on the region, may be referred to as *chaucheo* or *guapeo*. Both practices share core ideas: celebrating music and festivity through mocking or playful phrases.

In the past, typical ensembles also employed these expressions, but when recording outside their places of origin, they often had to limit them. Today, however, there's no room for compromise: times have changed, and roles have reversed. A *pandilla* without these essential elements cannot truly be considered a *pandilla*, even if this means taking the risk of being interpreted through different parameters.

TAMBO EN EL MONTE [TAMBO IN THE MOUNTAINS]: This composition was created exclusively for the *Selva Selva* recording. A *tambo* is a structure built with solid tree trunks and palm-leaf roofs, traditionally used by native societies as storage centers for food and other resources. Today, these structures serve various functions within communities and are mostly found on farms.

During my fieldwork, I used a *tambo* as a secret base of operations. It not only served as a resting place but also as a planning center for my activities in nearby communities, which shaped the music's character.

YANAPUMA: The *Yanapuma* is a black puma that, in the Kechwa Lamista worldview, is also regarded as a deity. This *pandilla* (as I reiterate) is built on locally used meter, although it breaks its traditional form with a guitar solo.

The effects that resemble puma growls are actually produced by a digitally modified synthesizer designed to emulate the animal. Finally, *shacapas* accompany the piece with the explicit intention of creating a ritualistic atmosphere, always grounded in the local cosmovision.

NACIÓN SELVÁTICA [SELVA NATION]: Martial music holds a fundamental importance for many peoples. For centuries, the various Amazonian regions have harbored culturally distinct societies. This heterogeneity has often led to internal tensions and conflicts. However, over time—particularly after the establishment of the Republic—the inhabitants of the jungle began to understand that their true adversary was not within their own territory, but rather in the Lima-centric centralism that imposed a state structure disconnected from their realities, needs, and aspirations.

In response to this marginalization, the jungle gave rise to several armed uprisings and resistance movements. Some of these even managed to build short-lived autonomous projects before being suppressed by the republican apparatus. Figures such as Guillermo Cervantes, who proclaimed the Third Federal State of Loreto in 1921, and Emilio Vizcarra, a military officer who attempted to establish an autonomous government called Selva Nation in the late 19th century, are remembered as symbols of this historical spirit of rebellion.

Today, large sectors of the Amazonian population still feel profoundly disconnected from the nation-building project imposed from the center. In regions such as Loreto, this has led to the emergence of regionalist and, in some cases, ultra-nationalist movements that reclaim ideas of self-determination—drawing inspiration both from insurgent leaders and from ideological currents such as Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, which arose in response to the hunger, inequality, and historical neglect experienced by Amazonian communities.

This composition is nothing less than a march of war that asserts and affirms the idea of a Selva Nation. Musically, it brings together a range of traditions—from local forms to rock and classical music.