

Inter-Weavings of Practice and Research in the Tšombiach (Woven Sashes) of the Kamëntša Biya People

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses practices surrounding the tšombiach, a traditional belt or sash woven by the Kamëntša people of Colombia. Aspects of the making, thinking, and feeling processes that cohere around tšombiachs are presented through weaving by eight Kamëntša women and the authors as a form of design research. The article considers how, through weaving, tšombiachs participate in cross-cutting care practices bound up by wrapping up, that include forms of working collectively, of summoning and sheltering, traveling, telling, and re-creating the territory. These involve caring for what is vital while interweaving practice with research.

Setting the warp

This article documents learnings from the making, thinking, and feeling processes that coheres around the *tšombiach*, a traditional woven belt or sash of the Kamëntša people (See figure 1). For Kamëntša people, whose ancestral territory lies in Bëngbe Uáman Tabanok, or the Sibundoy Valley, in the south of what is known today as Colombia, colonization over the last 500 years has brought various extractivist and capitalist processes into ways of living and knowing, in complex ways (Bonilla, 1968; Cabildo Indígena Camëntsa & Ministry of the Interior, 2014; Kuan Bahamón, 2014). The Kamëntša people's resilience and the capacities they have developed to resist those processes (Hernández-Wolfe & Muchavisoy, 2021) can be identified in continuous re-interpretation, re-placing, and re-visioning of their knowledge systems and activities. These movements, we believe, can also speak, though not straightforwardly – to questions raised by the dominant understandings of practice-based design research.

We draw attention to the strong link between the re-placing of these systems, and particular creation processes extending into housekeeping and other day-to-day tasks, festivals and celebrations, countless productive expressions (cultural/artistic etc.), and elements of material culture (Barrera Jurado, 2015; Cabildo Indígena Camëntsa & Ministry of the Interior, 2014; Chindoy Chindoy, 2020; Chindoy Jamioy, 2017). Central to Kamëntša creation processes are ways of weaving the territory and interweaving it with thoughts and feelings (Chindoy Muchavisoy, 2002; Guevara Muchavisoy & Jamioy Muchavisoy, 2020) in various forms. One prominent example of this dynamic inquiry is reflected in the practices surrounding the creation, weaving, and circulation of the *tšombiach* as woven traditionally by Kamëntša women and nowadays also by some men.

Kamëntša women weave and wear *tšombiachs* to support their *manta*, or skirt; protect the belly; and give strength to the body, especially during menstruation, pregnancy, the postpartum period, and heavy work in the fields. They are used also



Figure 1. A *tšombiach* woven 60 years ago by jecoyá Yolanda Chindoy. Photo: Alexandra Cuarán Jamioy (for the archive of the project).

for swaddling babies and for decorating traditional wreaths worn during the Bëtsknaté (“Big day”) celebrations. Importantly, *tšombiachs* are woven through a series of motifs that give shape to pictograms and ideograms (see Figure 2), called *labores* by the weavers (Chindoy de Muchavisoy et al., 2008; Chindoy Jamioy, 2017) women we will refer to as *jecoyëng*, holders of traditional weaving knowledge. *Tšombiach*’s character as a representative element of Kamëntša material culture has prompted efforts to investigate and more fully document them. These endeavors of recent decades have been conducted from the standpoint of the production process as a craft (e.g., Rodríguez Villamil et al., 2016), of craft-commodification processes of which *tšombiachs* form a part (e.g., Barrera Jurado, 2011), of their value as a non-normative text (e.g., Jacanamijoy, 2014; Leyva Mosquera, 2016), and of their potential role as a conduit for Kamëntša educational processes (Chindoy Muchavisoy, 2002). Since *tšombiachs* tie in with all these things yet also are much more, we turned our eyes to their becoming as possible spaces of integrative action for Kamëntša knowledge. Amid this becoming, we asked what is jointly created (or woven) and researched with a *tšombiach*. This question acknowledges Kamëntša people’s interest in their own processes of revitalizing and documenting their culture, alongside our contribution’s necessarily small part in the numerous ongoing ways of rethinking creative processes and knowledge creation in that territory. Here, we attempt to situate it in respectful dialogue with what our design and research have entailed: practices that we hope to question and expand. Later in the weaving of this article, we examine how our own positionalities create conditions of possibility and trouble for this dialogue.

We begin our account by describing our approach, aligning the methodology with *tšombiach*-creation practice and the organizing principles of Kamëntša culture. Secondly, we present, by means of a conversation among the four authors, various aspects of the creation and becoming of *tšombiachs* in Bëngbe Uáman Tabanok, laying out the practice and research process with the *jecoyëng* who accompanied us and, simultaneously, our own practices in parallel with that process. We conclude with reflections on the process of how we -as researcher-practitioners- are literally enwrapped, tied in across both space and time.

Sonja cada yebnenach –Casear– a method of visiting, listening to, and accompanying tšombiach-weaving

For situating the conditions of possibility for our project, its methodological choices, and how individual research interests intersect in this journey, it is important to start by locating ourselves as the ones responsible for writing this article. Alexandra is a Kamëntša woman educated as an industrial designer and working as a researcher and cultural producer, and Susana, also a Kamëntša woman, is an expert weaver and social worker, by both training and employment. Living in their traditional territory, they have extensive networks, social capital, and first-hand knowledge born of many years’ involvement in the region’s collective process. Andrea, in turn, is a *sñená*, as Kamëntša language denotes a woman originating elsewhere; educated as a designer and researcher, she is a white mestiza from Bogota who lives and works abroad. Finally, *sñená* Eliana, with training as a weaver, designer, and researcher, is another white mestiza from Bogota, where she lives and works. Both knew Alexandra from before the engagement but had little experience of Bëngbe Uáman Tabanok and *tšombiach*-weaving. Their angle of access involved the resources and research networks of the universities that employ them.



Labor Shinje (sun)

Figure 2. The labor (pattern) of the *shin e*, the sun (from the archive of the project).

Through conversations around a funding opportunity available to Andrea, we were able to align interests. Alexandra proposed arranging efforts with connotations of a *cuadrilla*, a notion that in Tabanok implies forms of collective work and mutual assistance implemented by a stable group of people over time (Cabildo Indígena Camëntsa & Ministry of the Interior, 2014). These were connotations in that Andrea and Eliana's employment contracts gave them a stable income while Alexandra and Susana were paid for their time and concrete contributions to the project. Still, all of us were involved for reasons transcending remuneration.

For this exploration, we requested the company of a group of eight expert weavers *jecoyëng* who were well-known in the community (photographed in Figure 3), and who knew Alexandra and Susana, trusted them, and had worked with them before. They accompany us authors in thinking, weaving,

and talking harmoniously about the practices surrounding *tšombiachs*. These *jecoyëng* contributed in the spirit of the Kamëntsa principle of *jenëbuatëmbam*, characterized as “lending a hand, accompanying and teaching each other in the work,” in conjunction with their interest in revitalizing weaving practices associated with *tšombiachs*. Since weaving is an important source of income in the area today and we took time from them, we established compensation for their weaving also.

As a common thread, each *jecoyá* (weaver in the singular) wove a *tšombiach* for the project. That provided an anchor for listening and for visiting them, organized as a form of *casear* (literally, going to homes) – especially during Bëtsknaté celebrations, Kamëntsa and Inga people commonly visit one another, going from house to house to ask for advice, to help, or to celebrate. We visited each weaver's home while she was weaving the



Figure 3. First collective weaving session. At the back (from the left), *jecoyá* Yolanda Chindoy, Susana, Alexandra, and *jecoyá* Mariana Chindoy; at the center, *jecoyá* María Victoria Chicunque Chindoy weaving a collective *tšombiach*; and, on the right, Ximena Jojoa and *jecoyëng* María Concepción Chicunque Agreda, Rosario Ágreda Chicunque, María Luisa Jansasoy, and María Clementina Ágreda. Photo: Gerardo Chasoy Juagibioy (for the archive of the project).

tšombiach. There, we engaged in situated dialogue that helped us map and discuss the ecologies surrounding the *tšombiach* and those that the *jecoyëng* built around their weaving practices and spaces. During this process, we collectively negotiated the research objectives as we and the *jecoyëng* gained greater understanding of the possible outcomes. As weaving is, the encounters (described in depth by: Cuaran Jamioy et al., 2023) were adjusted around three dynamics: warping, weaving, and thanking. In the warping and weaving visits, each *jecoyá* walked us through the surroundings, some previous creations, and weaving places. As the project's weave developed, we listened and collected life stories, including the joys and tribulations of being a Kamëntša weaver woman. We recorded audio material and snapshots of what each weaver considered important – and shareable – about the textile piece and process.

During and after the visits, we arranged collective working sessions in which we together – virtually and in person – analyzed the materials and where we also made “things” (see figure 4, 5 and 6). This process has carried the thread (or weft) back and forth as part of the interweaving of our discussions, through several months of meetings, in rotating locations. We also sought concrete comments and clarification from *jecoyëng*, mainly via text messages and when gathering. We could say that in any such work, just as in physical weaving, sometimes we made things and sometimes we unmade them (Lindström & Ståhl 2020; Sanchez-Aldana, 2022). Thus, we moved back and forth to delve into the meanings of our visits and conversations in the weavers' homes and to enrich our understanding of the meanings and places in what we all were making (and continue to do).

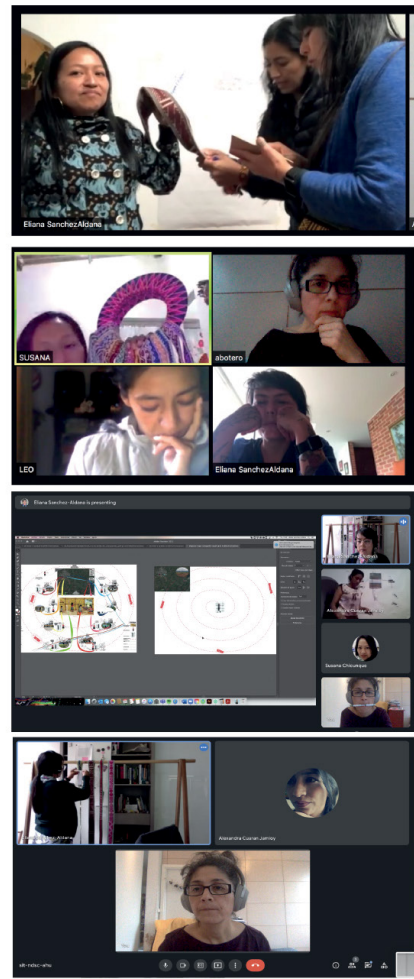
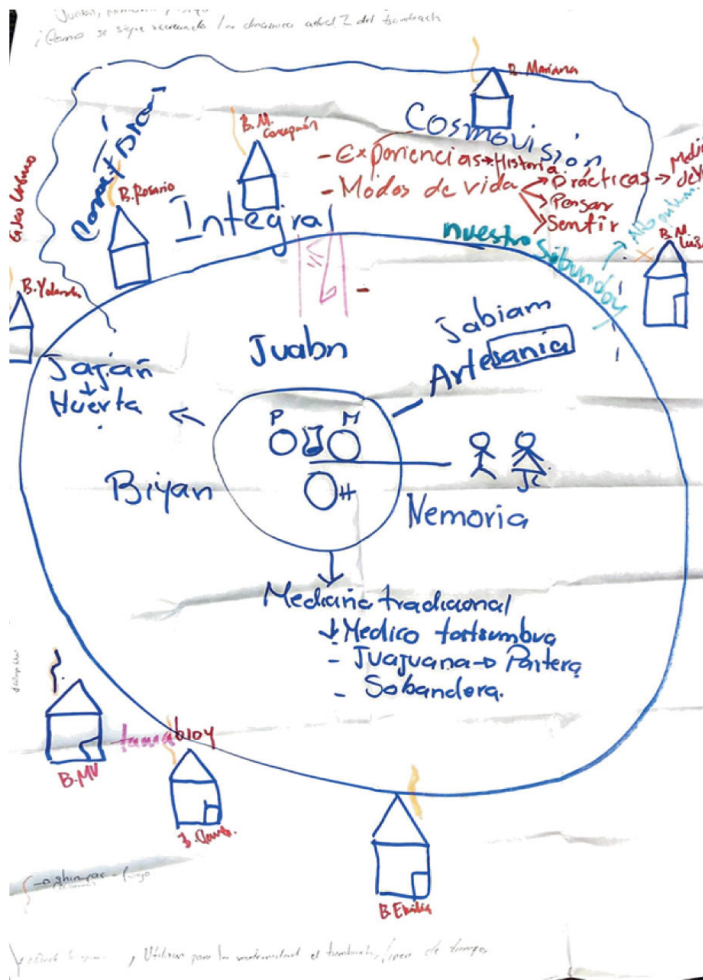


Figure 4. A sketch of the initial cartography and screenshots from the collective work sessions (from the archive of the project).

Through this collective work, we have created many things: the *tšombiachs* themselves (figure 3), cartographies of the practices and spaces of *tšombiach* creation (figure 4), temporary public exhibitions, and conversations (figure 6) to locate and share the oral histories woven in *tšombiachs* (Cuaran Jamioy et al., 2022; 2023). By collecting reflections and re-learning from our experiences as women, Kamëntša, *sñenás*, weavers, designers, and researchers, we have also embarked on creating speculative wearable-textile garments too (figure 5). These pieces are speculative in the sense that they are not actual garments, nor are they *tšombiachs*; they are garments that have been woven to feel-think-do with (Botero et al., 2024). With them we open discussion in Tabanok worlds around *tšombiach*-creation and research practices. We are expanding these discussions inside and outside Tabanok. For instance, when the exhibition was hosted at the Sibundoy public library, along with a panel discussion, the process opened to the larger community, and provided an occasion and space for enriching insights with each other and with a wider audience.

The piece is neither an actual garment nor a *tšombiach*, but rather a piece to think-feel-do with (Photo by Gerardo Chasoy for the archive of the project).

For us, the *tšombiachs*, cartographies, exhibitions, and speculative garments all constitute resources for collective analysis that encourage remembrance, exchange, and signposting of the core themes identified and of their design spaces (Botero, 2013). They are also outputs from our inquiry - in the vein

of other experiences that nourish our work (e.g., Iconoclasistas, 2013; Jungnickel, 2023) keeping close to what we have learned from the *jecoyëng*.

The interweaving of the *tšombiach*: Insight-weaving conversation

“Where do we start?” asked Andrea at one of our meetings. That day, we were meeting in Sibundoy, with Alexandra, Susana, and Eliana co-located while Andrea was connected via the Internet from her home. Susana and Alexandra exchanged glances before an answer wafted into the conversation with the smell of coffee brewing. Susana drew three stones on a sheet of paper that we had hung on the kitchen wall and at which we had pointed a mobile-phone camera so that Andrea could contribute. Alexandra fetched one of the *tšombiachs*, and Susana began our discussion:

Let’s start with the *shin ac*, the traditional stove made up of three *shachekbè*, stones – one of them is the *shin e*, sun (Father); another is *Joashkòn*, moon (Mother); and the third one is the *baseng*, stars (the children, who are many, like the stars) – because there begins the conception of the Kamëntša being. These are also the three Kamëntša pillars: the *Juabn*, thought; the *Biyan*, our mother tongue; and the *Nemoria*, our law of origin, our identity. *Juabn*, *Biyan*, and *Nemoria* are our Kamëntša being. To be Kamëntša is to be the three pillars. Around the *shin ac* (hearth) is the family. There, the *jecoyëng* learn and think about their



Figure 5. A speculative woven garment talking about water created by the authors.

environment, writing it in the *tšombiach*, to teach it again from the weave. They place the *Juabn* (thought) in the *tšombiach*, to tell and teach it and make the *Nemoria* (identity).

As *Jecoyá* María Victoria reminded us, the *tšombiach* “is the weaving of our grandparents’ thoughts – what they thought, what they calculated” (I:MVCC). The *tšombiach* is woven/written from the *Biyán*, which interweaves Kamëntša meanings and knowledge of the everyday. For example, she and another *Jecoyá* in the project, Clementina, always start and end their *tšombiachs* with the *labor* of *shinye* (sun); “I [weave] the sun first, always first. Thank God, for it gives us the light” (I:MCA). The experiences that arise from the daily chores and their associated knowledge are the ones that allow narratives to be woven. When reading the *tšombiach* she wove, *Jecoyá* María Luisa told us about the *juajatkman*, a bridge of rain tears that appears at planting time. She also pointed out in her *tšombiach* the *labor* of *juashintsam*, a caterpillar that announces the start of that season (I:MLJ). Clearly, the *tšombiach* is a highly concrete way of embodying relationships that are documented and interwoven with day-to-day life.

Alexandra then took up the thread of the discussion:

To talk about the *tšombiach*, first you have to come to understand/feel what it is to be Kamëntša. Because the *tšombiach* is part of being Kamëntša. The two go the same direction. It is all part of the same thing.

This is in line with what María Concepción said: “I used to keep aside a *tšombiach*, I kept it as a gift for myself because I thought it could be useful for something in life, to wrap the stomach, to wrap a baby, the womb, and so on. It has great significance because it is shelter and also health, because it helps the body. Of course, it is also useful as clothing” (I:MCCA).

Eliana continued:

That “same thing” that Alexandra refers to, I think, is something that, as weaving does, goes back and forth. When they [the *Jecoyëng*] talked about them, they talked about weaving and the territory; and when they talked about weaving, they talked about being Kamëntša, the *jajañ* [traditional forest garden], the Kamëntša language, the corn, the celebration of *Bëtsknaté*, and narratives such as the bear story. They

talked about their memories and of the preparation for the festivities.

Likewise, *Jecoyá* María Victoria told us that weaving accompanied her. She recalled standing at the *shin ac* to weave while she guided her daughter to do her homework or to cook. Thus she was writing/weaving while simultaneously teaching about household chores and the Kamëntša world. She also mused that one “does not live forever; we are alive today, so we share [our knowledge] so that we [are able to] continue. While weaving, I remember my mother weaving.” (I:MVCC). It is as if the *tšombiach* stands outside time. It is made today but from the past and waiting to be used or cared for in the future, to preserve the Kamëntša being.

Susana: For example, if they tell me to weave the [*labor* of the] bear, I can weave it because I have it here [pointing to her head and body]. I remember my mother teaching me to weave it. So, learning to weave *tšombiachs*, and learning to weave in general, is not apart from other activities, and it shouldn’t be. That is how many of the *Jecoyëng* grew as weavers.

Alexandra: Memory is also charged with profound understanding of their surroundings of the inside and the outside, just as the very warp of the *tšombiachs* sometimes is hidden and sometimes is visible. *Tšombiach* practices and the physical and cosmological characteristics of the territory are interwoven. Physical because they are not only weaving; it is also about going to and looking after the *jajañ* [for cooking], making *bocoy* [a fermented-corn beverage]. Cosmological because it articulates a way of seeing, feeling, and understanding the world. But we have to remember that making and keeping these connections is complex and very fragile. For example, when receiving the legacy of the *tšombiach* you have to have the will to accept it, and it is possible you wouldn’t want it. This happens more nowadays.

Jecoyá María Luisa had elaborated on this when telling us how she was *curada* (treated or prepared) to become a weaver: “They treated me; my grandfather [a *tätsembua*, or recognized traditional doctor] told me, ‘I am going to seed something good on you,’ blowing the leaves that he had on his hands, ‘and when you look at the leaves, you will have good energy to approach people easily.’ Then he planted the *yerbitas* [leaves] here [pointing to her palms] and blew the gift for me.” At the same

time, she stated, “I believe that it is also one’s own feeling. For example, I have taught weaving to other families. Some learned, and others did not. I explained to the girls the simplest things; you weave like this [passing the weft]. Sometimes they said, ‘Nooo, this is not for me. I’d prefer to work as a day laborer’ (I:MLJ)- After all, weaving on a *guanga* (vertical loom) is not easy. It requires time, concentration and demands knowledge that not everyone has or can afford.

Andrea: There are two things that stay with me after listening to the conversations. The first is to note the *tšombiach*’s role in relationship-building. How it manifests principles of reciprocity with everything, with other people, with *batsanamama* (Mother Earth / the traditional lands).

For example, when *Jecoyá* María Luisa’s mother “carried *tšombiachs* and a basket of corn and [then] exchanged those with other women and became co-madre” or joint mother, the others in return “gave the same back to my mother, and so they were double co-madres” (I:MLJ). It is that generosity from which Kamëntša derive pleasure, joy, and “beautiful” thinking, notwithstanding their life stories not always being smooth.

Andrea then pointed out the second element, before identifying a third:

[I]t also seems important to me to note how some of these practices have become commodified, by moving toward production done only for trading, right? It is a complex transition in any case, because, although the practice is marked today by commercial transactions, it keeps on being generous, as when, for example, we heard *jecoyá* Clementina explaining why she could not show us a certain *tšombiach*: “Right now, I do not have that sample here because sometimes I just look at them [the *tšombiachs*]: I take and give them away so that they can be worn; I do not like to keep things – I would rather share, for others to wear them” (I:MCA). The third thing to note is that hearing us talk about this seems as if it’s only women, right? But it’s not always that. For example, *jecoyá* Clementina said, “My father used to weave like this, sitting weaving a long sash, and I was standing at his back watching, quietly just watching. I liked what he did, and when he was a little careless, I would steal his threads and go to the *jajañ* to try to learn how to do the warp [by myself].”

(I:MCA). I think that these issues should be looked at more carefully in the future.

Susana: Yes, of course. However, let’s remember that an important aspect evident in the spaces of the *tšombiach* is all the cycles of women’s lives. Those cycles make it possible and also limit some actions. *Tšombiachs* are the framework for a series of care activities for which the *tšombiach* is also actually intended.

This was evident in the case of *Jecoyá* María Luisa’s mother, for instance: “My mother’s custom was to girdle herself with two and even three sashes [...] Why? Because the *tšombiach* is medicine, right?” (I:MLJ). The reciprocity she articulated was closely connected with upbringing and motherhood too – “when one went to visit a mother who had just given birth, one took as a gift a *tšombiach* to wrap the child. We can then say at least that child will grow well, with strength” (ibid.).

Eliana: So, the *tšombiach* can be read on multiple levels: that of the technique and the work embodied therein but also in how the *tšombiach* is cared for in its use and in the weaving. So, on one hand, we find spaces of creation from practice and repetition when, as *jecoyá* Rosario said, the more one weaves, the more one knows about weaving and the more one can propose new weaving patterns (I:RAC) or when *jecoyá* Clementina showed how “in these sashes I don’t play so much, but with these I do; there I bring the corn bush, the ‘bunch bush,’ the mountain, the road where I go to the *jajañ*, the little streams that are around there with water” through certain labores (I:MCA)

Andrea: Are they the spaces of creation that are created, redundancy aside, in creating it? Through weaving, dressing, bundling, rolling, hanging, and weaving it again? When the *tšombiach* (or what is created via weaving) takes care? For example, when *jecoyá* María Clementina tells us how “when I have guests, I sit them here where my *guanga* is [in the kitchen where she was weaving], because I give those who visit me coffee, hot soup, a cup of *chicha*; while they are chatting, I am weaving!” (I:RAC) she is telling us about her multiple configurations of space and the process of multiple creations. Thus, the *tšombiach* accompanies the day-to-day, the festivities/joys; makes sustenance possible; takes care of those close to it; and takes care of the one who weaves it.

Eliana: Yes, several times when I mentioned “use,” Susana and Alexandra changed it to “care.”

The *tšombiach* is woven / cared for and used / cared for. It has to do with living well; it carries words and emotions. You feel what you weave; you weave what you feel. It is how the world is understood throughout various spaces. We should, however, keep in mind the contemporary tensions and contradictions of this practice, as suggested by *Jecoyá* María Luisa’s hinting at the fragility of this knowledge or the processes of commodification that Andrea touched upon.

Andrea: In practical terms, it is the *tšombiachs* also sustaining the lives of their loved ones. With the income from the sales of the sashes to orders at fairs, they earn a livelihood, raise their children, and raise a family. Both in the cosmological dimension and in the immediate day-to-day, they tell us how they understand the world, how they think about it, and at the same time how they produce it. It is one of the

garments that continues to be used, [even] with more persistence, after centuries. Continuing to wear it is also an element of resistance. An Andean technology to document, plan, and tell stories, part of other textiles that connect us in the world.

Alexandra: As I said at the event at the library here in Sibundoy, the *tšombiach* is no longer an object: it is an experience, a memory, a relationship. The day we opened the exhibition, we invited people to find themselves in each of the eight *tšombiachs*, in the places they inhabit and the emotions of each of the *jecoyëng*. But it is not only them. Behind them are their ancestors and their relationship with the territory, so when we see these sashes presented there, we see these spaces of creation that are in relationship with the heart, the body, the house, the *jajañ*. It was not easy, even though we are from here, to understand that everything was related and that it is from the cosmo-vision we have as women.



Figure 6. A detail of the staging for the *tšombiach* collection at the public library in Sibundoy. Photo: Andrea Botero (for the archive of the project).

That same day something very beautiful happened. Mama Narcisa heard our announcement on the community radio and told us, “How nice! I heard that we were going to talk about what is important to us, and I decided to come.” How beautiful that this research summons other *jecoyëng* and other people to talk about what they do (I:MCM). Some weavers brought their daughters and sons, proud of what they had made. People from Sibundoy who had no direct contact with weaving joined in too.

Eliana: Mama Narcisa’s visit told us as much about Kamëntša history as about pain. She reminded us of the relationship between the word and the *tšombiach*. Watching her unwrap the sash that held her skirt to read her stories was further confirmation of the multiple uses and relationships the *tšombiach* carries. When we brought

the exhibition to Bogota, for example, we were interested mainly in inviting women weavers or those closely connected with textile crafts to learn more about *tšombiachs*. Listening to their impressions added layers of meaning to what we have learned.

Alexandra: What we hope for is to continue just as we started the project, with the world around the *tšombiach*. It appears that what we are doing is to expand the circle we started with. With the various stagings [e.g., see figure 5 and 6], we are seeking to continue the *tšombiach* practice that leaves an inheritance of weaving know-how.

Eliana: We have discussed several times with Andrea how, since we started think-feeling with this project, we’ve found a continuous presence of the actions of swaddling, wrapping



Figure 7. Maria Emilia showing/teaching us how to wear a *tšombiach* and an early sketch of a speculative wearable garment. Photo: Alexandra Cuarán Jamioy (for the archive of the project).

up, and rolling in our day-to-day life. Probably something that is very present for you both, Susana and Alexandra, who are used to wearing your *tšombiachs*. For us, it has revealed itself in subtle and powerful ways.

Alexandra: Do you remember when *Jecoyá Maria Emilia* was showing you how to wear a *tšombiach* last time we visited her? I took the pictures [reproduced as figure 6]. Yes, that makes sense.

Andrea: Indeed. We wonder about the embodied implications of this new understanding of swaddling, as we have been wrapped by/with them. This is something we explore in more detail in the pieces we are working on now.

Tšombiachs as and in spaces of creation

Practices surrounding the creation, weaving, and circulation of the *tšombiach*, as it is woven by Kamëntša women, present ways “otherwise” to understand facets to what dominant discourses denote as practice-based research. Through *tšombiachs*, the territory grows interwoven with stories, thoughts, and feelings. Weaving and caring for them, therefore, constitutes part of research that contrasts conceptions of space and time: readings from the past get drawn into the present while simultaneously remaining as legacies too. If *tšombiachs* are woven as a mechanism to transcend time, in memory, and to safeguard resistances, they do so without tying an end to good living.

In being made and used to perceive, conceive, care for, and protect territorialities and their forms of individual and collective representation, *tšombiachs* articulate an ontological approach (Escobar, 2018) wherein stories, daily tasks, Kamëntša language, and textile productions manifest parts of a whole – the Kamëntša being. In *tšombiach* weaving and wearing we find various interrelated practices present as forms of **wrapping up as a care practice** that encompasses swaddling of bodies (at childbirth and postpartum), of the *jajañ* and all its practices, and of the entire environment, that is rolled together with the knowledge the *tšombiach* preserves. These practices are bond up by forms of **working collectively**, or the actions central to the community, mutual aid, accompanying, and teaching; followed by **summoning and sheltering**, which account for places of origin and points of family gathering and socialization; **traveling, telling, and re-creating**

the territory, thereby collecting all the paths traversed, both individual and collective, in visiting, exchanging, buying, and selling; and **conceiving of and positioning in the territory** to account for diverse ways of building knowledge, celebrating, sharing, visiting, and greeting, in a situated manner. All these practices are developed in relation to the pillars of life and of Kamëntša permanence: origins, the word, and thought.

These practices account for the collective and individual-level nature of these spaces of creation alike (Botero, 2013). They are collective insofar as a common territory is discussed and explored: its constantly traced, re-created relationships and shared histories (rites and myths etc.); its vital cycles of sowing, harvesting, and celebration (lunar cycles and biological indicators, etc.); and concrete elements of the landscape (rivers and mountains, sunrise, and sunset, etc.). Even if the weaving is within each house or *jajañ* or at each *shin ac*, the weavings are connected via a common language, as a communal territory gets re-placed in the daily spaces of forest gardens or urban living rooms. They are individual-specific also, to the extent that each weaver’s own path, sentiments, and tasks related to caring for the body (both physical and spiritual) are woven in. Complicating the weave further are the ecological, social, and economic forces of extractivism that render today’s *tšombiach*-weaving timeframes shorter and impose precarious conditions for trading, always cross-cutting with various family, collective, and other activities. This situation implies great fragility to the practice and related knowledge, though the practice’s continuity demonstrates resilience too. Addressing its future is, therefore, an important challenge for Kamëntša landscapes.

Conclusions

Previous studies have documented ways in which the motifs and pictograms of the *tšombiach* represent nature and culture, the cycles of various beings important to the Kamëntša, and the compositions’ many possible associations with describing and relating to/by the territory, feasts, attitudes, and emotions. This weaving manifests a complex symbology almost in the manner of a “hypertext” (Barrera Jurado, 2015, pp. 30–31). Creating new *tšombiachs* and new stagings for them has allowed us to discuss additional aspects of this process and, further, posit a link to the care of what is vital, and an interweaving of practice and research.

Mamidipudi and Gajjala (2008) propose that it is through practice, via the action of weaving, that theory is constructed. In our conversations with the *jecoyëng* and the visits to their places of creation, in the weaving and in the creation of our own pieces, we became involved in the making of the *tšombiach* as a joint or integral becoming. In weaving, the *jecoyëng* make themselves by making the Kamëntša. We find ourselves literally involved, in the sense of the Latin *involvere*, from *in-* (“into”) + *volvere* (“to roll”). Enfolded and entangled, we were, we are wrapped by the process.

Through weaving, Kamëntša wear, remember, re-create, practice, and produce their territory. While this process undoubtedly is a “craft” or “making,” it also may be understood as a way of cultivating and nurturing (Hallam & Ingold, 2014), an alter-equivalent (Gutierrez, 2022) to what dominant discourses refer as practice-based research, without it being the same. In *tšombiach* logic, the cultivation and nurturing occurs not only figuratively in *labores* that can be “read” but also literally: cultivation and nurturing are woven into the *tšombiach* and shared across multiple paths and places.

The multiplicity present becomes all the more apparent when one remembers that we considered the practices via the lens only of the *jecoyëng* who accompanied us, female weavers aged 65–80. Hence, we revealed eight strands of a version of *tšombiach*-making and cannot speak of all the *tšombiach* being made (or not) in Bëngbe Uáman Tabanok today. How can these creation practices question and reconfigure different territories, worlds, temporalities, functions, and manifestations? With such questions, we intend to keep problematizing our own practices, our research, and what lies around us, to bring Kamëntša logics into horizontal dialogue with the dominant settings of creative practice and of knowledge production and circulation.

Our hope is that the spaces and dialogue openings created in this research will contribute to the re-signification and political re-dimensioning of different knowledges (Pérez-Bustos & Márquez Gutiérrez, 2015) and of the territories and spaces where these unfold – the human bodies, living rooms, *shin acs*, *jajañs*, and waters—. These spaces of creation, learning, practice, care, and relationships enfold everything around them in a form of creation, re-creation, and circulation of knowledge. Rather than being isolated or in neat compartments, the

emerging spaces, places, and knowledge retain their specificity; they are re-placed continuously. From this vantage point in the weave, practicing (making) and researching are actions of involving, enrolling both materially and into the matter of a particular territory. This is an invitation to practitioners to interweave re-search and action by stringing connections across times and across places too. However, there is a need to continuously interrogate those connections as vital, to open ourselves to multiple, plural, heterogeneous but rigorous practices and outcomes.

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Endnotes

- 1** As a research approach, this was pioneered by Kamëntša artist Tirsa Chindoy (see Chindoy 2019).
- 2** These pillars are discussed in greater depth elsewhere (see Cabildo Indígena Camëntsa & Ministry of the Interior 2014).