

# Magütá Museum

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Magütá Museum Management, 2022

This descriptive text is about the origins of the museum, why Magütá, its objectives, as well as the exhibition of ethnographic items and materials that incorporate the knowledge and wisdom of this people.

It is worth noting that the Magütágü do not consider themselves to be indigenous, because this term is not present in the origin story of this people. For this reason, it does not have any meaning within Magütá thought and cosmogony, although the countries where they currently live refer to them as "Indians and indigenous"... They are Magütágü, natives of this Amazonian territory. We will begin by describing the territory of origin of this people.

## 1. Territory of origin

The oral<sup>1</sup> history of the Duügü Magütágü recounts that their geographical origin is in the Amazon basin. According to the definition of the three countries' borders, the Magütá live along the Colombian border, where they number about 10,000. There are around 7,000 in Peru and 50,000 in Brazil. In total, there are an estimated 70,000 Magütágüs across the global territory.

Map 1 shows the area of origin of the Magütágü (the yellow dot is the original area of distribution and management of the caring for and balance of the territory). Before contact with Europeans, the Magütágü had already dispersed along the headwaters of the tributary rivers of the Amazon, a scattering caused by constant warfare with their ethnic Tupi enemies, including the Omagua.

<sup>1</sup> Oral history of Magütá origin, as opposed to the "Ticuna myth".



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The territory has expanded in the direction of the four cardinal points. In this global territory are the places where the creators of the Magütágü walked, and in each space there are sacred and important places that mark milestones of ownership and belonging to this territory, in which the cultural cosmogony of this people was created and continues to be built.

In Colombia, the Magütágü are in the Amazon Trapeze, neighboring the Kokamashas, and for some years now the core Murui, Muine, Piinemuna, Miraña, Yukuna, Tanimuka, Andokes and Ñihamwo populations (Montes, 2004, p. 14), as well as the Creole and mestizo population, which is concentrated mainly in the urban area of Leticia and Puerto Nariño, as well as in the surrounding areas. The efforts of local, national, and international indigenous movements ensured that national states took significant steps to granting land extensions to the Magütágü. In Brazil, for example, lands were marked out, which constitute extensive reserves, now known as Eware I and Eware II. In Colombia, in turn, small reserves have been established, although this is not the case in Peru.

**Map 1.** Naane of the Magütágü, territory of the Magütágü indigenous people.



**Comentado [LV1]:** LEGEND  
Magütágü origin and fishing  
Magütágü Ancestral Territory



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**Source:** Map developed as part of the Ancestral Knowledge Gathering. Arara, 2021. Digitized by Abel Santos.

**Note:** The shaded part, in yellow, indicates the point of origin and dispersion of the Magütágü before and after contact with Europeans. The territory expanded between the Amazon, Caquetá and Putumayo rivers, and their Cothé, Purite, Yauma, Cuchillo Cocha, Bugeo Cocha, Loretoyacu, Amacayacu, Calderón tributaries, and other tributaries in the three bordering nations (Colombia, Peru and Brazil). It is in this territory, in the adjacent ones, and beyond, where management and healing within the territory occur (Santos, 2019, p. 123).

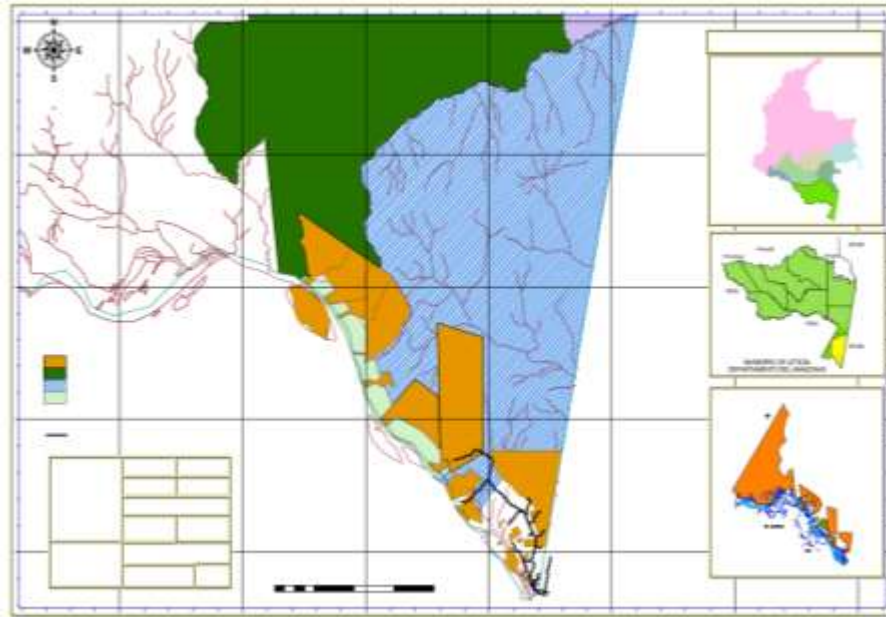
Map 2 shows the small reserves (in orange) that the State gave to the Magütágü. Here the global territory of origin described in Map 1 is invisible, while the rest of the lands are classified as wastelands, although they never were. These reserves are home to the Magütágü communities, in some of which the language, rites, daily traditions and cultural legacy are still maintained. In others, the worldview has gradually changed.

**Map 2.** Current status of the location of the Magütá people in the Amazon Trapeze



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**Comentado [LV2]:** Caquetá, Putumayo, Vaupés, BRAZIL, PERU  
LETICIA MUNICIPALITY, AMAZONAS DEPARTMENT

**Source:** OTI, 2019.

**Note:** This map shows the political-administrative division of the Colombian Amazon Trapeze, where the Magütágü are currently located in small reserves.

The following describes their self-designation as Magütá and not Ticuna, as the people are commonly referred to.

### 1.1. The Magütá people

Duŕgü<sup>2</sup> Yunatüğü<sup>3</sup> political leaders, in the search for an authentic name, have turned to origin narratives and have understood that the ancestors of the Duŕgü Yunatüğü were fished by Yoí, Ípi and Techí<sup>4</sup> in the Eware creek. These fished people were still *üünetagü* (immortal), because they originated from the natural cosmic energy of tú



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and not through acts of gestation and childbirth, as had occurred with the first generation of conjugal unions between the fished people. Consequently, the Duŭgŭ Yunatŭgŭ are the product of sexual acts, gestation in the womb<sup>5</sup> and childbirth, and the present-day Duŭgŭ Yunatŭgŭ are descendants of this first incestuous generation of the Magŭtágŭ. The fished people are referred to as Magŭtágŭ in ancestral speech. Nowadays, *Pogŭtá* is also used, which means the same thing, "fished people", the literal translation of "fishing people".

The political leaders and wise individuals who have fought to remain in their territory have decided to use *Magŭtá* as an endogenous self-designation, cultural identity and claim before the national State as "we are fished people". In addition, they immortalize their identity as descendants of the Magŭtágŭ. Breaking down */magŭtá/* [*mă<sup>2</sup>.gŭ<sup>2</sup>.ta<sup>3</sup>*], */ma/* is described as a free morpheme representing the action of throwing or moving one's arm forward and retracting it several times, an action observed when fishing with a fishing rod. This action of throwing, stretching and retracting one's arms is "*ma*". */gŭ/* is a pluralizing bound morpheme and */tá/* is a group of people, related to a build-up/pile, and translates as "the taken people". */Magŭ/* translates as several objects obtained, taken, or extracted. The morpheme */tá/* indicates people, and is the third-person singular (3PSG). In this way, *Magŭtá* means "the fished people".

In summary, the name *Magŭtá* reminds us that we are descendants of the first people fished by the heroes who created the cosmos and people. Combining the proper names (*Dùuŭ*, *Yunatŭ* and *Magŭtá*), each with its own meaning, translates as "mortal fished people". But at meetings, gatherings and congresses, leaders can be heard saying "we are Magŭtágŭ people, we are Magŭtágŭ". Because of this and the above arguments, we defend with conviction that we are *Magŭtá* and not Ticuna.

<sup>5</sup> It seems illogical to mention gestation in the womb, but the truth is that there has been gestation of beings in the knee; for example, Yoí, Ípi, Aŭkŭna and Mowacha were born in Ngutapa's knee.



There were three groups of people fished, those fished by Yoí, Ípi and Techí. In other words, there are the Yoí, Ípi and Techí people. While in the origin story Techí is mentioned as fishing very few people - only Ípi - she does fish her own people. This is affirmed in the story when Yoí orders Techí to fish and it is at that moment when she catches Ípi in fish form. It is clear that she fishes other Magütá beings - Techí people.

In addition, it is said that the first fished people are *ũũnetá*, still without clans, but the first generation of the fished people were products of gestation and birth, without clans, not yet incestuous *ũũnetagũ*. This is because it is from the second generation onwards that the incestuous behavior takes place. It is here when Yoí and Ípi give them the norm of the clans, at a time when they are already *yunatagũ*, just like the territory, that is, not entirely. Instead, *ũũneane* moves into another dimension of the universe, and becomes hidden and difficult to reach for the *yunatũgũ* at present.

In summary, those who today are known as Ticunas are actually Magütágũ, a denomination that recalls a history, an origin, knowledge, wisdom, norms and laws of origin. In contrast, Ticuna is never recounted in the origin story. It is never sung in the ritual acts of passage or healing, that is, Ticuna has no meaning for the *Magütágũ*, it is only used externally to acquire the benefits of the State. The origin and purpose of the Magütá Museum are described and recounted below.

## 2. The Magütá Museum

It is so called because in this space the ethnographic, socio-cultural, traditional, and environmental items and materials of the Magütá people are presented and exhibited. This is the reason behind the museum's name.

The story of its founding is as follows: about 20 years ago, there was the idea of creating a museum space with the items and materials that were collected during the development of linguistic workshops with teachers, leaders and knowledgeable individuals from this community. The items were collected in the different stages of field research and meetings with these wise individuals about their medicine and



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health practices, but also during participation in the male and female rites of passage celebrated in the region's communities. In 2019, the idea was brought to life and the space was built with the following specifications (image 1).

**Image 1.** Exhibition space of the items and materials of the Magütá people



**Source:** Magütá Museum, Santos, 2022.

**Note:** The museum is designed and built in three hexagonal units, each measuring 16 m<sup>2</sup>, making a total of 48 m<sup>2</sup>, where the Magütágü ethnographic items and materials are exhibited. There is one entrance and three exits. The exhibition is divided into five sections, each with its respective subsections. The visitation route follows a clockwise direction (see the visitation route in image 1).

The Magütá Museum is a family heritage entity, created in 2019 and opened to the public on December 26, 2021. It is located in the Mocagua Indigenous Reserve on the Amazon River, an hour and a half from the port of Leticia and other points along the river. It can be accessed by river on public transportation or private boats (map 1).

**Map 1.** Location of the Magütá Museum.



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**Comentado [LV3]:** EXIT

Fermented beverage containers

Tipiti - pots

HUNTING

SECTION 3

Blowguns

COOKING

SECTION 2

Baskets and sifters

Baskets and sifters

CHAGRA

FISHING

SECTION 4

SECTION 1

Remains of the first Mocagua settlers

Ornaments

ENTRANCE

EXIT

EXIT

SECTION 5

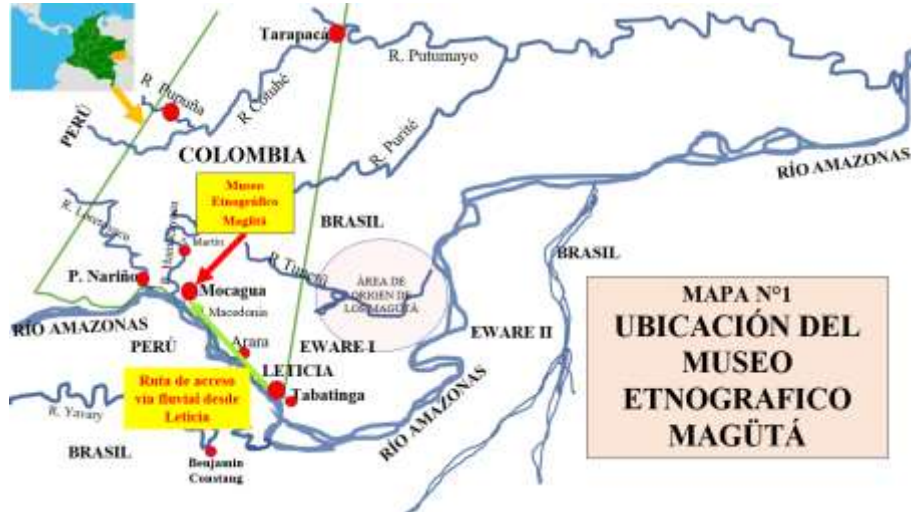
PUBERTY RITUAL

Bathrooms

Family Dwelling

Berure Shop

MAGÜTÁ ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM



**Source:** Magütá Museum. Santos, 2022.

The museum's mission is the depiction and dissemination of the knowledge and wisdom of the people fished by Yoí, Ípi and Techí, "the Magütágü", which is exhibited here. The museum presents the ethnographic items and materials of this people, through which the stories and origins of each of the materials are explained, described, and narrated. This is intended to provide each local, national, or international visitor with the opportunity to learn about, understand, get to know, and experience our traditions and culture. Our vision is that by the year 2030 it will become one of the most visited local museum projects in the area.

Likewise, the idea is for the museum to promote, revive, and showcase the traditions, language, rites, songs, narratives, weavings, ceramics, painting and local medicine, and also to articulate and combine its work with linguistic, social, ecological, archaeological, and ethnographic research. In order to achieve its objectives, goals, and purposes, it must create a network of alliances, agreements, and partnerships with local, national, and international state and private entities and institutions, as well as with individuals. In addition, it should be publicized through existing digital networks.



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**Comentado [LV4]:** Magütá Ethnographic Museum  
Access route by river from Leticia  
MAGÜTÁ PLACE OF ORIGIN

PERU  
AMAZON RIVER  
BRAZIL

MAP N°1  
LOCATION OF THE MAGÜTÁ ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

The objectives of the museum include the explanation and description of Magüta knowledge, wisdom, and thought. This is done through the exhibition of the items and materials of this people. The uses and functions of each object are explained, and the origin of the people is recounted in their native language, so that the visiting public can understand each of the objects on display. In addition, traditions, language, and rituals are promoted, brought to life, and taught. Through these actions, knowledge and wisdom are taught to children and young people in local, national, and international educational institutions. All actions aim to promote understanding of the items and materials. Workshops are also held on ceramics, painting and weaving, storytelling, and the promotion and activation of traditions, language, and rituals. With these activities and foundations, the museum came to be.

The following is a description of the visitation route of the items and materials exhibited in the museum. As mentioned above, there are three hexagonal units in which the six (6) sections, with their respective subsections, are distributed, which are as follows:

### **Section 1**

This section recounts the story of the first Mocagua settlers. It is divided into two sections: the first part talks about the funerary remains of the first Mocagua settlers and the second section includes the remains of the Jesuit mission Nuestra Señora de Loreto, to the Ticuna, during the colonization period. These archaeological remains were found in the locality of Mocagua, signaling that the community is located at a point of archaeological importance for the nation.

**Photo 1.** Remnants of a Kokamilla secondary funerary urn.



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**Photo:** Magütá Museum Abel. Santos, 2022.

## Section 2

This section describes *naane*, the chagra, where all food products are grown, such as tubers, fruits, and Amazonian vegetables. It is subdivided into four subsections. The first is dedicated to sowing tools; the second, to the baskets used to carry the products of the chagra and other items; the third describes the guaruma baskets, where the feathers and seeds for ornaments are kept; and the fourth subsection refers to the guaruma sifters and strainers, as well as the guaruma presses, called *tipití*, for the processing of cassava flour.

## Section 3

This section, dedicated to traditional cooking, is divided into twelve subsections in which we discuss, among other topics, clay pots for cooking food, clay bowls, resin and copal torch, feather and cumare fans, food containers, macerating pots, cassava roasting pots, pitchers for fermented beverages, totuma containers for beverages, jars for cooking curare, and tar resin.

## Section 4

This section refers to hunting and is divided into six subsections, dedicated to blowguns, dart baskets, darts with curare, cotton for darts, cotton containers, and a display of other fauna.

## Section 5



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This section describes the fishing operations. It is divided into three subsections, in which the fishing canoe and other fishing items such as arrows, bows, fishing rods, spears, hooks, oars, and fishing lines are discussed.

## Section 6

This section is dedicated to the female rite of passage. It is divided into four subsections, which cover topics such as masks, ritual instruments, the Worekü's reserve, and ornaments such as necklaces, bracelets, feather crowns, and the feathered breastplates of pubescent woman.

The items and materials from the Magütá Museum sections amount to 1,200 pieces, as well as 20 pieces for the puberty ritual which are currently in quarantine.

### 3. Perspectives on the Magütá Museum

From the perspective of the wise Magütá people, it is surprising that there is a museum space (building-construction) within their communities, where all the cultural aspects are taught and learned. For them, the entire territorial space (*naane*) is for teaching and cultural, social, linguistic, and ritual learning; things are not learned within four walls but throughout the whole territory. In addition, the items and materials in natural and everyday spaces are arranged according to the fulfillment of their functions, according to Magütá cosmogony.

That being said, the items and materials located in a museum are immobile, "dead", without use; they are not in operation. Moreover, in each material and item lives a being that can make people sick and harm their corporeality. The wise people will only heal those who handle and calm these beings, which is why at the Magütá Museum a session to heal the items with tobacco has been carried out, so that these materials can be exhibited without any risk to locals and visitors.

The knowledge of these wise individuals is crucial since material perceived as purposeless becomes more dangerous and aggressive. In addition, some rite of



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passage objects should not be exhibited to the public, because they can harm the spiritual and physical integrity of children, young people, and some pregnant women. In everyday life, these items are stored, or sometimes thrown into the water to fulfill functions of abundance.

Teaching and learning from museums is key for the peoples and communities that are gradually changing their traditional views, knowledge, wisdom, and thoughts, because these spaces become sanctuaries for the preservation of memories, of the material and immaterial, and of language archives. For this reason, it becomes for this population a return to the past and not an understanding of existence itself. The Magütá Museum understands these issues, which is why it carries out actions to transmit knowledge and strengthen the Magütá language, and uses traditional items to alleviate difficulties.

### Conclusion

As mentioned above, the Magütá Museum opened its doors to the public at the end of 2021, with a monthly flow of 130 visitors, including locals, nationals, and foreigners. On Friday nights, stories, events, and occurrences of everyday life are narrated. Tobacco is used in this space because it offers protection for the materials and the people who visit the museum. It is one of the items that are not present physically, but which are present spiritually.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that the museum is still being set up. This means that documentation is required for each of the items exhibited, as well as a photographic record, and infrastructure to carry out its actions and dissemination in digital media.

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